

The Macedon Digest

The Australian Newsletter of Disaster Management

Produced by the Australian Natural Disasters Organisation

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NEW DISASTER RESEARCH AND TEACHING CENTRE

A new era has commenced for the Australian counter-disaster community, with the establishment of a Disaster Management Studies Centre (DMSC) at Cumberland College of Health Sciences, located at Lidcombe, in Sydney. The decision to establish a disaster research and teaching centre was announced formally by Cumberland College in February. There has been a gap in the current national capability to study and undertake research into disasters. This has been brought about, in part, because of the absence of any vocational demand for scholars to invest the time and effort needed to become skillful in this field of endeavour. The same could be said about the practical side of disaster management. Thus, there has been a gap in existing emergency service training programs. Unlike many specialist groups, no tertiary educational program has been available for disaster services personnel. Equally important, there has been no geographical focus for disaster research and teaching within Australia and the wider Pacific/Asian regions. It is expected that, with the development of a specialist Disaster Management Studies Centre at Cumberland College, these gaps will be narrowed, and the proficiency of both national and regional disaster management will be enhanced. In turn, this will increase the demand for disaster researchers and for formally qualified counter-disaster professionals.

“...with the development of (the)... Disaster Management Studies Centre... the proficiency of both national and regional disaster management will be enhanced.”

Cumberland College is well-placed to carry out these important areas of activity. The appropriateness of the College to provide the location and resources, in the light of its major involvement in the disaster field, has been acclaimed by members of the Australian disaster research community and by senior counter-disaster managers. The unique profile of the College as a tertiary educational institution in research, teaching, and training of the health and allied sciences is internationally recognized. The development of DMSC is a natural extension of current College teaching and research programs. Cumberland College already offers components on disaster management in undergraduate courses, and a

postgraduate option is available at Masters level. These activities will be strengthened with the introduction of a Diploma in Disaster Management course which commences in 1990 (see below), and when Masters research and Doctoral study programs are offered in the near future. Academic staff have been involved in hazard impact field-work, and disaster-specific research is presented and published by staff in national and international forums. Health consultancy work and advisory commissions, including assignments of a disaster-specific nature, are regularly undertaken by staff throughout Australia, Asia, and the Pacific. In addition, the co-editorship of a leading disaster research publication,

The International Journal of Mass Emergency and Disasters, currently resides at Cumberland College.

“ The following five fields...will be pursued by DMSC: Research..., Teaching..., Training..., Information Clearing House..., (and) Consultancy Work... ”

The following five fields of activities will be pursued by DMSC:

* Research: in all phases of the disaster spectrum by means of general theory development, on-site impact investigations and long-term research projects.

* Teaching: providing emergency and disaster personnel with a recognized tertiary qualification (a Diploma in Disaster Management).

* Training: directed towards in-country training programs throughout the South-West Pacific, South and South-East Asia regions, in accordance with the World Health Organization's Emergency Preparedness and Response Program.

* Information Clearing House: focussing on both disaster and emergency health management in the Southern Hemisphere.

* Consultant Work: to provide expert advice on disaster management to government organizations, emergency services, voluntary and professional agencies, and local communities.

Commencing in 1990, DMSC will be offering a Diploma in Disaster Management. The content of the Diploma is oriented towards developing a comprehensive

understanding of the phenomena of disaster and management of disaster impact. The program is designed to develop professional skills in disaster management. It will focus on providing students with knowledge and intellectual skills that will enhance the effective delivery of inter-agency emergency and disaster services. The program will not focus on operational skills training. The Diploma course is designed to expand and contextualize those skills training and knowledge previously acquired by emergency services personnel. The program will be of interest to those in State/Territory Emergency Services, police, fire and ambulance services, social and welfare services, and in the health services. Thus the Diploma will augment the courses already available through the Australian Counter Disaster College and the initial recruitment education programs and senior management courses, (both of which cover aspects of disaster) available to State and Territory police, fire, and ambulance services.

