Overview

- Background
- Disaster Response in US
- Federal Role and Formation of FEMA
- Severity of a Natural Disaster
- When the System Fails
- Katrina: What Works, What Doesn’t
- Recommendations
- Discussion
Background

- Author: James F. Miskel
- Purpose: Examine Disaster Relief as a System
- Objective: Discuss an Approach to Reform the System

Disaster Response in US

- Structure of Disaster Response
  - Private Sector, State/Local Gov't, Federal Gov'n
- When the Federal Government plays a large role
  - “Major” disasters – direct/operational role
- National Response Plan
- Largest Federal Contributors
  - Military, FEMA
Federal Role and Formation of FEMA

- Role of Hurricane Agnes and the Three Mile Island
  - Hurricane Agnes (1972): “The most ravaging storm in US history”
  - Three Mile Island (1979): Nuclear power disaster
- FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency
  - 1979 under the Carter Administration
  - Centralized Federal agency

Severity of a Natural Disaster

- The system works reasonably well with a “degree of difficulty” within a predicted set of limits
  - Economic Costs
  - Social Costs
  - Degree of Difficulty
- Question:
  - How should we categorize the severity of a natural disaster?
When the System Fails

- Question:
  - What defines a successful disaster relief operation?

- Examples of Failures
  - Hugo: 1989
    - Poor communication between state and federal government
  - Andrew: 1992
    - Absence of utilities
  - Katrina: 2005
    - Overwhelmed system and high expectations

Katrina: What Works, What Doesn’t

- Evacuation strategies: some but not complete
- Lack of Data for complete recovery plan
- The concept of “incident of national significance”
- Involvement of military in distribution of relief items
- Can FEMA handle all phases of the relief process?
- Federal operations still rely on need estimation reports from the affected states
Recommendations

- Good things about the system
  - Immediately provides shelter, food, and medical assistance
- What do you think?

Discussion

- Questions?