MISCELLANEOUS REPORT #39

THE ART OF STORYTELLING: THE STRUCTURING AND PROCESSING OF NEWS DURING DISASTERS *

Barbara Jill Friedman

1987

*A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology.
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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study is to examine the operations of local mass media organizations during the impact period of disasters. Eight organizational dimensions related to the structuring and processing of news are examined. These dimensions include 1) gatekeeping, 2) decision making, 3) the role of technology, 4) reporter autonomy, 5) the role of press conferences and press releases, 6) sources, 7) the role of television, radio and newspaper, 8) the sharing of information. Normal, non-disaster patterns related to these eight dimensions are compared with their patterns during the emergency period. Changes from the normal structure and process are noted.

An elaborate case study of the local media outlets in one community is constructed. Findings from this case are discussed and placed within the context of research literature. These findings are then compared with data from local media outlets in five other communities.

The findings from the case study generally were replicated in the other communities. The study suggests that community and organizational size have a substantial effect upon media operations during disasters.
CHAPTER 1

This is a study of local mass media organizations. It focuses upon the operations of these organizations under disaster conditions. In particular, this study is concerned with changes in the processing and structuring of news during disaster times as opposed to that during normal periods.

The prevalence and significant influence of mass communication in today's society is undeniable. Almost every home and almost every vehicle in America is connected to the mass communication system, be it by radio, television or newspaper. Mass communication as a major social institution has not gone unnoticed by researchers and scholars of many disciplines. Sociologists are no exception. The last few decades have brought about a tremendous increased interest and a great deal of research in this area.

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1 The author recognizes the difference between the terms mass media and mass communication. The former referring to technology and the latter to a social process. However, for the purposes of this study the terms will be used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.
To appreciate just how prevalent and widespread mass communications are, one need only realize that in the United States there are 9000 newspapers (1730 daily) with a total circulation of 61 million and 10,830 magazines distributed across the nation. There are 1000 television stations, 5000 cable companies and 9000 radio stations on the air. Radio can be found in 99.9% of all homes throughout the country (Bagdikian, 1983). These figures, alone, indicate the popularity and massive scale of the mass media. The pervasiveness of the mass media system has led one researcher to compare it to a total institution such as a prison. He states:

Common to both is an explicit effort to frame experience according to specific rules about time, place and manner. Through the use of formats for recognizing, organizing and presenting information and experience, specific organizations such as prisons and television networks communicate as well as constitute the social order. In both types of organizations, the actual experience of the patrons (inmates, audience) is intended to be essentially defined through the respective communication formats e.g. walls, bars, uniforms etc. on the one hand, and channel, time of day and style on the other hand. (Altheide, 1986:8)

Based solely on prevalence, then, it can be argued that the study of mass media organizations is a worthwhile and legitimate endeavor. However, this particular study is not of the mass media per se, but rather of the mass media as it operates during disasters. It is a comparative study
of the mass media's operations during disaster and non-disaster times. The notion of studying the operations of the mass media during disasters is a search for understanding how, if at all, the mass media operate differently during disaster as compared to non-disaster times. Examining the media under crises is critical, particularly when it is realized that approximately 15 percent of all news is disaster related stories (Gans, 1979). Disasters are big business for the mass media. An understanding of the relationship between disasters and the mass media can serve not only the research community, but also prove to be beneficial to any community struck by a disaster. It is with this relationship that this study is primarily concerned.

STATEMENT OF THE PROJECT

Specifically, the goal of this study is to examine the operations of local mass media organizations during the impact period of disasters. It focuses on the local media for the "local media bear the primary burden for disaster reporting because most disasters are local or regional phenomena..." (National Academy of Sciences, 1980:2).

As mentioned earlier, the primary focus here is on the structure and news processing of these organizations. Certain aspects or issues surrounding these focal points
will be examined. The discussion of these aspects is based on previous research as well as on empirical observation.

SPECIFIC ISSUES UNDER CONSIDERATION

Eight issues involving the structure and news processing of media organizations will be the focus of this work. The first four issues deal with intraorganizational dimensions while the latter four are interorganizational in nature. These issues are 1) gatekeeping, 2) decision making, 3) the role of technology, 4) reporter autonomy, 5) the role of press conferences and press releases, 6) sources, 7) the role of television, radio and newspaper, 8) the sharing of information. They will be examined during disaster and non-disaster periods. Of particular interest is how, if at all, any of these aspects of media operations change across the two time periods.

INTRAORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

1. Gatekeeping. This term was first introduced by Gieber (1950) to describe the activity of wire editors. He noted that they must choose only a few stories from a very large number of available items. Through this process of choosing certain stories, certain items inevitably are omitted. Thus, he became concerned with the process of choosing these stories and the factors involved.
Principally this concept refers to the those positions in an organization which can modify, alter or control communication in a significant way. Such positions include not only wire editors but reporters, editors, producers.

