

Improving Public Reaction to Emergencies with Information and Improved Communication

Capt Bob Ross, USCG (Retired)

Unofficial and unapproved thoughts on Homeland Security decision-making and emergency response

Wicked Problems

Characteristics

1. You don't understand the problem until you have developed a solution.
2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule.
3. Solutions to wicked problems are not right-or-wrong, but good-or-bad, better-or-worse.
4. Every wicked problem is essentially unique and novel.
5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a "one-shot" operation."
6. Wicked problems have no given alternative solution
7. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem.

Rittel and Webber

8. Every solution to a wicked problem will generate new wicked problems.

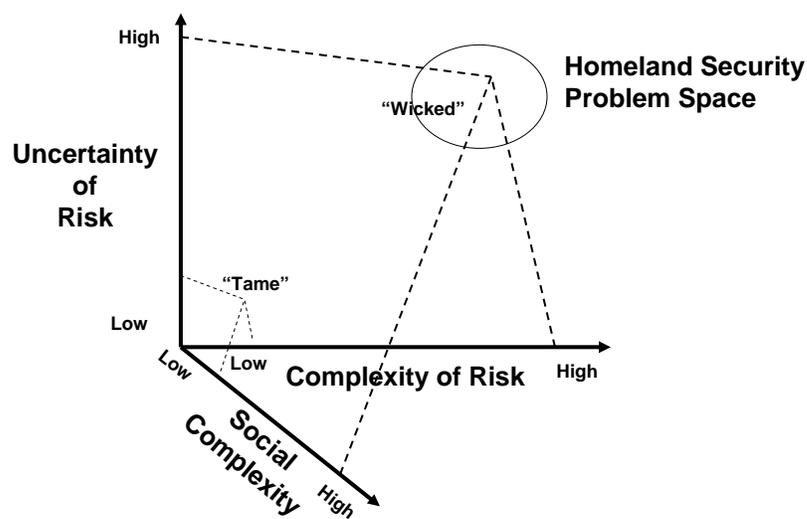
The Law of Unintended
Consequences

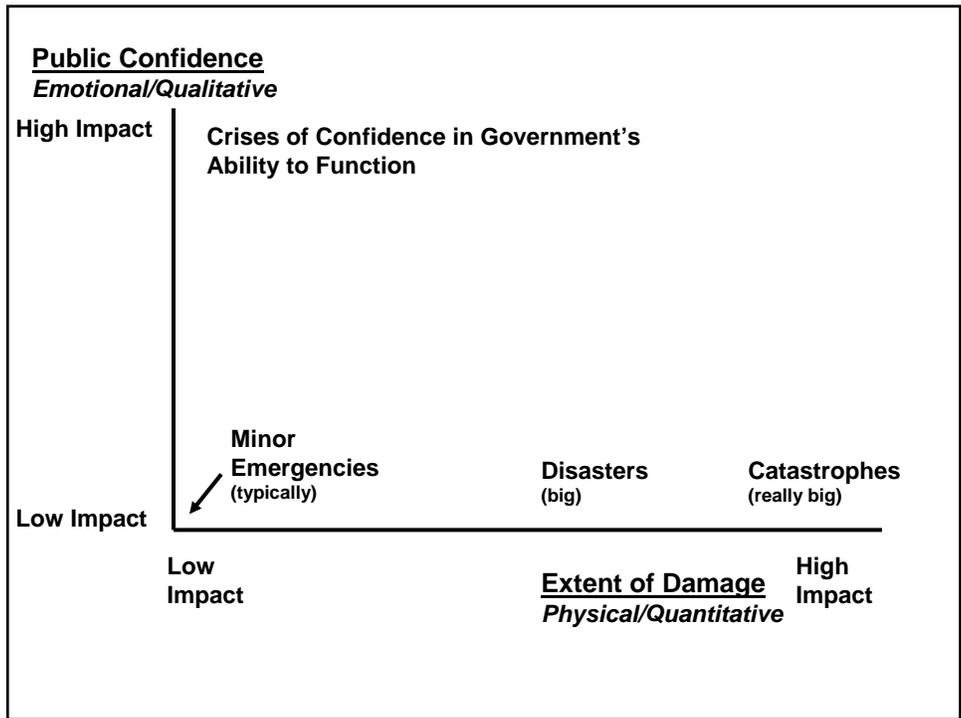
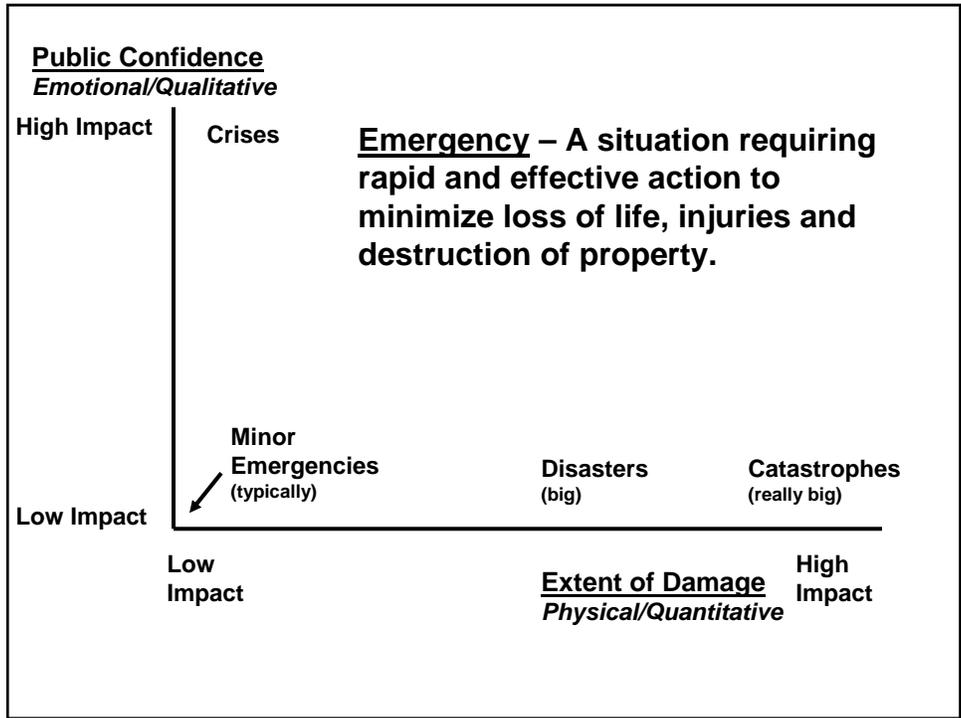
Social Complexity