DMSC will develop the inter-disciplinary program, which will be located within the Department of Behavioural Sciences. The course will provide students with a series of 'core subjects', together with a choice of 'electives'. One elective will be based on disaster management in the context of 'developed nations' and will be based, as far as possible, on the Australian context.

Another elective will be oriented towards disaster management in 'developing nations' and is designed to assist emergency and disaster personnel in Pacific and Asian regions. Further course electives, such as a program in emergency health management, are expected to follow.

The DMSC proposal contains provision for a budget with full-time academic and support staff. To complement the expertise of its own staff, DMSC will employ the specialist skills of Cumberland College academic staff. Particularly in the first few years, staff will also be augmented, by inviting external disaster researchers and practitioners to participate in the Centre's teaching programs. The opportunity will also exist for scholars outside of DMSC to participate in the Centre's research programs, or to undertake separate projects under the auspices of the Centre.

For further information relating to the Disaster Management Studies Centre or its activities, please contact the Director, Dr Neil Britton at:

Disaster Management Studies Centre
Cumberland College of Health Sciences
East Street
PO Box 170
Lidcombe
Sydney, NSW 2141

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ERRATUM

The following corrections are required for the feature articles that appeared in the December 1988 edition of TMD (Vol. 3 No. 4)

1. Table 1 on page 5 : - "2 : Same Residence 1985" should read "2 : % Same Residence 1985".
2. On page 5, column 2 at line 18, the word "date" should read "data".

3. The heading for the Pam Millican article should read "Human Risk - A Perception".

4. At line 14 of page 6, the word "intermediate" should read "indeterminant".

EDUCATION

ACDC PROGRAM

2 April to 3 November 1989

- ❖ Advanced CD (1150) 2-14 April
- ❖ Future Trends in Disaster Clinic (1151) 2-5 April
- ❖ Reserved 17-21 April
- ❖ Advanced Hazard Analysis (1153) 30 April - 5 May
- ❖ Schools Curriculum Workshop (1117) 8-12 May
- ❖ Critical Incident Stress Clinic (1105) 8-12 May
- ❖ Introduction to Disaster Management (1155) 14-19 May
- ❖ Disaster Response Management (1156) 21-26 May
- ❖ Hazard Management (1157) 28 May - 2 June
- ❖ Costing Disasters Workshop (1158) 28 May - 2 June
- ❖ Disaster Recovery Management (1159) 4-9 June
- ❖ CD Planning (1160) 18-23 June
- ❖ Evacuation Management (1161) 25-30 June
- ❖ Workshop - Perception of Risk (1164) 2-7 July
- ❖ Introduction to Disaster Management (1166) 9-14 July
- ❖ CD Planning (1167) 16-21 July
- ❖ Workshop - Development of Local Planning Courses (1168) 16-21 July
- ❖ External NSW - Introduction to Disaster Management (1170) 30 July - 4 August
- ❖ External SA - Introduction to Disaster Management (1171) 6-11 August
- ❖ Response Management (1172) 20-25 August
- ❖ Hazard Analysis for Disaster Managers (1173) 27 August- 1 September
- ❖ Introduction to Disaster Management (1175) 3-8 September
- ❖ Development of Australian Emergency Manuals Workshop (1176) 3-8 September
- ❖ Evacuation Management (1177) 10-15 September
- ❖ Seminar - Prevention/Mitigation (1178) 17-22 September
- ❖ External QLD - Introduction to Disaster Management (1179) 24-29 September
- ❖ Response Management (1180) 1-6 October
- ❖ Workshop - Hazard Warning Systems (1181) 8-13 October
- ❖ External QLD - Local CD Planning (1183) 15-20 October
- ❖ External SA - Local CD Planning (1184) 22-27 October
- ❖ External NSW - Introduction to Disaster Management (1185) 29 October - 3 November

Details about these activities are contained in the 1988/89 and 1989/90 ACDC Handbooks; or contact the College direct on (054) 261205.