Waxman (1973b) examined the role of gatekeepers during normal and disaster times. He argued that normally more information comes into a news department than can ever be put out on the air or in print. Hence, this surplus leads to a selection process: only a few items are ever actually distributed by an organization. During disasters, however, this is not the case. Waxman argues that during a disaster there is actually a shortage of news and information flowing in the channels. In absolute terms, there are much greater numbers of news stories, however, there are also expanded newscasts devoted to the event. As a result there is a great deal of time or space to fill and so "everything" related to the disaster is put on the air or in print. In addition, the news stories generally bypass many of the gates they normally go through and are therefore not as thoroughly processed.

Since Waxman's study, the concept of gatekeeping has been examined, studied and criticized (See McQuail, 1984). However, it is still of great interest to students of mass communication and disasters. In this study, we
will examine the role of gatekeeper. The factors influencing and affecting the gatekeeping process will be noted. In addition, the effect of the emergency situation on the role and decision making of the gatekeepers will be examined.

2. Decision Making. During normal operations, the formal division of labor and authority structure generally dictate what position is responsible for making final decisions about what actually goes on the air or in print. Epstein (1973) describes at length the work of producers at network news organizations. He quotes one producer explaining:

> have only one job on the show... I do a rundown. I take a piece of paper and write down what's going to be on the show in what order and at what length... My whole day is directed towards that and it is possible to do nothing else all day. (p. 181)

Gans (1979) refers to these decision makers as "top producers" at the networks and "top editors" at print organizations, as they, along with a few assistants, make the "top" or final editing of all stories. He asserts that some journalists have stated that news organizations are not democratic at all, and that some do not hesitate to refer to them as militaristic. Producers and editors generally take only suggestions from reporters.
As this description indicates, decision making in news organizations tends to be rather centralized. This study will focus on this centralized decision making structure during disasters. It will examine whether or not this very well defined division of labor remains as firm during disasters, or if the decision making process becomes more of a group process.

3. The Role of Technology. Gans (1979) has argued that technological advances have very minimal effects on news content. He argues that the novelty of color photographs in magazines and newspapers has warn off, and thus the influence of vivid pictures has not changed the content of print news. He held the same argument about the electronic media.

Technological improvements come into being from time to time, but they do not seem to alter the format or story selection. The replacement of television film by tape has not visibly changed story content. Conversely, videotape cameras, which allow journalists to put breaking news on the air live and could enable television to compete with radio's speed, have not, thus far, been used extensively. (1979:167)

Of course there are those who have argued strongly that technology does influence the structure and processes of an organization. (Perrow, 1967; Hage and Aiken, 1969) Technological determinists would argue that the introduction of video cameras, satellites, etc., would
effect or change the content and news processing in television news organizations. McLuhan (1964) argued strongly that technology does influence content. Moreover, he argued that media technology has such a profound effect as to change all aspects of society not just news content.

We will reexamine the effects of technology. It is possible that the widespread acceptance and use of video cameras, satellites, and the like is reflected in the content of news. If not across the board, perhaps these changes can be found in certain media. Perhaps one might expect this difference to be most striking in the case of television, as this particular medium has undergone the greatest technological advancement. Television has the ability to cover stories live and immediately with relative ease. One might speculate as to how this ability might affect the types of stories covered, as well as the manner in which television covers them. Furthermore, if employed regularly, does this technological ability effect the nature of radio and its relationship to television? In other words, has radio lost its primary advantage over television, i.e. its ability to report news immediately?

The event of a disaster permits an examination of this issue under curious circumstances. Disasters bring about a need for continual updates and up to the minute
coverage. Moreover, they result in a predominance of unscheduled events as opposed to the scheduled events of normal times. Hence, one might argue that emergencies test television's technological capabilities to report live and instantaneously. This study will examine the affect of technological capabilities both during this "heightened" period as well as during normal times.

4. Reporter Autonomy. In general, reporters view themselves and are viewed by the organizations for which they work as professionals (Gerald, 1963). Although the required magnitude tends to vary, the qualities of professionalism most often include self employment, long training, code of ethics, competence testing and licensure (Cullen, 1983) With these qualities comes a degree of expertise which allows only qualified individuals to practice the profession. Hence, if the occupation of reporter fits the criteria of professionalism, one would expect to witness a significant degree of autonomy practiced by them by virtue of their expertise. However, by the standards set forth by many scholars (see Cullen, 1983) reporters and journalists in general do not fall within the parameters of professionalism. However, being classified as non-professionals does not necessarily and automatically connote that reporters do not exercise autonomy. The question needs to be addressed as one of
In other words, how much autonomy do reporters possess?

