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# Regionalizing Emergency Management: Counties as State and Local Government

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*Why should emergency management agencies be based in county offices? William L. Waugh, Jr., discovers a number of reasons including that they generally (1) are geographically close to environmental problems, (2) have larger resource bases than municipalities, (3) have ambiguous administrative structures that encourage inter- and intragovernmental cooperation, (4) are local agents of state administration, (5) have close administrative ties to state agencies, (6) provide forums for local-local cooperation, and (7) serve as general-purpose local governments representing local interests and having strong local identification.*

Hurricanes Hugo, Andrew, and Iniki and the Loma Prieta earthquake are still having profound impacts on the national emergency management system. The failures to prepare and respond adequately to these emergencies may well lead to fundamental reform of the system. The U.S. Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs has been holding hearings on the reauthorization of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which has borne much of the criticism for the recent failures. In 1992, Congress commissioned a National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) study of the national emergency management system and a General Accounting Office (GAO) study of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Both studies focused on improving federal executive leadership, transferring resources from FEMA's national security and civil defense programs to its natural disaster programs, and building state and local capacities to manage their own emergency management systems better. States and communities, too, are reexamining their emergency management organizations and capabilities.

This analysis examines the emergency management function in terms of its fit within the emerging roles of county government in the United States. The thesis is that county governments may in fact be the most logical and hospitable hosts for emergency management agencies because of their unique roles in state and local governance. Indeed, county governments are the most appropriate and effective vehicles for regionalizing policy making and program administration in a variety of functional areas, as well as emergency management.

In fact, the NAPA report recognized the crucial roles of county governments in implementing and maintaining emergency management programs and pointed out the uneven state and local government commitment to emergency management and limited capacity to design and administer programs (1993; pp. 82-88). GAO (1993) focused on the problem of bringing federal resources to bear when state and local government and volunteer agency capacities are overwhelmed. GAO recommended improvements in the damage assessment process and in state and local capacities (pp. 6-12), as well as in the structure and function of FEMA. Both NAPA and GAO recognized the need for sustained federal action to build state and local capacities to handle such events.

In response to the NAPA and GAO studies and recent congressional hearings, the sponsors of S.995, the "Federal Disaster Preparedness and Response Act of 1993," sought to reorganize FEMA and to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5131) to (1) authorize federal agencies to be more proactive in preparing for anticipated disasters; (2) clarify federal, state, and local government and private organization roles in disaster preparedness and response; (3) create an accessible inventory of disaster response resources; (4) manage private agency and volunteer participation; (5) assist state and local officials in assessing damage and requesting federal aid; and (6) improve state and local government capacities (including financial incentives for state compliance).

The Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs scheduled hearings on S.995 for the fall of 1993 (Glenn, 1993). The principal goal was to designate a lead agency with the capacity to ensure communication between the President and governors and effective interaction among emergency management agencies at all levels. The major question was whether a reformed Federal Emergency Management Agency can fulfill those responsibilities. The logical next question was whether similar reforms could encourage better communication and interaction among state and local emergency management agencies, including governors' offices. That is the question addressed here. Brief overviews of emergency management and county government will provide the context for the arguments for central roles for counties in state and local emergency management. It is assumed that other regional structures for emergency management may be appropriate when a state has no county governments. States with many small counties may find consolidated, multi-county agencies more appropriate and large metropolitan areas may find other collaborative and cooperative arrangements more appropriate. Nonetheless, for most states, county-level agencies offer unique benefits for emergency management.

## The Emergency Management Function

The activities and objectives of federal, state, and local emergency management agencies in the United States today are based on a "comprehensive emergency management model." That model divides the emergency management function into four phases (Petak, 1985; McLoughlin, 1985).

1. Mitigation—assessing the risk posed by a hazard or potential disaster and attempting to reduce the risk;
2. Preparedness—developing a response plan based upon the risk assessment, training response personnel, arranging for necessary resources, making arrangements with other jurisdictions for sharing of resources, clarifying jurisdictional responsibilities, and so on;
3. Response—implementing the plans, reducing the potential for secondary damage, and preparing for the recovery phase; and
4. Recovery—reestablishing life support systems, such as repairing electrical power networks and providing temporary housing, food, and clothing. Recovery is assumed to stop short of reconstruction.