EMERGENCY MEDICINE CONFERENCES

A number of conferences with the theme of emergency medicine, are scheduled for 1989. These include :

1. The Second Annual Trauma Anaesthesia and Critical Care Symposium, to be held in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A., from the 1-4 June. The Symposium is being sponsored by the Maryland Institute for Medical Services Systems Department of Anaesthesiology. Amongst the topics to be examined by international trauma anaesthesia and critical care experts, is mass casualty situations.

2. The Emergency Health Care Development Conference, to be held in Washington D.C., USA, from 15-18 August..It is being presented by Medical Care Development International and sponsored by the Pan American Health Organisation and the US Public Health Service. The Conference objectives are to :

- clarify the linkages between emergency health care (EHC), local and national health care services and national disaster management systems;
- present concrete methods of developing or improving emergency health care capabilities within society which differ widely in resources and characteristics;
- demonstrate processes by which different EHC services have been developed; and
- propose international EHC developments for the next decade.

It is intended for planners, administrators, clinicians, instructors, researchers and financial managers. Members of the world emergency health care community will be involved in selected topics, including:

- bridging the gap between emergency health care, primary health care and disaster management systems; and
- identifying opportunities for EHC development during the U.N. International Decade for Natural Disaster reduction.

3. The 6th World Congress on Emergency and Disaster Medicine, to be held in Hong Kong, from 10-15 September. The congress is being sponsored by the World Association for Emergency and Disaster Medicine, with one of the invited co-sponsors being the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine. Addressing the theme "Present Status, Future Strategies", the Congress will review current research, epidemiology and clinical practice across the spectrum of emergency and disaster medicine, and will consider strategies for future development. Invited collaborating organisations include the American College of Emergency Physicians, the Australian Resuscitation Council, the British Association for Immediate Care, the International Society for Disaster Medicine and the UN Disaster Relief Organisation.

4. The 1989 Conference for the Royal Australian College of Medical Administrators, to be held at the Hyatt Hotel in Canberra, on 30/31 August. The theme of this Conference will be "Medical Aspects of Disaster Medicine."

Details about each of the above activities can be obtained by contacting :

Mr Don Withers
Principal Executive Officer (Counter Disaster)
National Disasters Section
Commonwealth Department of Community Services
and Health
GPO Box 9848
Canberra ACT 2601
Phone : (062) 897777

ICI TECHNICAL HAZARD ANALYSIS SEMINARS

ICI Australia Engineering have scheduled a series of Technical Hazard Analysis Seminars during 1989, suitable for managers and tertiary qualified staff, generally in the production, safety or engineering fields. The three day course provides an introduction, on tutorial lines, to the techniques used in the management of technical safety. The aim of the course is to equip participants with :

- ❖ sufficient understanding to carry out simple hazard studies adequately;
- ❖ recognition of the limits to that understanding;
- ❖ references for further study; and
- ❖ an appreciation of standards required for conduct of various safety analysis techniques.

Courses will be conducted in several capital cities, commencing in Sydney in mid April, then Brisbane (mid July), Perth (mid August), Melbourne (mid September) and back to Sydney (mid October).

The courses which will be limited to 20 people, will be run by Senior Engineers from ICI&E Process Safety Section, supported by safety experts from the ICI operation arm. All have conducted a number of Hazard Analysis courses and have led technical safety studies, on a wide range of installations.

Details about this course (cost \$925), can be obtained from Carolyn White at ICIAE, 6th floor, 486 Albert Street, Melbourne 3002, or phone her on (03) 664-9602.

REFLECTIONS

Thursday 11 May 1989 marks the 19th anniversary of the opening of the original Knox-Knight Hall.

