

## **Integrated Response as a process of enhancing Incident Command System (ICS) through Community Functions**

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### **Context**

Disruptive events like disasters are known to cause devastating societal impacts. Evidence of this over the decades have emphasised the need for more effective and unified emergency response arrangements beyond current status quo. Practitioners and academics have proposed measures, frameworks and approaches which are relevant, but unprecedented occurrence and frequencies of disruptive events have indicated that they are inadequate.

### **Aims**

This research critically examined theoretical explanations and practice systems for emergency response phase with the aim of identifying community functions that align with, and can be integrated with Incident Command System (ICS) to enhance response to large-scale or unprecedented disruptive events. Ultimately, this research aimed to develop an integrated response framework that can be adopted to improve response to any disruptive event.

### **Findings**

Case studies of two communities in Christchurch, New Zealand were analysed to identify potentially useful and ICS-relevant functions that may co-create with emergency response framework. Semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions with community groups, organisations, emergency practitioners and local council officers were carried out.

- The results that indicated that four types of community functions can be integrated with ICS for more effective response arrangements. The four functions are; Community Specific (CS), Impromptu, Collaborative and Structured functions. Collaborative and structured functions were observed to have similar characteristics, but distinct in type and level of relationships exhibited by partners when responding to disruptive events. An evaluation of CS and Impromptu functions indicated that both functions may integrate directly for response even ICS is dysfunctional or certain levels of chaos and communication gaps exist between emergency organisations.
- The research findings also indicated that integration is possible by adopting these community functions consequent on overcoming barriers and challenges to sustained community engagement from planning through response phase. The Integrated Response (IR) framework developed as a result of the research outcomes integrates the four community functions with the ICS command and control structure illustrating the ability of community functions to enhance communication, collaboration, coordination and capabilities for response to disruptive events.

*For access to the complete paper, please contact Research & Development at Humanitarian Academy for Development (HAD) at: [research@had-int.org](mailto:research@had-int.org) or Dr Dolapo Fakuade at [otf11@uclive.ac.nz](mailto:otf11@uclive.ac.nz)*