The four-phase model was the product of a National Governors' Association study in the late 1970s (Petak, 1985) and provides much of the current conceptual language in the field. That is, emergency managers and researchers generally accept this model as the beginning point for policy and program design and administration.

## Emergency Management at the National Level

National emergency management efforts have dated at least from the Flood Control Act of 1936 and the Disaster Relief Act of 1950 and from the post-World War II civil defense programs. The creation of FEMA by President Carter brought a variety of program elements together under one agency umbrella. Offices were transferred from the U.S. Departments of Defense, and Housing and Urban Development, and the General Services Administration. Additional responsibilities were transferred from the Executive Office of the President for dam safety, earthquake hazard reduction, terrorism, emergency broadcast and warning systems; from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the flood insurance program; and from the U.S. Department of Commerce for the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration, the National Fire Academy, and the National Weather Service's Community Preparedness Program (McLoughlin, 1985). In some measure, the new agency came to be dominated

## For most states, county-level agencies offer unique benefits for emergency management.

by the civil defense and preparedness programs and made less effective by jurisdictional and resource conflicts among programs. The major reorientation of FEMA's mission, deemphasizing civil defense and national security programs, recommended by the NAPA and GAO studies and S.995 are in response to these conflicts within FEMA, as well as to the end of the Cold War.

Similarly, the recommended reduction in the number of political appointees (NAPA, 1993; pp. 48-50; U.S. Congress, 1993; pp. 31-32) are in response to FEMA's internal problems. During the early 1980s, in particular, FEMA suffered from poor leadership that resulted in very high turnover in personnel, legal charges against some political appointees and contractors, and a fluctuating set of programmatic emphases. State and local officials often found themselves at odds with FEMA over resources and responsibilities and confused by the rapidly changing priorities (Clary, 1985; Mushkatel and Weschler, 1985; Perry, 1985; May and Williams, 1986; Waugh, 1990a). It is sufficient here to note the confusion and conflict that characterized FEMA's operations in the 1980s, as well as the controversies concerning FEMA's authority and its organizational culture shaped by national security priorities.

Problems of intergovernmental cooperation were clearly manifested in the response to Hurricane Hugo in 1989. Although FEMA correctly did not presume to have jurisdiction over the disaster response and waited for the South Carolina governor's formal request for assistance, the agency did not act as proactively to anticipate that request as it might have. Rather than prompting state officials to ask for appropriate assistance, FEMA officials watched them struggle with inadequate communications and logistics systems. When assistance was requested, FEMA's response was too little and too late and, consequently, was much criticized by Congress and the media. FEMA responded quicker in the U.S. Virgin Islands because of clearer jurisdiction when local officials were unable to respond themselves, although there have been charges that the agency expended money for response and recovery without appropriate authority. FEMA's response to the Loma Prieta earthquake later that fall was even quicker.

## Emergency Management at the Subnational Level

A 1988 report by E. L. Quarantelli describes great variance in the capabilities, structure, and orientations of local emergency management offices. He found a system in which some agencies are autonomous, some are tied to the office of the elected executive or appointed chief administrator, some are small units in other "unimportant agencies," and so on. Some of the agencies are oriented principally toward civil defense, sometimes including civil disorders, and others are oriented toward natural disasters. Local planning and response capabilities are mixed but generally very poor. The study found some improvement in disaster preparedness since the 1960s, but still very mixed capabilities. Agencies typically are small and have little direct connection with functions like land-use regulation, building codes, and other activities central to the broad function of emergency management. But, the later studies do show greater salience of emergency management as a local issue and more credibility for local agencies, despite a widening gap between the most and least capable agencies.

Needless to say, resources for effective mitigation, preparedness, and response programs are scarce commodities in states and commu-

nities. It is axiomatic that it is far easier to get public money in the aftermath of a disaster than it is to get it beforehand (May, 1985). When a disaster occurs, local officials have to assess the damage reasonably accurately and submit requests for assistance to state emergency services offices and on to the governor. FEMA's regional offices also dispatch staff to assess damage and estimate assistance needs. When it is apparent that local and state resources are insufficient, it is the responsibility of the governor to request federal assistance and to document its need. Even then, it is uncertain whether a presidential disaster declaration will be issued. The level of assistance is dependent upon the negotiated Federal-State agreement.