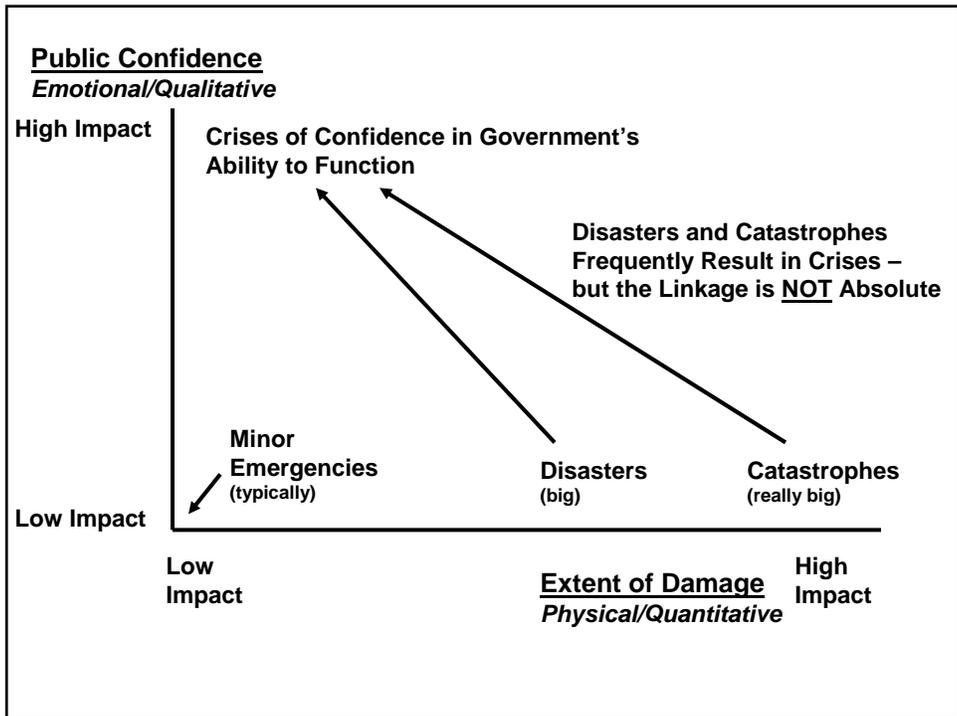
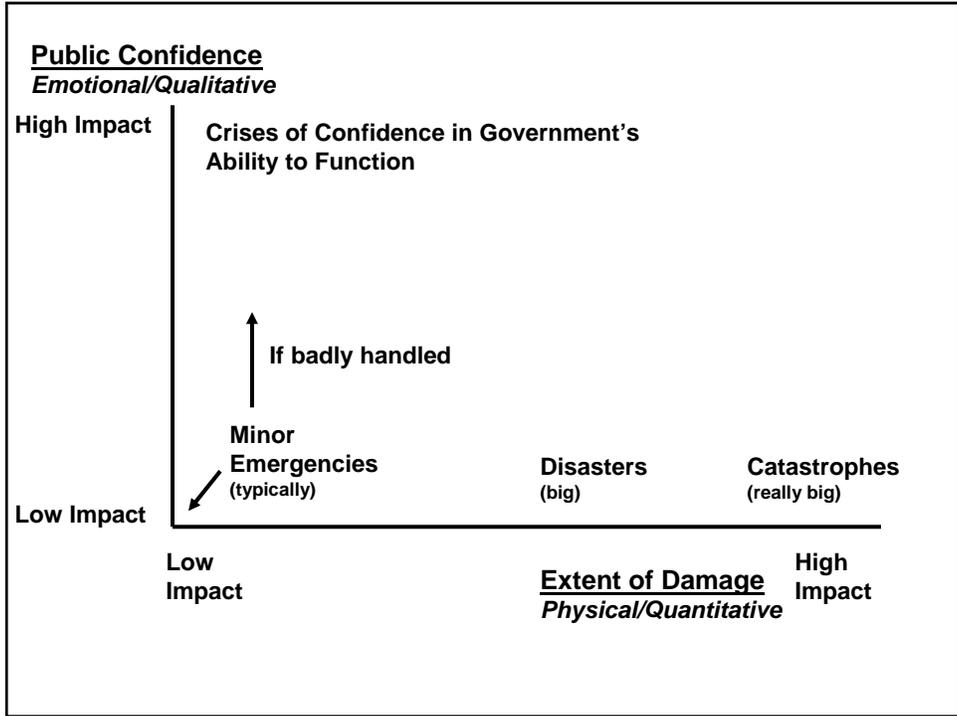
- Numerous legitimate stakeholders
- Multiple Public and Private Goods
 - Legitimate
 - In Competition
 - Irreconcilable
- Choices
 - Create Winners & Losers
 - Must be Made
- Decision-Making Processes
 - Political
 - Best Done in the Open
- Decisions – Necessary, but not necessarily 'Rational'

Dr. Jeff Conklin – CogNexus Institute

The Homeland Security Decision-Making Environment







Five Levels of Response

- Individual/Family
- Neighborhood/Community (in non-gov't. sense)
- For-Profit NGOs (e.g., utility companies)
- Not-For-Profit NGOs (e.g., Red Cross, church groups)
- Official/Government (local, state, federal)

Five Levels of Response

- All will happen
- All are critical
- Can work at cross-purposes
- Best when coordinated
 - Understanding of the informal by the formal
 - Shared Information (risks, goals, situational awareness)

Thoughts on Planning

“Plans are worthless, but planning is everything.”