One would not expect reporters to have total independence. Media organizations, as any bureaucracy, necessarily require standardization. Therefore, the degree of freedom held by reporters to do whatever they want with a story is limited. Often, standardization is ensured through written guidelines and strict socialization and social control. (Breed, 1955).

Normally, maintaining standardization is not difficult. Two primary reasons for this practice are the predictability of events and the use of traditional sources. Simply put, the organization is able to plan ahead for events and define ahead of time the way an event will be covered. This is not always the case during disasters. Generally, disasters are unscheduled events that are more ambiguous than regular events. Because of the nature of disasters, one might anticipate the need for an increase in discretion and in-field-decision-making on the part of the reporter. There is some suggestion, however, in the guidelines and handbooks developed by organizations that reporters have specific rules or guidelines to follow when covering disasters. (See Quarantelli, 1981) Thus, a comparison of the activities of
reporters during disasters (when we would expect a heightened degree of autonomy) to normal times will allow us to focus tightly on the issue of autonomy.

INTERORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

5. The Role of Press Conferences and Press Releases.
Contrary to conventional wisdom, news reporters are not chiefly concerned with searching for scoops and exclusives, but rather, are more interested in avoiding being scooped. (Scanlon et.al., 1980) In other words, reporters are not preoccupied with getting information that no one else has, but in making sure that others do not have information they have missed.

On a daily basis, news operations will receive a great many press releases and announcements. Most are never used: however, they still account for about 50 percent of the articles printed. This type of scheduled news is easy to cover primarily because it is predictable and timely (Tuchman, 1978). Sandman expresses concern about this heavy reliance on press releases because "they put the initial decision as to what is and is not newsworthy in the hands of the source instead of the reporter or editor" (1979:145). However, it is essential to note that news organizations are still able and do continue
to choose which events they decide to cover or which they choose to be newsworthy.

Press releases are distributed to the media because the source is interested in the publicity or public attention to the issue. The media organizations generally decide whether or not they are interested in the event. There has been little systematic work involving the role of press conferences during disasters aside from noting their widespread use. Under emergency conditions, when the media are in a situation where they "need" news and are less selective about what they will cover (they are focused tightly on any disaster-related information) the media appear to play a more passive role and are anxious to obtain whatever information is available or distributed at press conferences and through press releases.

5. Sources. The role of sources in the processing and creating of news is of major issue to students of the mass media. Sources play a major role in the determination of what becomes newsworthy. To a large extent the news which becomes available to the news media is influenced by the types of sources and their availability to the media (Tuchman 1978; Gans, 1979). This is precisely the issue Sandman (1979) addresses in his earlier comment about the widespread use of press releases.
The beat system, which is widely used by all media organizations, is based on a decision about what sources are the most able to supply reporters with news. This system is rooted in the principle of locating reporters "where there is promise of maximal return in publishable news for their investment" (Roshco, 1975:72).

In her discussion "news net or news blanket," Tuchman addresses at length the nature of the news net and what is missed or included in it. Her expansion of the image of a news net as opposed to a news blanket illustrates the idea that not all events are included in the system and that some value decisions are made about what should and should not be included.

The issue of the role of sources has also permeated the work done in the area of the mass media and disasters. Perhaps most prominent is the work done by Quarantelli (1981) on the "command post view." Essentially Quarantelli argues that during disasters the media tend to focus on emergency officials (generally located at the command post or emergency operations center) almost to the exclusion of any other sources. The result of the heavy reliance on these sources is the reporting of disaster events with a bias toward the view of emergency officials.

This study will examine closely the role of sources
during disasters and non-disasters. It will be concerned with what the major sources are for reporters during both times and how these sources may contribute to the shaping of the news content.

7. The Role of Television, Radio and Newspaper. Since its discovery and introduction to the public, radio has always had the ability to report news with immediacy. Newspapers and television, on the other hand, have had a relatively limited ability to perform in this same capacity. Because of their particular medium, the news produced by each tends to be somewhat different in nature. Television tends to favor stories that have good visuals, radio prefers stories that are quick and fast, and newspapers, because of factors of time and the nature of print, have tended to favor stories with depth and graphics. The result is not only different media portraying different types of stories but also favoring different slants. (Scanlon et. al., 1980)

If these differences in coverage across media are in fact present, one might expect each to perform a different role in the relaying of news. This issue of the differing roles of the mass media also is of importance during times of emergencies. Most work done in this area has focused on the role of radio stations, as they have always been viewed as the primary news source during
disasters (Quarantelli, 1971; Waxman, 1973; Harless and Rarich, unpublished). However, some of the issues discussed previously suggest that perhaps this focus should be broadened to include television and newspapers as a way of comparing the role of the different media. Such a comparison may find that radio is not the primary source of news during disasters. Investigations should perhaps look into the potential displacement of radio (by television) as the top source of up to date news.