What is clear from the problems encountered (and engendered) by FEMA is that emergency management is at best a difficult function that frequently crosses jurisdictional boundaries, demands more resources than a local government (and occasionally a state government) typically possesses, and requires some clarification of federal, state, and local responsibilities and authority. An important aspect of that difficulty is that local officials are almost always the first responders to hazards and disasters and local governments have legal jurisdiction until they ask for outside assistance, while needed resources are all too frequently concentrated at the state and federal levels.

State and local government emergency management efforts are difficult, at best, because of the: (1) very diversity of hazards and disasters; (2) low salience of emergency management as an issue; (3) historic resistance to regulation and planning; (4) lack of strong political and administrative constituencies (advocates); (5) uncertain risk from hazards; (6) technical complexity of some regulatory, planning, and response efforts; (7) jurisdictional confusion; (8) economic and political milieu inhospitable to expanding government activities; and (9) questionable capacities of state and local government officials to design, implement, finance, maintain, and operate effective emergency management systems (Waugh, 1990b; Petak, 1985; Cigler, 1988; May and Williams, 1986).

To some extent, local capacities can be augmented. Financial resources and technical capacity can be provided by state and federal agencies, but local officials typically are required to manage disasters until help arrives. What is done during those first hours or days may well determine the success or failure of the response and the costs of recovery.

Effective preparedness and mitigation programs require the willingness and capacity to plan and to regulate land use, building codes, and public behaviors. The regulatory efforts require considerable political wherewithal when strong local interests may oppose limits on such things as the development of coastal areas, wilderness areas, or floodplains. Research strongly indicates that county and municipal officials, while generally charged with land-use regulation and zoning and often with designing and enforcing building codes, are frequently unable to resist pressures to ignore, change, or remove such regulations. Studies by Beverly A. Cigler and Raymond J. Burby (1990) of the flood insurance program are illustrative in that they found that federal regulation, even coercion, is necessary to ensure local compliance with restrictions on floodplain development. A study by Howard Kunreuther and Anne E. Kleffner (1991) of earthquake insurance similarly found that individuals have to be forced to buy insurance and offered strong incentives to reduce their exposure to risk, or compliance with even minimal risk reduction measures is almost nonexistent. Although Elliot Mittler's (1993) study of South Carolina's attempt to regulate coastal development after Hurricane Hugo found state officials unable to adopt adequate policies, regulation is generally more difficult at the local level and state action can be helpful. Clearly, the requirement of national standards for disaster preparedness in

S.995 (U.S. Congress, 1993, pp. 26-28) and the provision of fiscal rewards for state and local government compliance, as well as punishments for noncompliance, are further evidence of the perceived need for federal intervention.

Finally, emergency management is becoming more defined as an administrative field at all levels of government. The recent implementation of a certification program for professional emergency managers, under the auspices of the National Coordinating Committee on Emergency Management, the International City/County Management Association, the American Society for Public Administration, FEMA, and other professional and governmental organizations, indicates positive change.

## County Government

A recent assessment of the research on county government describes counties as the "local governments of the future" and a growing focal point for local policy making and program administration (Menzel *et al.*, 1992; Marando and Reeves, 1991). Clearly, the responsibilities of county officials have been increasing rapidly (Streib and Waugh, 1991a; Salant, 1991 and 1994). In some states, like California, the new responsibilities of county governments have included central roles in the administration of emergency management programs, while, in others, those roles have been assumed largely by state or municipal offices with only supporting roles expected of county officials.

The development of new county government roles has been, in large measure, a process of reconciling traditional responsibilities as agents of state administration, the hodgepodge of responsibilities assumed by counties because of a lack of state action, and the new responsibilities assumed as counties develop as full-service governments. In effect, counties may be finding their own niche defined by the powers and authority left after state officials have centralized some functions and those gained when municipal officials have lost or given over functions to the counties (Menzel *et al.*, 1992).

The tremendous diversity of county forms and roles notwithstanding, important features of county governance bear directly on the delivery of services. Although the reliance on county administration for state programs varies widely among the states, Americans still tend to assume that county officials are simply agents of state administration (Martin, 1993; Salant, 1993). In some measure, the role of the county as a local government depends upon whether one is talking about a rural area or an urban area. Counties typically provide a wider range of services for residents in unincorporated rural areas. The important factor here, however, may be the very usefulness of that tangled web of authority and accountability.

