



### **Development of the US National Disaster Information Network The Western Disaster Center Perspective**

- The ability of the nation to mitigate, plan for, respond to and recover from natural, environmental and man-made disasters is today recognized as a significant national security issue.
  - For the past decade, direct Federal disaster costs have about \$1 Billion per week.
  - Federal costs related to severe weather disasters increased over 300% in the latter part of the 1990's.
  - Development continues to expand across the US in areas vulnerable to natural disasters -- floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes.
  - The threat posed by man-made disasters (terrorism) is significant and yet to be fully recognized. The increasing technical complexity of the nations infrastructure puts the country at significant risk.
  - The threat of new and reemerging infectious diseases pose a rising global health threat and will complicate US and global security over the next 20 years.
- As the risk and associated costs from disasters continues to grow, it is imperative that recent technological advances be harnessed to aid the State and local disaster manager in reducing loss of life and property.
- Revolutionary advances in the technologies of communications, remote sensing and computing now enables the sharing and distribution of disaster related data and information products as never before.
- In order to address this national security issue, a US National Disaster Information Network, with provisions for international link-ups, is under development. The Western Disaster Center is an active participant in this process.
- In a recent independent study of the US National Disaster Information Network concept, the National Research Council's Board on Natural Disasters concluded -- "if the system is used correctly, there can be no justification for continuing in the current mode of non standard, disparate resources when available modern technological developments would make their linkage into a system in a relatively straight-forward matter with obvious potential payoffs in saving lives and reducing losses."

- The US National Disaster Information Network will be built on a framework that involves public and private stakeholders in forming a long-term organizational structure. The process has already begun to solve Federal-level challenges through an Integrated Program Office under the auspices of an interagency Executive Committee directed by the National Security Council.
- As a not-for-profit research center, the Western Disaster Center is working to establish the Western Disaster Information Network as part of the operational US National Disaster Information Network. The Western Disaster Center is also working to establish the Institute for Crises Management as an applied R&D component of the proposed US Virtual Enabling Technology Center In Crises Management, part of the evolving Information Technology for the Twenty First Century initiative.
- The Western Disaster Center believes that for the US National Disaster Information Network to be effective it must support State and local disaster managers with access to "all-source" data and information products, including data derived from classified national security capabilities.
- The Western Disaster Center believes that the US National Disaster Information Network must address "all-hazards", natural, environmental and man-made.
- The Western Disaster Center has proposed a unique public/private-funding concept to support the development of the US National Disaster Information Network. Using the American Red Cross as the business model, the Western Disaster Center has proposed that the Stafford Act (the governing Federal legislation addressing Federal and State disaster issues) and the Federal Response Plan, be amended to define the US National Disaster Information Network as a not-for-profit public/private enterprise.
- Rather than relying on the Federal government to develop the US National Disaster Information Network, the Western Disaster Center further proposes that the nations private high-tech business sector, led by California and Silicon Valley entrepreneurs and venture capital investors, take the lead to establish this public/private partnership.

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