8. The Sharing of Information. It is well known that the very existence of wire services ensure the sharing of information as many media outlets feed the wire services daily with their stories. But do reporters actually share information with each other while in the field? To a large extent the answer to this question depends upon whom you ask. Editors and producers often report that reporters do not share information, or, if they do producers and editors do not want to know. However, if media organizations are really more concerned with not getting scooped than with scooping others, one might expect that more sharing goes on than is assumed.

Reporters tend to be overly protective of their sources and somewhat competitive with regard to their beats. However, reporters also have their own rules about
what and with whom they will share information (Tuchman, 1978). With 50 percent of all news items originating from press releases and many others from the wire, it seems that a relatively small number come from exclusive sources.

What happens during disasters? It has been noted that when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, reporters shared all their information with each other. This enabled the news media to disseminate the information quickly and within the framework of organizational time restrictions. (Tuchman, 1978) Based on this example and the fact that disasters require the ability to report news immediately and quickly, one might hypothesize that the sharing of information takes place more frequently.

Quarantelli (1981) notes however that although reporters converge at the emergency operations center or at the command post, not much sharing occurs. The fact that reporters see one another at this central location acts as reaffirmation that they are in the right place, but this does not lead to sharing of information. He argues that reporters are very protective of their sources and their information during disasters as well as during normal times.
METHODOLOGY

The research design of this study has been devised to allow for the analysis of mass media organizations during non-disaster and disaster periods. Moreover, it also permits the study of changes or alterations within the structure of the organizations and in the manner in which the organizations process news.

The design rests on the development of an elaborate case study of a disaster-impacted community and findings from five other communities also impacted by disasters. It is specifically structured to allow for comparative analysis among the cases as well as generalizations across them. In order to ensure that such generalizations and analyses can be made, the following approach has been adopted.

The study is divided into two major phases. The first phase involves the construction of a detailed specific case study of one disaster stricken community. The case study outlines the structure of the local mass media market in the particular community. It will also focus quite specifically on three organizations. The major television station, radio station and newspaper organization are the central concerns of the study. Subsequently, certain statements or specific observations
will be made based on this case study. These statements and observations will revolve around alterations of the structure and processes of the organizations across the two time periods.

With the completion of this phase of the study, the other cases will be examined. The same type of analysis will be undertaken by focusing on the major media organizations during both time periods. With the culmination of these cases, an analysis will be undertaken to determine whether or not the observations drawn from the first case are supported in the latter case.

THE CASE STUDIES. The data for these case studies are collected primarily through intensive open-ended interviews, observations, and the collection of secondary documents. In each case, the study is drawn from at least one trip to the community. The initial trip took place during the actual emergency period or as close to the impact period as possible. It was during this trip that a great deal of observational data of emergency activities were obtained. Interviews conducted during the trip focused essentially upon disaster operations. The emphasis was placed on the emergency structure and activities revolving around the processing of news. Subsequently, some questions were asked regarding any changes or
differences between the emergency activities and normal-time activities. (See the Appendix for the interview guides used in Sutton, Carlyle, and the second trip to Byerton. The field interviews used in Madeira, Hormby and the second trip to Byerton may be obtained from the Disaster Research Center.)

The second trip, which was undertaken two to three months following the disaster, focused on normal operations as well as on specific differences between normal and disaster times. At this time observations were also made about day to day operations. This allowed for comparisons across observations.

THE SELECTION OF INFORMANTS. Within each major local media organization, specific informants were interviewed. These informants were asked particular questions about the organization, rather than about their own experiences. These interviews were conducted with individuals from all levels of the organization. Within television stations, interviews were conducted with administrators, news directors, producers, assignment editors, reporters, photographers, operations personnel and anchors. Radio station interviews were held with administrators, news directors, anchors or disc jockeys, reporters, editors and operations personnel. Interviews
within newspaper organizations were with administrators, managing editors, metropolitan/city editors, copy editors, assignment editors, reporters, and photographers. In all cases, additional interviews were conducted with other involved personnel as dictated by the particular organization. A total of 119 interviews were conducted. Thirty-nine were held in Sutton, 7 in Carlyle, 44 in Byerton, ten in Hormby, three in Madeira, and 16 in Dickerson.

It is important to note the profound impact of the time sequencing of this study. The first phase of the study was necessarily completed before the commencement of the second phase. This sequencing was necessary to avoid the introduction of any bias in the analyses across and between the cases. The observations drawn from the first case were developed completely independently from any knowledge of the other cases to ensure objectivity in the determination of the generalizability of the observations of the first case to the latter cases.

This study was primarily of a qualitative nature. The analysis focused upon recorded open-ended interviews, documents, and observations made while in the field. The interviewees were treated as informants, rather than as respondents. Hence, they were asked about the activities
of the organization, rather than about their own personal activities and experiences.