Tanis J. Salant (1989 and 1991) has categorized the functions of county governments as being: (1) administrative arms of the state, (2) traditional governments, (3) local governments; and (4) regional governments. The administrative arm role is evident as counties deliver what are essentially state services, often without discretion in how they are administered. Salant puts indigent services that are driven primarily by state mandated eligibility requirements with funding based on the number of clients into this category. The traditional government role includes mandated services that provide some discretionary authority to county officials, such as tax assessment and law enforcement in unincorporated areas. The local government role is performed in those functional areas that may be considered municipal such as land-use planning and zoning and other discretionary functions that are in response to constituent needs. The fourth role, regional government, according to Salant, may be increasing the most. It includes many envi-

ronmental functions related to emergency management, such as toxic waste and landfill management.

State-local relationships also differ considerably from state to state. State constitutions and statutes often are very specific in their definitions of county structures, officials, and roles (Streib and Waugh, 1991b and 1991c; DeSantis and Renner, 1993). Nonetheless, as pointed out by Joseph Zimmerman (1983), states may provide counties with the greatest flexibility in terms of their structures. Administratively and, perhaps to a lesser degree, politically, counties can be very adaptive to new demands.

When *Baker v. Carr* effectively ended the practice of using counties as state electoral districts, county governments assumed more ambiguous political roles. Although the relationship among county officials and elected state officials has often been characterized by distrust (Waugh, 1988; Waugh and Hy, 1988; Waugh and Streib, 1993), county officials have been active and influential in state policies (Salant, 1992). However, county officials have to engage in coalition building in order to promote their agendas in the state legislature.

The relationships with governors tend to be somewhat different. Governors typically appoint state agency officials who interact with county officials and, in some programmatic areas, state officials who directly supervise county employees (Salant, 1994). Working relationships between state and county executive and administrative offices are vestiges of the more traditional relationships that can be critical for functions like emergency management. Such relationships are seldom found between state and municipal executive offices.

The collaborative and cooperative environment in which many county officials work is also an important element of county governance. Just as city officials may negotiate and coordinate with officials in bordering jurisdictions when the size or intensity of an issue has a constituency broader than one community, county officials necessarily interact with the municipal officials within county boundaries. As Roger Parks points out (1990), the county level is often the lowest level for strong cooperative arrangements and county officials are often the "conveners or sponsors for the development of intracounty multijurisdictional arrangements" (p. 2). County associations of local officials, including police and fire chiefs, highway engineers, and school superintendents, are mechanisms to encourage interaction and strengthen working relationships. One of Park's examples is the relationship between the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Allegheny County, whose 1.4 million residents are served by 250 volunteer fire departments. Contracting, joint services, mutual aid agreements, and other more or less formal means of cooperation increase available resources and expertise. Moreover, the redundancy created by multiple agencies in particular functional areas also acts to increase capacity.

In terms of their electoral systems, counties have historically had strong constituent identification as governmental units. They are close enough to citizens to have considerable familiarity and allegiance, unlike state agencies. They are also much less likely to have undergone reform to lessen political competition. According to a recent International City-County Management Association (ICMA) study, counties are more likely to have district elections (45.5 percent) than cities (12.8 percent). Counties, too, are much more likely to have partisan elections (82.4 percent) than cities (27.4 percent). Studies indicate that district elections provide greater representation of female and minority residents (DeSantis and Renner, 1993), thus county officials may be more representative of their constituents than are municipal officials. To the extent that partisan elections and district electoral systems encourage the expression of political interests and the resolution of conflict, county structures may also be better able to mediate among conflicting interests.

## Why Counties Are Logical Vehicles for Emergency Management

The importance of the location and design of emergency management agencies is manifest. Effective disaster preparation (and, ultimately, effective response and recovery operations), according to Michael Smithson (1990; pp. 228-229), necessitates anticipation of disaster *or* development of sufficient resilience to recover from it. The challenge of emergency management is to balance the two strategies, reasonable anticipation and preparation and reasonable capacity to recover. The resources and expertise needed to develop, implement, operate, and maintain an effective emergency management system demand intergovernmental cooperation. Whether local officials and their offices have the political and administrative capacities to design and manage effective programs is questionable, but they certainly should have the basic tools to do so.