This building was the forerunner of the present instructional centre (completed in 1985), which incorporates a refurbished Knox-Knight Hall. On Monday 11 May 1970, the Minister of the Interior, Mr P. Nixon, officially opened the new lecture hall at the Australian Civil Defence School.

The new Knox-Knight Hall was named after the school's original Commandant, Air Commodore E. Knox-Knight. Air Commodore Knox-Knight was from 1955 till 1969, responsible for the School's operations. Mr Nixon said that he was "glad to be here to honour this man who for over 15 years, gave whole-hearted dedication to the development of civil defence in this country."

The Kyneton Guardian of 20 May 1970, reported that "The magnificent building, equipped with every feasible facility to assist in the instruction of civil defence courses, is not visible from the main road to Mount Macedon... The hall is in a particularly picturesque setting, with an artificial stream and magnificent gardens in front of it".

BRITISH AUTHORITIES LIABLE FOR FLOOD WARNING FAILURE

By John Handmer (Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies Australian National University), Denis Parker and Jeremy Neal (Flood Hazard Research Centre Middlesex Polytechnic)

The 1984 Massachusetts case of *Brown v US* reminded all those dealing with severe weather of their potential liability. In that case a lower court found the government of the United States liable for failing to predict a severe storm in which a number of lobstermen died. The failure was due to a breakdown in a critical part of the National Weather Services data gathering network. However, the judgement was overturned by an appellate court, on the grounds that repair of the breakdown was a discretionary rather than an obligatory function of government. Furthermore, the appellate court found that "A weather forecast is a classic example of a prediction of indeterminate reliability, and a place peculiarly open to debatable decisions..." The details of this case, problems with the court's reasoning and the application of the principles to Australia are set out in Partlett (1987) and in Handmer and Partlett (1988). Millington (1987) examines the case from a British perspective.

A more recent British case however, reaches different conclusions. In the 1987 case of *Robinson and Ors v Cardiff City Council and Ors*, government authorities were found liable for failing to provide members of the public with a flood warning. As in the Massachusetts case the legal argument concentrated on the nature of the decision making. Before reviewing this case and its application to Australia, it may be useful to comment on the legal basis of liability, which hinges on the distinction between types of decisions.

Note that the discussion is necessarily brief and simplified.

“ ... government authorities were found liable for failing to provide members of the public with a flood warning. ”

Basis of liability

At the most general level, three criteria must be satisfied for a court to find that liability exists as a result of negligence (Winfield, 1984). The defendant (in our examples the weather bureau or emergency services) must have a legal duty of care to the plaintiff (the person bringing the lawsuit). A "duty of care" involves responsibility to avoid harm to the plaintiff. The defendant must be in breach of that duty, and the plaintiff must have suffered damage as a result of the breach.

The duty of care may be a positive duty set out in legislation, or it may arise under common law. The type of decision involved and issues of reliance on the service by the plaintiff, foreseeability that the plaintiff would rely on the service, and proximity, are central in determining

whether a duty of care exists. Note that these criteria are only relevant to the issue of negligence. Where a legal duty arises for other reasons, for example strict liability, different criteria may apply.

Type of decision

To establish whether a government body owes a duty of care in the case before it, the court will inquire into the nature of the decision-making power exercised by the government body. The key distinction is between decisions of a policy or discretionary nature and those of an operational nature. Government authorities are not liable for the results of the former, but may be liable where the decision is classified as operational.

Mason J. (as he then was) summarised the distinction in the 1985 Australian case of *Sutherland Shire Council v Heyman*:

“ Essentially the warning system failed because of the absence of a clear responsibility for disseminating warnings to the public. ”

The distinction between policy and operational factors is not easy to formulate, but the dividing line between them will be observed if we recognise that a public authority is under no duty of care in relation to decisions which involve or are dictated by financial, economic, social or political factors or constraints. Thus budgetary allocations and the constraints which they entail in terms of allocation of resources cannot be made the subject of a duty of care. But it may be otherwise when the courts are called upon to apply a standard of care to action or inaction that is merely the product of administrative direction, expert or professional opinion, technical standards or general standards of reasonableness.