The following outline has been adopted for the presentation of this study. Chapter two contains the presentation of the first case study. This case study is descriptive in nature and focuses upon the eight issues presented. Chapter three presents the analysis of the case study as well as an extension of the literature review. Chapter four contains a description of the five additional cases and a comparative discussion between the findings from the first case and the latter cases. The final chapter summarizes the findings and presents the conclusions drawn from this study.
CHAPTER 2

On July 18, 1986, 15 cars of a 44 car freight train derailed just south of the midwestern city of Sutton. One car containing phosphorus, a chemical which burns spontaneously when exposed to the atmosphere, burst into flames and sent a potentially dangerous cloud of irritating fumes over the city.

The case study of the local mass media's response to this accident is the focus of this chapter. The description is limited primarily to those organizational aspects and activities presented in chapter one.

THE COMMUNITY

Sutton, a city of approximately 200,000 people, has the 48th largest media market in the United States. The metropolitan area, which includes 35 towns and villages and 1,000,000 people, is serviced by 10 radio stations, 16 newspapers and seven television stations. There is one daily newspaper in the city.

In addition to the one private, independent station, the five television stations represent the three major networks and PBS. Three of the radio stations
maintain twin station operations. However, in each of these cases, the stations share news department resources. The seven separate stations include two ABC affiliates, one NBC, one CBS and one CNN affiliate. The remaining two stations are independent non-affiliated stations.

This description will focus upon the three dominant media outlets. They are all owned by the same, large national media conglomerate. As a result, while maintaining a competitive relationship, The Sutton Gazette, WGGG-TV and WGGG-RADIO do share information and resources with each other more than with the other outlets in the area. For example, WGGG-TV and WGGG-RADIO are located in the same building and share the same newscenter. A great deal of sharing takes place between radio and television news staffs in the newscenter, including informing each other about story leads and verifying information. Likewise, The Gazette has an agreement with WGGG-TV that allows the television station to take newspaper photographers aloft in its helicopter. This agreement was honored during the train derailment.

DISASTER IMPACT

It was an unusually warm day in Sutton on Tuesday July 18, 1986. The temperature rose to about 90 degrees, a temperature reached on the average only 17 days a year.
The unusually hot temperature caused the railroad tracks just south of the city to buckle and 15 cars of a 44 car freight train to derail. One of the derailed cars was carrying phosphorus. The following description of the derailment was written by two local fire fighters who responded to the accident.

The first 23 cars cleared the trestle. Then, something went wrong. The next four cars derailed and were dragged along, upright, for more than a half mile. Three more boxcars uncoupled and dropped alongside the tracks at various points south of the trestle.

Then came the tank cars. The first one cleared the trestle on its side and landed at a slight tilt along the tracks, resting against an old concrete bridge pylon. An empty gondola car piled up on top of it. The second tank car stopped halfway through the trestle, wedged in by an automobile carrier that broke loose and came rolling down the other set of tracks. The third tank car smashed into the rear of the second. A boxcar rammed the end of the third tank car, telescoping it in about four feet. Behind it, two more automobile carriers derailed upright, north of the trestle.

The impact tore several holes and gouges in the first tank car, exposing its contents: 12,000 gallons of highly toxic white phosphorus. Phosphorus in contact with air ignites at 86° F. The temperature that afternoon in the river bottom was above 90 degrees. (Menker and Floren, 1986:30)

The plume of smoke which exuded from the tanker was described by the media and by emergency officials as spectacular. The orange-white flames billowed 50 feet and the white smoke rose hundreds of feet in the air. The thick cloud of smoke clung to the ground as it made its way
north toward the city. The television stations aired film of the fire for hours over the two days it burned and the newspapers printed color pictures of the fire on the front pages and on open pages throughout the week.

At 5:00 p.m. the Sutton officials ordered an evacuation of the southern section of the city. During the next few hours, residents in the surrounding area who had not left were advised by health officials to remain indoors, and the first of over 231 patients were treated at nearby hospitals. By 10:00 that evening the once raging fire appeared to be nearly extinguished, and one shelter in the area was emptied as evacuees were told they could return home.

Within the next several hours (early Wednesday morning) evacuees from neighboring townships were allowed to return home, and chemical experts waiting at the scene were permitted their first detailed look at the derailed cars. Until this time fire fighters had been dumping 5,000 gallons of water a minute on the tanker to prevent it from reigniting; efforts also began to patch leaks in the damaged phosphorus car. Late that morning, officials announced a plan to isolate the phosphorus tanker from another containing sulphur, and the "potential danger area" in Sutton was reduced to the very southern section of the
city. This area affected approximately 800 residents who were strongly urged by emergency officials to remain away from their homes.