The role of county governments as agents of state administration clearly lends itself to functions like emergency management that require local action and regional and state coordination and support. To the extent that state governments have more resources than do local governments, the state connection can enhance the status of a county emergency management program, support its maintenance, and assure channels of communication during preparation and the disaster itself. When Hurricane Hugo made landfall in South Carolina in 1989, emergency communication hinged upon an ill-prepared network of National Guard offices. When that system failed, the governor's office had to depend on the state police radio network. Even then, the connection with local authorities was poor to nonexistent in many communities. For the National Guard and the state police, emergency management was a tertiary function and not well developed for a catastrophic disaster. A more bottom-up, county-city based system would have been much more effective.

Similarly, the traditional role of county governments is conducive to emergency management in that it institutionalizes county-wide administrative functions, mandating services defined largely by the state, yet offering some local discretion. Here, as well as in the state agent role, emergency managers may find support. For example, the greater protection offered state agents from legal liability for exercises of administrative discretion, while still limited, is an extremely important argument for an enhanced county role in emergency management. Decisions concerning mass evacuations from hurricane-threatened coastlines, limits on development of floodplains and coastal zones, building codes and zoning, and any number of other actions to reduce potential and real hazards need to enjoy some protection or public officials will be hesitant to act appropriately. An early evacuation decision, for example, can save dozens to thousands of lives from a Force 5 hurricane, but an evacuation that proves unnecessary can cost millions of dollars. Lawsuits followed the evacuations in 1985 when Hurricane Elena sat for days off the Florida coast before making landfall in Mississippi. Approximately 1.25 million Florida residents were required to evacuate, sometimes more than once, and human casualties and property losses were caused by the evacuation itself, as well as the economic losses caused by the shutting down of businesses (Stokes, 1986). Public officials voiced considerable concern over the repercussions and clearly expressed reticence about future evacuation decisions.

Legal liability, too, can prevent communities from loaning emergency personnel to neighboring communities. Insurance for public employees does not normally cover injuries sustained outside of the employing jurisdiction or civil liability for real or perceived malpractice or mistreatment of victims outside of that jurisdiction. "Good samaritan laws" may extend some protection to emergency workers, but the safer umbrella is state law.

## The regional government role of counties also offers a mechanism to coordinate local emergency management efforts, as well as to target state resources where they are most needed.

The county role as a local government representing local interests and delivering local services, too, is important to the emergency management function. County governments generally have the regulatory powers necessary to support effective mitigation programs and, although resistance is usually great to local regulation of building codes and land use (Cigler and Burby, 1990; Kunreuther and Kleffner, 1991), the larger county electorate may be easier to persuade than a smaller city electorate would be. The responsiveness and representativeness of county government may be suspect, too, but the broader population base may act to defuse some issues and to provide better balance in the representation of interests. Certainly, land-use regulations and large-scale mitigation projects do need public money and public support, as well.

The regional government role of counties also offers a mechanism to coordinate local emergency management efforts, as well as to target state resources where they are most needed. Services such as toxic waste management are frequently provided by county governments already. The need to consider hazards in regional planning efforts is compelling (Michaels and Solecki, 1991). As Parks (1990) noted in the Pittsburgh/Allegheny County case, having a large number of local agencies able to respond to an unusually large disaster also increases emergency management capacities. Moreover, the fact that county associations of public officials offer forums for the coordination of efforts is also an asset.

In terms of resources, financial capacities are certainly lower at the state and local levels than they are at the federal level. The presidential disaster declaration process is predicated on the differences in fiscal resources and a declaration is supposed to indicate that state and local resources have been outstripped by a disaster. Counties offer a staging area for state and local personnel and equipment resources, as well as a center for planning and emergency operations management.

The locus of technical expertise is more difficult to pinpoint. In some cases, state agencies have more expertise in hazard management than federal agencies. In a few cases, local officials may have the most expertise. Notable cases in which local officials may have the most expertise are the hazards posed by collapsing buildings and responses to high-rise fires that are familiar occurrences to public safety officials in the largest U.S. cities. Nonetheless, local first responders do generally require assistance with response operations. Much more to the point, state and federal assistance is typically needed to support the development of local capacities to design, implement, manage, and maintain effective emergency management programs. There is never a certainty that preparations will be sufficient, thus more supporting programs are a necessity. Nonetheless, larger substate units of government, either large cities or counties, are likely to be better able to bring the requisite technical expertise to bear on problems than are smaller communities.