Some British writers use the terms "powers and duties" to refer to the types of decision (Barker, 1988). When using their "powers" government authorities have discretion and they can *choose* whether or not to exercise a power. "Duties" on the other hand are obligatory and the issues of choice and discretion do not arise: they specify what should and what should not be done. The distinction is elusive and the boundary is easily crossed. The legal arguments are complex and involve, among other things, the institutional competence of the courts to decide questions of social policy and economic expediency: in other words certain decisions of government are outside the ambit of judicial review.

Recent observations by the Privy Council in the case of *Rowling* affirm this point.

A classic illustration concerns lighthouses. In the case of *Indian Towing*, the United States Supreme Court stated that the Coast Guard did not have to provide a lighthouse service, but that once it had used its discretion to build and operate a lighthouse, and induced reliance on the service, it had a duty to maintain the service. This duty was not a discretionary function of government.

Extending the argument to flood warnings, it would seem likely that decisions concerning the establishment of flood warning systems would be discretionary. But, once a system was in place, and those at risk of flooding had come to rely on the system, the relevant authority would have a duty to maintain the system and to ensure that it functioned properly. Some US legal researchers have argued that where flood warnings are concerned, the discretionary exemption from liability could be more limited than the above discussion suggests. Kusler (1986) suggests that where the stream concerned has been modified by a government agency or with the approval of government, there may be a duty to provide a flood warning system.

It is important to realise that even if it is clear that there was a duty as opposed to a power (ie that the decision was operational rather than discretionary), liability does not automatically follow. It may also be necessary to deal with the issues of reliance, foreseeability, proximity, and with cause and effect. This last point may be especially difficult to demonstrate; assessing the real impact of a flood warning, for example, is problematic (Penning-Rowsell and Handmer, 1986; Handmer and Penning-Rowsell, 1989). Also, the scope of common law liability is frequently modified by statute.

The case of *Robinson v Cardiff City Council*

On December 27, 1979, the River Taff flooded between three and four thousand households in Cardiff, Wales. The River had flooded Cardiff before, but this event was considered exceptional. Even though about 12 hours elapsed between the first alarm on catchment rain gauges (4am) and the flood peak (4.30pm), and the Welsh Water Authority prepared a flood forecast which was delivered to the police some nine hours before the peak, members of the public were not warned. Apparently, those at risk had received flood warnings on other occasions. (The material in this section is drawn largely from Barker, 1988, and from a transcript of the judgment by Davies J. The section does not deal with the role of European Community regulations concerning emergency planning, in particular the 1976 *Seveso Directive*.)

Following the flood, the local Ombudsman considered complaints against the Welsh Water Authority and Cardiff City Council because of the failure to provide warnings to those flooded. The Ombudsman found that the complaints were justified. However, both authorities rejected the Ombudsman's findings, and as he is powerless to take further action there the matter rested, until it was brought before the Cardiff Crown Court which handed down its verdict in late 1987.

Essentially, the warning system failed because of the absence of clear responsibility for disseminating warnings

to the public. Briefly, the events leading to this situation are as follows.

In 1974, after the creation of the regional water authorities, local and regional government bodies held a meeting to organise a flood warning system for Cardiff. Those present at the meeting were Cardiff City Council, South Wales Police, South Glamorgan County Council, and the Welsh Water Authority. The meeting decided on a three step procedure : the Water Authority would monitor the river and issue flood predictions to the police: in turn the police would pass the information on to the Cardiff City Technical Officer; the Technical Officer would be responsible for any decisions concerning warning the public.

However, it appears that these arrangements became confused after a 1975 Home Office circular. This document suggested that local authorities might prepare plans to deal with peacetime emergencies such as floods. The South Glamorgan County Council saw the resulting plan as one to assist the coordination of local and regional services *after* an event. But the City Technical Officer thought that the plan *superseded* the 1974 arrangements. To complicate matters further, the police and Water Authority thought that the 1974 arrangements continued to operate.