Throughout most of that day the tanker continued to smolder, however the plume of smoke which at one time rose hundreds of feet into the air had dissipated greatly, and thus the threat appeared to be reduced. However, at approximately 6:05 p.m., while television crews and radio announcers were broadcasting live from the scene, the tanker shifted and fire reignited in the phosphorus car. For a second time, a huge white cloud of smoke billowed outward toward Sutton. At that time officials made the decision to let the fire burn itself out, and the emergency officials reordered the evacuation of all Sutton residents, as well as residents from two surrounding townships. Later the evacuation order was expanded to include two additional townships.

At 9:30 that evening, the command post, originally located near the burning tankers, was moved to the Sutton Fire Station because shifting winds had pervaded the area with smoke. By 11:00 p.m., residents from the two, most distant, townships were allowed to return home. By Thursday morning at approximately 7:00 the command post was relocated to its original site, only to be moved back to
the fire station one half hour later due to shifting wind. At this point the tanker was allowed to burn slowly in the hope that it would consume itself.

Although most residents were allowed to return home on Thursday, the tanker continued to burn throughout Friday and Saturday. It was not until Saturday evening that National Transportation and Safety Board officials were able to speculate that the accident occurred as a result of the defective rail and exceedingly high temperatures on the day of the derailment.

THE RESPONSE

The report of the explosion was initially sent over the police radio and was intercepted on scanners by the Sutton Gazette, WGGG-TV and WGGG-AM/FM. Due to the timing of the event, WGGG-RADIO already had its plane airborne conducting the traffic report. From the plane, the reporter spotted the cloud about 2 miles away and flew immediately toward it. WGGG-TV's helicopter was also aloft and was sent to the site. The assistant metropolitan editor at the Sutton Gazette, who was replacing the vacationing metropolitan editor, dispatched a reporter along with a photographer to check out the event.
Within one and one half hours from the time the station became aware of the event, the entire news staff, consisting of five full-time and six part-time employees had reported to the station. Those who reported included the news director, who was technically on vacation, and the station's only full-time reporter, who had been home that day due to illness.

The assistant news director, who normally works from 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., would have been at the station; however he was at home. He had taken over the vacationing news director's 4:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. shift and heard the reports at home just as he was called by the newscenter. Because he lived close to the scene, he went directly to the site to gather information. At that time he had no transmitting equipment with him, so he phoned in reports. Shortly after he reached the scene, a part-time reporter arrived with a broadcasting van. At that time they moved from the scene to the mayor's office. The assistant news director was on the phone almost continually with the station. He positioned himself near the location where calls were coming into the mayor's office. It was from here that he received most of his information. The part-time reporter served as a "gopher," gathering information.
primarily between the mayor's office and the police department. Additional information was acquired over the phone from the station.

The radio station first changed its programming at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday. At that point the AM station changed its programming to mostly news and aired longer updates and newscasts. By about 5:30 or 6:00 p.m., the severity of the situation became apparent, and the news director and operations manager decided to broadcast all news on the AM station and updates every 15 minutes on the FM station. However, as the situation continued they decided, around 6:30 p.m., to simulcast all news over AM and FM stations. This continued until 10:00 that evening. The local professional baseball team's game was preempted that evening.

At 10:00 p.m., the FM station returned to normal programming because the situation appeared to have stabilized. The AM station remained with continuous coverage of the situation until 1 a.m. At that point there were still two people reporting from the field --- the assistant news director, situated as close to the scene as possible, and a part-time reporter at the secondary command post in the city manager's office.
On Wednesday updates were given throughout the day on both stations. The situation was described as "stabilized" by the media. At 6:05 p.m. when the station was broadcasting live interviews at the scene, the tanker reignited and people were told to evacuate the area immediately. Both AM and FM stations began to simulcast all news once again. They continued the simulcast until 1 a.m. that morning, at which time they reinstated regular programming on both stations with continuous updates. This format remained in effect over the next two or three days.

The station's primary concern and goal was to "first provide people with information that they needed most." In particular, this included information regarding the evacuation itself and the hazardous nature of the chemicals involved. Although reporters and directors made an effort to cover everything (their usual policy, they noted), their main concern during the emergency was to give necessary and important information which might effect the well-being of the public.

The station did experience some difficulty in contacting official sources, primarily because many of the officials remained very close to the site in an area restricted to the media. In addition, because the incident happened on the outskirts of the city, the reporters were
not familiar with the local officials. A public information officer was placed in charge of conducting press conferences and supplying the media with information. However, press conferences were not conducted with regularity and officials were rarely present at them. As a result, the radio station placed heavy emphasis on the mayor's office. They kept a reporter there constantly, and he attempted to gather whatever information passed through that office. On the second night, the regular full-time reporter was present near the site. She experienced a great deal of difficulty contacting officials because the command site was moved frequently due to wind shifts, and the media were not always informed about these moves.