A last consideration that supports the choice of county governments as vehicles for emergency management is the problems that result from centralization of decision making. The administrative and political ambiguity resulting from county governments frequently being structured without designated chief executive officers or chief administrative officers may well be quite appropriate to the emergency management function. Although ambiguous authority and account-

ability are not generally desirable in administration, the absence of strong executive control, and even the lack of clear political authority, are common in county operations and should encourage cooperative leadership and administration.

Indeed, a growing literature suggests that centralized authority is not an effective response to crisis (r'Hart, *et al.*, 1993; Waugh, 1993) because it encourages structural inflexibility, decision making with too little or the wrong kinds of information, and jurisdictional conflicts. Quarantelli (1988, p. 14) has pointed out that a "state of emergency" has never been declared in an American disaster, but a centralized authority may be needed to order evacuations, seal off dangerous locales, and so forth. Indeed, the centralization of authority is more often an ill-chosen strategy that overlooks the "emergent" quality of much of the typical disaster response. Quarantelli goes on to suggest that "...the more effective organizations are those groups which encourage improvisation and multiple alternative ways for dealing with problems" (p. 19). He suggests that emergency management agencies focus on the coordination and integration of a multitude of other public and private planning and response agencies, such as hospitals and fire departments. Horizontal relationships are far more effective than vertical ones (see also Drabek, 1987; and Drabek, *et al.*, 1980).

The assessment of county offices identified the coordinative nature of many county functions as a particular virtue and particularly appropriate to the emergency management function. Sandra K. Schneider (1990) contrasts the Hurricane Hugo experience with the top-down or command approach used by FEMA in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico where local action was preempted, the confusion pattern in South Carolina and California where locals were left out of the preparedness process and unable to respond effectively, and the bottom-up approach in North Carolina that resulted in better overall planning, more state assistance for local planning, and a state coordinated rather than directed response and recovery. Although more sympathetic to FEMA and its roles in the Hugo and Loma Prieta disasters than most analysts, Schneider's analysis supports the involvement of county and municipal offices in planning and the need for more coordinative state offices.

## Conclusion

Certainly the arguments in S.995 and the NAPA study for strong working relationships between political executives and the heads of emergency management agencies and for fewer and better qualified political appointees are equally applicable to state and local governments. The trend toward greater professionalization of personnel at all levels is also to be encouraged. Structural reform of subnational emergency management systems should be the next step.

The reasons why county offices may be better suited to emergency management functions than municipal and state offices are several. First, county governments typically have close political and administrative ties to the state government and easier access to the state's resources and technical assistance. Second, counties are generally representative of a broader electorate than cities, thus are better able to mediate conflict and respond to regional needs. Third, counties usually have a strong resident identification and allegiance, unlike a special district, and thus provide a focal point for policy making and administrative decision making. Fourth, ambiguous administrative roles may well encourage a more cooperative set of relationships and dissuade the imposition of a command and control system.

Fifth, county governments are generally in closer proximity to disasters and hazards than state offices and enjoy greater economies of scale, broader perspectives, and larger geographic bases (and presum-

ably greater resources) than municipal governments. Sixth, some protection from legal liability is provided to emergency managers when acting as agents of the state, as well as for local emergency responders when engaged in cooperative efforts. And, seventh, county governments can facilitate local-local cooperation by providing a forum for interaction and training. The value of personal contact, knowing counterparts in other agencies and governments, to effective operations is frequently mentioned in the emergency management literature and local professional groups frequently have county-level organizations.

This analysis has focused on the emergency management function in terms of its fit within the emerging roles of county government in the United States. County governments may be the most effective vehicles for regional emergency management because they (1) are geographically close to environmental problems, (2) have larger resource bases than municipalities, (3) have ambiguous administrative structures that

encourage cooperation, (4) are local agents of state administration, (5) have close administrative ties to state government, (6) provide forums for local-local cooperation, and (7) already serve roles as general purpose local governments representing broad constituencies and having strong local identification. Most important, a county organization may avoid inappropriate command-and-control structures in favor of more collaborative and cooperative approaches to emergency management.



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