On the day of the flood the warning system worked as far as the City Technical Officer. He did not pass the warning on or advise the police to issue a warning to the public, as he believed that it was no longer his responsibility. Believing the opposite, the authorities responsible for warning dissemination waited for his advice. The public was not warned.

Liability and types of duty.

Davies J of the Cardiff Crown Court found that both Cardiff City Council and South Glamorgan County Council were liable for failure to warn the public. He found that the discretionary exemption did not apply. The burden of liability was divided with two thirds going to Cardiff and one third to South Glamorgan. The Water Authority was not liable as it had performed its role and was not responsible for issuing warnings to the public. Both councils are appealing to the High Court claiming that their proportions of liability are too high.

The Judge specified two types of duty : "prior duty" and "duty on the day".

The prior duty was to take reasonable steps to ensure concluded, effective and continuing flood warning provisions vis a vis flood endangered areas. The duty on the day (December 27, 1979) was to take reasonable steps to ensure communication of a public warning to persons in the flood endangered areas. (p. 56).

The failure of Cardiff's City Technical Officer to take action to inform the public, breached the City Council's duty on the day. The absence of coherent, effective plans for flood warnings breached the prior duty of both the City Council and South Glamorgan County Council. "There was inexcusably insufficient co-operation and co-ordination on their part." (p. 57). It is not clear to what extent the court took into account the circulars from central government which indicated the desirability of emergency plans

Cause and effect

Davies J was satisfied that the plaintiffs suffered damage, and that this damage was a result of the failure to issue warnings :

"I say now that it is not in dispute - and if it is in dispute, then I find on the evidence - that if a public warning in any of the ways I have said were available....it would have enabled the damage which the plaintiffs suffered to have been avoided". (p. 27).

The complexity of this issue received rather less attention than perhaps it deserved. As mentioned earlier establishing how effective official warnings have been or could have been is a very difficult task. It appears that the court relied on evidence that people were available to move property on receipt of a flood warning, and on opinion that warnings had been satisfactory in the past

Implications for Australia

Although the various common law liability arguments are similar in Australia, Britain and other jurisdictions with a heritage of British common law, application of the *Robinson* decision to Australia is not automatic. The Cardiff Crown Court is a lower court and therefore forms are relatively weak precedent for Australian courts : it is persuasive rather than binding.

“ Although the various common law liability arguments are similar in Australia,.... application of the Robinson decision to Australia is not automatic. ”

The two types of duty mentioned by Davies J are considered separately. "Duty on the day" is unlikely to concern emergency personnel, or those involved in related activities, in those states and territories where statutory immunity from liability is provided by the relevant legislation. For example, flood warning dissemination in NSW is the responsibility of the State Emergency Services, which operates under the *State Emergency Services and Civil Defence Act, 1972*. Section 21 of the Act provides broad immunity to a broad class of people "acting in the execution or intended execution of this Act...." Flooding is specifically listed as something the Act is concerned with. Thus it is most probable that other groups concerned with flood warning in NSW, such as the Bureau of Meteorology, would also be protected from liability (Handmer and Partlett, 1988). It is important to note that gaps may still exist in the protection. Furthermore, these comments apply to NSW only. Although some other states and territories have similar legislative provisions, readers should check the relevant statutes.

The liability situation may be similar with the "prior duty" issue. Liability resulted from the failure to develop adequate emergency plans for flood warning following policy advice from central government that plans were desirable. However, if the plans were prepared under the authority of legislation containing immunity provisions

such as the *NSW State Emergency Services and Civil Defence Act*, then the authorities are unlikely to be liable.

