

CONVERGE COVID-19 Working Groups for Public Health and Social Sciences Research

Research Agenda-Setting Paper

This paper was written to help advance convergence-oriented research in the hazards and disaster field. It highlights areas where additional research could contribute new knowledge to the response to and recovery from the pandemic and other disasters yet to come. Questions about the research topics and ethical and methodological issues highlighted here should be directed to the authors who contributed to this paper.

Working Group Name:

Emergency Management and Policy Analysis in a Pandemic

Working Group Description:

The purpose of this Working Group is to investigate the emergency management community's capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover after the COVID-19 pandemic. The group's intent is to examine the ways policies affect capacity and the interrelated effects on community outcomes. This includes future partnerships with emergency management professionals, organizations, community members, and other stakeholders to build knowledge, increase the capacity of the emergency management community, and improve public policy in future disasters.

Priority Research Topics and Specific Research Questions:

| Priority Research Topics | Potential Research Questions |
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| 1. <i>Emergency Management Preparedness:</i> The extent to which federal, tribal, state, and local U.S. emergency management agencies had planned for a role in managing a pandemic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1:</u> To what extent did emergency management agencies plan for a pandemic prior to COVID-19? • <u>Research Question 2:</u> What was the planned role of emergency management agencies in the response to a pandemic? |
| 2. <i>The Role of Emergency Management in the Pandemic Response:</i> The extent to which U.S. emergency management agencies were involved in managing the pandemic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1:</u> What was the role of emergency management agencies during the response to the COVID pandemic and what was their capacity to fulfill that role? • <u>Research Question 2:</u> How did this actual role relate to the planned role? • <u>Research Question 3:</u> How did this role evolve over the course of the response? • <u>Research Question 4:</u> What factors led to the emergence of this role? • <u>Research Question 5:</u> What factors shaped this role throughout the response? |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 6</u>: How did the capacity of emergency management agencies evolve throughout the course of the response? • <u>Research Question 7</u>: What factors contributed to the evolving capacity of the emergency management agencies (e.g., other disasters, budget infusions or cuts, staff turnover)? What factors facilitated and hindered this role? |
| 3. <i>Landscape of Government in the Pandemic Response</i> : The relationship of emergency management to other governmental responses to the pandemic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: What were the governmental responses (state/county/city) to the pandemic? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: How did these responses differ (e.g. did they use task forces, emergency management plans, medical experts, etc.)? • <u>Research Question 3</u>: How were these responses communicated to the public? • <u>Research Question 4</u>: What was the relationship between emergency managers and the broader governmental responses? |
| 4. <i>Emergency Management Capacity and Its Impact on COVID-19 Outcomes</i> : The extent to which preparedness efforts and the actual capacity of emergency management agencies affected community-level COVID-19 outcomes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: What are the local outcomes related to COVID-19 (e.g., physical health, mental health, cultural, employment/economic, housing recovery)? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: How are those outcomes related to the role and capacity of emergency management agencies? • <u>Research Question 3</u>: How are those outcomes related to the broader governmental responses? • <u>Research Question 4</u>: How did differences in capacity affect outcomes among vulnerable and historically marginalized populations? |

Ethical / Methodological Considerations:

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began there have been a number of initiatives across the United States to compile rapidly changing information such as confirmed cases, death tolls, and policy directives into databases, many of which are publicly available. Along similar lines, a specific goal of this Working Group was to begin to develop a national database of emergency management agencies at the local, state, tribal, and federal levels. Such a database does not currently exist, and its development would create significant opportunities for research projects, coordination, and collaboration across the disaster research and emergency management community related to the pandemic and beyond. Further, these data are perishable and rapidly changing, and thus creating a permanent dataset is crucially important. As these databases are developed, and new, similar initiatives ensue, we want to underscore the importance of maintaining free, public access. At a time when research funding for social science initiatives may be limited, any opportunity to democratize data access should be supported. The creation of these databases can offer long term research benefits for future projects including coordination and collaboration across the disaster scholar community and beyond.

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