The station's major problem, however, involved the activation of the emergency broadcast system. The local emergency services official failed to properly alert the media of his desire to activate the system. In any type of emergency situation that may require an evacuation, he is supposed to alert WGGG-RADIO and authorize them to activate EBS. Being the primary station, WGGG should be alerted first and then they in turn are to alert the other stations.

At the time of the emergency, however, the director of emergency services was participating in a live interview
with a WGGG-TV reporter and said, "Well, I think I'll activate the EBS." Not knowing what to do, the radio immediately activated the system. They had no specific message to broadcast, therefore, they decided to pick up the television's live audio. This decision had many ramifications. First, there was no emergency message broadcast. By the time the radio picked up the television audio, the television coverage was in the studio focusing on an unrelated issue. Second, the audio picked up did not fit the requirement of a generic, specific message to be announced following the sounding of a tone. As a result, stations all over the area were broadcasting WGGG-TV anchors and reporters's voices with WGGG's call letters. The EBS was activated on two subsequent occasions; both times it was done correctly.

In sum, the following general statements can be made about WGGG-RADIO's organizational activities during this emergency. First, the staff was expanded greatly for the first two days of the emergency. The entire news staff was involved with the coverage, and some employees were given new tasks and responsibilities. For example, the assistant news director, who normally has no reporting duties, adopted reporting activities the first night. Second, the station's relationships with the emergency relevant organizations were somewhat limited. The field
reporters were granted limited access to emergency officials and a great deal of the information they gathered was through means other than direct interviews with officials. Third, the station viewed its role during the disaster as a conduit for information. It was concerned primarily with supplying the effected population with warning messages and information about the situation as soon as it became available.

WGGG-TV

With word of the tanker explosion, WGGG-TV sent their already airborne helicopter to the scene with a ground crew (consisting of a reporter and photographer) following shortly thereafter. Within 10 minutes of notification, at 4:50, the station was on the air live with a 10 minute report announcing that a railroad tanker had been derailed and that white phosphorus, a potentially dangerous chemical, had leaked and was on fire. Ten minutes later the station went live to the scene again with a five minute update. These and all subsequent decisions pertaining to interrupts, preemptions and expanded coverage were group decisions made by the news director, executive producer and the affected show's producer.
The first night, Tuesday, the regularly scheduled 6:00 evening news was expanded to 90 minutes. The network news, usually aired at 6:30, was taped and aired at 7:30. This expanded newscast only included accident related stories.

The station preempted network coverage for the evening. At 8:00 p.m. they once again began live coverage of the spill and were on almost continuously until 11:00 p.m. when the scheduled news broadcast aired. This report was also expanded to 90 minutes. Although the station usually airs network programming between midnight and 5:00 a.m., it continued to air interrupts until 2:00 that morning.

By Wednesday morning, the situation had improved. As a result, the 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. news programs were not expanded, although they were primarily devoted to accident coverage. There were a few interrupts that day. The bulk of the day was spent preparing the evening news with the intent of airing a near-regular format.

The news began at 6:00 Wednesday evening as scheduled. At 6:05 when the tanker exploded for a second time, the scheduled broadcast format was abandoned. Hence, Wednesday night's WGGG-TV broadcast strongly resembled that of the prior night. Specifically, the 6:00 evening
news ran 94 minutes, the network news was preempted, and there were almost continuous updates throughout the evening. The 11:00 news, however, was expanded only 5 minutes.

Due to the immediacy of the situation, a great amount of the news broadcast during the emergency was live. The result was a substantial degree of overlap and repetitiveness, especially at the beginning. This pattern was reduced substantially as soon as the station began getting specific reports about the nature of the accident. The situation brought about a need for a steady flow of information which could go on the air immediately. Because the station was airing so much live material, the footage was unedited and not viewed prior to the broadcast. Hence the potential for conveying unverified or inaccurate information rose sharply. This became a key concern for the news director and executive producer.

Most of WGGG-TV's live broadcasts were done from their helicopter which was over the scene almost constantly. Their's was the only media helicopter at the scene. The helicopter served two purposes. First, it allowed the station to cover the story and, second, it brought emergency officials on board in order to get an aerial view of the scene. Throughout the first two days
there was an emergency official in the chopper constantly. At first the helicopter had unlimited access to the airspace, but by late the second day, the state had brought in their own helicopter, and subsequently the WGGG helicopter was restricted first to 1000 feet from the scene and later to 2000 feet. However, as long as the officials needed the WGGG helicopter, the station’s reporters were privy to exclusive interviews with those they took up with them. Moreover, in order to serve the emergency officials, the station’s personnel were permitted to enter the restricted area and could therefore obtain interviews with officials within that cordoned area.

