



Hazard Reduction & Recovery Center

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“Politics of Hazard Mitigation.”

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After 1992’s Hurricane Andrew, the 1993 Midwest floods, the 1994 Northridge earthquake, and repeatedly devastating tornadoes in the middle of the country, most people recognize that natural hazards are a big threat. There has been disagreement about what to do about these threats to reduce the casualties and property destruction. The creation, adoption, and application of reduction measures is an extremely political process that professionals in hazards need to understand to be more successful in reducing community hazard vulnerability.

Findings

The study describes the process by which hazard mitigation can be seen as a primary issue on the community agenda through either focusing events such as disasters, or focusing policy entrepreneurs like involved professionals. It also looks at the demands of policy creation, especially the importance of preparing a voter group for hazard reduction among affected stakeholders in the community. Even though federal participation in earthquake reduction started with the 1977 Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act (Public Law 95-124), few cooperative efforts to improve the states’ ability to manage seismic risk reduction had been successful. An important part of hazard mitigation policy is the influence of state government on local usage and implementation of hazard reduction policy. There was a positive effect from the state agency that applies the state mandates.

Implications

A major political challenge facing hazard-prone communities is hazard mitigation policy. The need to include different stakeholders, both groups and individuals, is a factor has to be looked at early in the policy process. The successful policy entrepreneur needs to assemble a union that can agree on what kind of problem it is, the best solutions for it, and the best ways to be a hazard-durable community. Policymakers should accept and use a policy that is based on a firm understanding of how it will reduce casualties and property losses but also make sure that the policy isn’t too expensive in a short period of time when trying to achieve long-term goals.