Despite the broad immunities many authorities appear to enjoy, liability may still exist under certain circumstances. Those responsible for flood warnings can reduce the potential legal problems by ensuring that their warning systems are unlikely to fail. Success is measured in terms of the timely delivery of flood warnings and related assistance to those at risk.

Note

Joint research on the legal liability aspects of dam failure and flood hazard management is part of a continuing program of collaboration between the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, Australian National University, and the Flood Hazard Research Centre, Middlesex Polytechnic.

This paper does not offer legal advice or any definitive statements on liability. The authors and their employers assume no liability whatsoever for the consequence of any error of fact or opinion.

References

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Handmer, J.W. and Partlett, D.F. 1988 *Flood warnings and legal liability : the Georges River floods*, August 1986. Canberra : CRES, ANU. (Working Paper 1988/9).

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Kusler, J. 1986 personal communications.

Millington, D. 1987 Weather, forecasting and the "limitless seas". *Law Quarterly Review*. Vol. 104 (April) : 234-245.

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Penning-Rowse, E.C. and Handmer, J.W. 1986. *Evaluating flood warning effectiveness: the conceptual, methodological and practical research problems*. Canberra : Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, Australian National University (Working Paper 1986/6).

Winfeld, P.H. 1984 *Winfeld and Jolowicz on Tort*. 12 ed, London : Sweet and Maxwell.

Cases

Honour Brown et al vs US 599 F. Supp. 877 (D.C. Mass 1984); rev'd 790 F. 2d 199 (1986)

Indian Towing Co v US (1955) 350 US 61, 76 S. Ct. 122, 100 L. Ed. 48.

Robinson and Ors v Cardiff City Council and Ors (1987) Cardiff Crown Court, 16 October.

Rowling v Takaro Properties Ltd (1988) 2 W.L.R. 418.

Sutherland Shire Council v Heyman (1985) 157 C.L.R. 424.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DEBRIEFING

Recently, a review was undertaken into the psychological debriefings conducted by the Melbourne Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team. Dr Robyn Robinson, Clinical Director of the Melbourne CISD Team, reports that little evidence has been presented to demonstrate the value of debriefings for emergency service professionals, involved in crisis, trauma, emergency and disaster.

Psychological debriefing is a psychological and educational group process designed to do two things :

- a. to lessen the impact of critical incidents on emergency service staff; and
- b. to accelerate normal recovery in normal people who are experiencing normal stress after experiencing a highly abnormal event.

Dr Robinson's review (by way of evaluation forms filled-out by staff), unearthed some interesting findings, such as :

* One in two staff reported symptoms of stress following the incident under consideration. About the same number of staff reported a lessening of stress symptoms due, at least in part, to the debriefing session. Thus the psychological debriefing session lessened or totally eliminated the stress symptoms in nearly all people who were unfortunate enough to experience some kind of stress response.

* The average rated value of the debriefing session was above average (3.5 on a 5 point scale, where 1 = no value and 5 = high value).

* Sixty-six of the eighty-one respondents had the opportunity to describe how and why the debriefing had been helpful. In keeping with the aims of psychological debriefing, the results show that the group process facilitates self understanding; understanding of others, and learning from them development of coping skills, and promotion of group and interagency cohesion.

* There was general approval of debriefings.

* There was a preference for voluntary rather than compulsory attendance at debriefings.

* There was endorsement of multi-agency attendance.

Dr Robinson concluded by saying that the work of the debriefing team, including its evaluation component, will continue and there will be regular reporting back to emergency services, on CISD activities. She said that although cost-benefit analyses are difficult to establish in work of this kind, the Melbourne CISD team have established for the first time, preliminary evidence that psychological debriefings do help staff deal with incidents that impact upon them.

EDUCATION (continued)

ACDC FLOOD PREPAREDNESS ARRANGEMENTS SEMINAR OUTCOMES

This Seminar was held at the College from 21 to 25 November 1988. The aim of the Seminar was "To examine problems associated with the processes of developing and implementing flood preparedness arrangements". The seminar was attended by forty-eight representatives of relevant Commonwealth and State/Territory meteorological/hydrological, water supply and flood management agencies. Specialist input was provided by related research bodies.

