

PREPARING FOR TRANSBOUNDARY CRISES: RESEARCH LESSONS

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Outline



- Cyber threats and the rise of transboundary crises
- Challenges for crisis management
- Lessons for preparation

Defining Transboundary Crises

- We speak of a transboundary crisis when the functioning of multiple, life-sustaining systems or critical infrastructures is acutely threatened and the causes of failure remain unclear.

A Few Examples

- Kobe, Chernobyl, Canadian Ice Storms, Buenos Aires blackout, 9/11, SARS, Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, China Earthquake (2008) Houston Blackout (Ike), BP oil spill; Icelandic Ash; Fukushima
- Going on now: Financial crisis



Characteristics of TC

Transboundary crises

- Cross geographic and functional boundaries
- Causes are hard to pinpoint
- No clear beginning or end
- Periods of rapid escalation
- Unpredictable effects
- No ownership

Increased frequency: Driving Trends

- 1) Changing threat agents
- 2) Increased societal vulnerability

Increased societal vulnerability



- Growing complexities and interdependencies
- Changing societal and political climate
- Increasing dependencies on CIs

Changing Threat Agents

- (Bio) Technology jumps
- New forms of terrorism
- Climate change
- Global shifts



Paradoxes



- While public leaders can do less to prevent crises, they are increasingly held responsible.
- Trends increase vulnerability of modern societies, while increasing crisis management capacity.

Principles of Effective CM

- Focusing on administrative resilience
- Basic mechanisms in order
- Training to work with limited information
- Contingency planning (on principles)
- Have networks in place
- Understand the media
- Be prepared for the post-crisis phase

Challenges for Crisis Leadership

- Making sense of crisis developments
- Managing large response networks
- Meaning making: What's the story?



A. Sense making: why it is hard

- 1) Not much sense-making capacity at the transboundary level
- 2) Agencies plagued by bureau-political trouble

B. Managing large response networks

- Making critical decisions
- Working with limited information
- The coordination challenge: Who does what?
- Communicating to the public

C. Meaning making: Offering answers

- What's the story? Reducing public and political uncertainty
- It is hard to explain a TBC without undermining the system
- Failure to explain can be costly

Strategic leadership training

- The art of assessment*
- Work with the media (monitoring & messaging)
- Capitalizing on emerging networks
- Identifying capable partners
- Working with experts

The art of assessment

- What do we have left?
- What can it do?
- How can we put it together?
- What can we no longer do?
- What do we need?

Thank you!