“...when you are planning for an emergency you must start with this one thing: the very definition of 'emergency' is that it is unexpected, therefore it is not going to happen the way you are planning.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Thoughts on Planning (cont'd.)

Effective Planning produces

- a menu of pre-considered responses to potential scenarios
- a list of essential required capabilities
 - human, materiel, policy, procedural, etc.
- shared understanding and a sense of community across the planning group
- planners able to quickly deal with the inevitable unexpected developments

Planning Assumptions – Necessary but Dangerous

Joint Operations, Planning and Execution System (JOPES)

- “Assumptions that address gaps in knowledge are critical for the planning process to continue.”
- “Assumptions must be continually reviewed to ensure validity.”
- JOPES requires that key assumptions be listed and assessed for impact if they prove erroneous (Joint Pub 5-0, Joint Operation Planning)

Civil Emergency Response Plans

- Rarely identify or address assumptions
- Frequently based on unrecognized but invalid assumptions

“Redefining Readiness” – New York Academy of Medicine

- Significant differences between planner assumptions about public actions and what the public identifies as their probable actions (“Redefining Readiness: Terrorism Planning Through the Eyes of the Public”)

“...people are more likely to follow official instructions when they have a lot of trust in what officials tell them to do and are confident that their community is prepared to meet their needs if a terrorist attack occurs.”

“...only a tiny fraction of the American people know very much about the plans that are being developed in their communities.”

“Redefining Readiness: Terrorism Planning Through the Eyes of the Public”; New York Academy of Medicine
<http://www.redefiningreadiness.net/>

It's All About the Pre-Needs

Pre-Need Relationships

- Between Agencies (federal, state, and local)
- Between Government and the Public

Pre-Need Information

- Public attitudes and beliefs
- Likely Public response to various emergency situations

Pre-Need Planning

- Key Assumptions Identified and Understood
- Contingencies within Contingencies

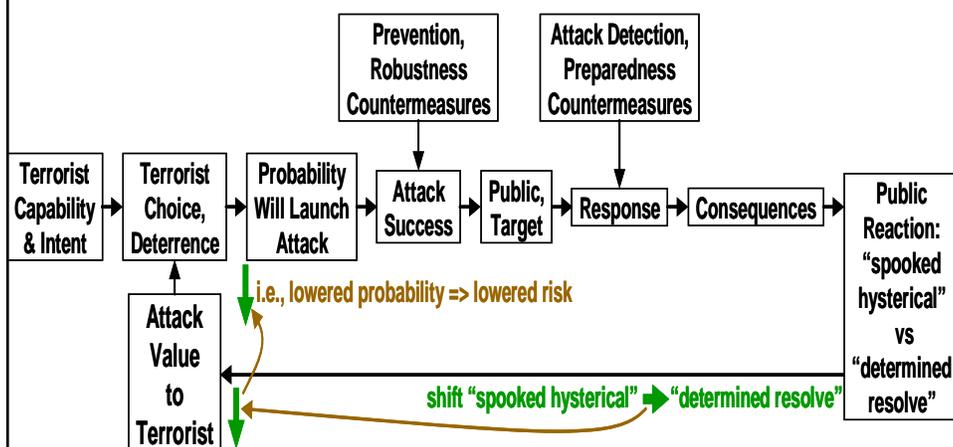
Pre-Need "Preparation of the Battlespace"

- Tailoring – Response Plans to the Public and the Public to Response Plans
- Improving Public understanding and knowledge – what to expect, what to do

Pre-Need Credibility

- Created by all of the above
- Available to exploit in aftermath of an event

Risk Reduction through Societal Resilience



Dr. John Lathrop, Lawrence Livermore NL