

Abstract

Disaster Logistics: The effectiveness of contingency plans during disasters and the role of human behavior

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All over the world, populations are confronted with natural and man-made disasters. Every emergency can be resolved by applying logical reasoning. Since each disaster is unique, contingency plans are limited when adapting to each case. During a disaster the crisis managers are faced with many unknown circumstances because they don't know what happened, who is affected, how big is the damage etc. A successful response to a disaster is characterized by the success of the objective to reduce the vulnerability of the people affected in the shortest amount of time with a minimum of available resources. In this context, agile, adaptable and capablesupply chains are needed. During disasters, human behavior in form of immediate action is essential. The behavior of crisis management personnel plays a crucial role in disaster response efforts and so does the self-organization of people in each crisis situation (Kovács & Spens, 2007). Ten Brinke et al. (2010) call for simple plans and realistic preparations with the possibility for improvisations, with an emphasis on public awareness. Those responding to disasters (e.g. rescue teams) must be able to align the various needs and dynamic roles of many players (van Wassenhove, 2006). In this context, the following research questions arise: 1) how we can optimize performance and be better prepared for disasters by using contingency planning? 2) how we can integrate human behavior into contingency planning? The authors use a multi-method approach by referencing different case studies (including expert interviews, document analysis, and observations) to compare contingency plans in order to gain insight into how to be better prepared in crisis situations.

Note: The result of this research project is part of an EU-funded project called PsyCris (PSYcho-social Support in CRISis Management) with the overall objective to improve psycho-social support in crisis management. The main goals are: status quo analysis of support in crises in European countries, improvement of support strategies, contingency planning, development of interventions, providing efficient self-help strategies to communities affected by crises as well as investigation of long-term impact of crises.

References

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