Specific conclusions reached by the Seminar included:

* There was a demonstrated need for further development in the processes of disseminating, advisory and warning material at the time of a flood event.

* There was concern over deficiencies in developing integrated data collection and forecasting systems for flood preparedness purposes, particularly in a number of major metropolitan areas where large populations are at risk.

* There was a need to seek maximum involvement of local government and communities themselves in flood preparedness planning and preparation, especially where warning times are short, as in many urban communities.

* The Seminar strongly recommended further development of visual approaches to hazard identification in flood preparedness, such as colour-coded maps and marked poles in streets, etc.

* The Seminar noted that a publication, Flood Plain Development Manual, had been prepared by New South Wales Government agencies and was strongly of the view, that similar guidelines should be able to be prepared for Flood Preparedness Arrangements.

* There needed to be significant improvements in the production and dissemination of adequate flood hazard maps, specifically for the use of those with a planning responsibility in floodplain and incident management.

* The question of appropriate terminology should be given further consideration.





INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MASS EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS (IJMEAD)

The IJMEAD is the official journal of the Research Committee on Disasters, International Sociological Association. It is published triennially during March, August and November.

The **IJMEAD** is concerned with the social and behavioural aspects of relatively sudden collective stress situations, typically referred to as disasters or mass emergencies. The journal addresses issues of theory, research, planning and policy. In addition to scholarly articles, the **IJMEAD** includes book and film reviews, editorial commentary, and reader reaction and feedback from the field

Membership in the International Research Committee on Disasters, provides an automatic subscription to the **IJMEAD**, and **Unscheduled Events**, a newsletter about disaster research and researchers.

Dr. Neil Britton of the Department of Behavioural Sciences at Cumberland College of Health Sciences, has recently accepted a five-year appointment as Co-Editor of the *IJMEAD*. For further information about the *IJMEAD*, contact Neil at :

Department of Behavioural Sciences,
Cumberland College of Health Sciences
Lidcombe,
Sydney, NSW 2141.
Phone (02) 646 6593.



ACDC PUBLICATIONS

Two new publications have recently been produced by the Australian Counter Disaster College. They are :

1. A report and papers of the **Toxic Chemicals Incidents Symposium** held at ACDC in October 1987. Over sixty delegates gathered to examine the hazards posed to the community by the manufacture, transport, storage and use of dangerous goods. The Symposium was jointly sponsored by the Departments of Defence

(Natural Disasters Organisation) and Community Services and Health; Delegates represented Commonwealth, State, Territory and industry bodies, which have direct responsibility in this field. Also attending were those from a wide cross-section of medical, ambulance, nursing, health and trade Union authorities. The Symposium made several recommendations relating to areas like decontamination, warning systems, public education programs, data bases, first aid, definitive care and legislation.

2. A report and papers of a Workshop on the Economics of Disaster, held at ACDC in June 1988.

A small group, consisting of environmental economists and hazard specialists, gathered at the College, with a view to suggesting an economic approach to allocating resources to the management of disasters. A number of brief perspective talks were given in areas like storm surge, wind events and bushfire. This provided background information on the range of hazards present in Australia. The economists attempted to form a conceptual economic framework to be applied to these "real world" events. By the end of the Workshop, a general consensus had been reached and some guidelines suggested. The hazard specialists cited data sources held at their places of work, that are available for collation into national data bases, and identified gaps that could easily be remedied. For example, with cyclones, estimates could be made of the extra cost to housing that results from the addition of cyclone-proving.

These publications are available from :
The Australian Counter Disaster College,
Mount Macedon, Victoria 3441

Phone : (054) 261205
or
The Natural Disasters Organisation,
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Canberra ACT 2600
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Editor: Tony Davis Tel: (054) 261205