The station, at no time, acquired extra resources. They used all their company vehicles and even some personal cars. They also did not expand their staff during the emergency, although there did appear to be a need for more personnel. Due to the prolonged nature of the incident, news department personnel were extremely fatigued by the time of the second explosion. Many reporters and photographers on the staff were home resting and many of those at work had already put in a full day.

Individual tasks and responsibilities did not change during the emergency. Approximately 11 of the 14 reporters and almost all the photographers were assigned to
the story. The rest of the staff remained at the station and engaged in editing film brought in from the field, writing copy, and answering telephones. A great deal of follow-up stories and verification of leads and tips were done by phone by available personnel.

Considerable effort at WGGG-TV was expended to sustaining coverage throughout the four days. The news director and executive producer met repeatedly throughout the days to ensure that the station would be able to supply their viewers with new information.

Overall, a few general statements can be made about the performance of WGGG-TV in covering this event. First, the station's division of labor remained basically in tact throughout the emergency. No extra personnel were used and most people continued to perform in their usual capacity. Second, the nature of the station's news seemed to change dramatically. The majority of the news broadcasts were aired live and unedited. As one informant noted, doing a great deal of live coverage results in a "different visual experience." The aerial footage of the huge plume of smoke was extraordinary and was used quite extensively throughout their coverage. Finally, WGGG-TV saw its role throughout the emergency as a servant to the emergency officials. They often supplied them with information about wind
direction and other weather conditions. However, they also felt that they had a responsibility to their viewers. They perceived that there was a great need to show the public how the plume looked. In other words, they felt that the viewer really need to "see it to believe it."

THE SUTTON GAZETTE

From the beginning, the Sutton Gazette attempted to handle this story like any large, breaking story. The newspaper received word of the accident just prior to its 5:00 p.m. daily news huddle. Mention was made of the train derailment, however, the decision was made that no space would be allocated for the story in the morning paper. The story, however, grew by the minute and the expected front page "went out the window." The news editor is empowered to redo the front page as needed. By Wednesday morning, the derailment story was the most prominent story on the front page.

There were no major alterations in the division of labor within the paper. The metropolitan desk was placed in charge of all spill stories. With the exception of one story written by a sports reporter that was filed as a spill story with the metropolitan desk, all stories came from the traditional metropolitan desk operation. No other departments were involved in spill coverage.
All assignments of spill stories were made by the metropolitan editors working with their normal beat reporters. Rewrite persons were also utilized. Certain reporters who were known to be competent writers were kept in the news room. Reporters in the field, instead of communicating their stories directly to editors, would phone in their information to the rewrite people who collected the information from various reporters and constructed a story. For the major lead stories on the spill, as many as eight different reporters would make contributions, however the story would only be written by one person. The rewrite person would then proceed down the usual path of gatekeepers.

The derailment occurred at a fortuitous time for information. A number of reporters were still on duty and were simply asked to stay on the job. A total of 12 reporters were eventually assigned to work on the spill. The work shifts were altered dramatically. Overtime became the norm. Some of the metropolitan editors were working 12 to 16 hour days. Many of the reporters were working similar hours. By Friday evening, "burn out" was having an effect, and there was a severe shortage of personnel in the news room. The newspaper was sensitive to the problem of burn out to the extent that reporters and editors who covered the stories were not only paid overtime, but were
given time off in the following week to recuperate from the experience.

The news organization attempted to meet their regular deadlines, however they were a few minutes late on the first night. Subsequent days also saw minor problems of meeting deadlines.

Open pages were added to the paper. Four pages were added to the afternoon paper on Wednesday. Two pages were added to the paper on Friday. The Saturday paper had six open pages and was the largest Saturday paper in the history of the organization. The decision to add open pages was made by the managing editor. These open pages were recovered later in the month. The process is known as "stealing" pages. While the paper expanded in the disaster period, it contracted several weeks later to catch up to the annual budget allocation of advertising to news.

The percentage of the paper devoted to news increased during this period. Stories about the spill dominated the available news hole for the five days following the spill. A mix of "hard" and "soft" news stories on the spill occurred. Each edition of the paper carried a lead story that was an "umbrella" piece of hard news. This story included a vast array of information of the incident. A second story also appeared on the front
page. This story was more focused around specific issues, such as evacuation, sheltering, law suits, etc. Human interest or "soft" stories tended to appear in the back pages of section A. No substantial effects on advertising were noted.

The sources used by the newspaper reporters during the disaster were varied. Principally, they included the public information officer, spokespersons from the railroad and representatives of the National Transportation and Safety Board. Other local Sutton officials were used. However, since field assignments were based on capability rather than familiarity with the involved officials, reporters who did not know local officials found themselves developing other sources. These other sources included trusted contacts normally used that appeared to have any information relevant to the derailment. It was noted that it was more difficult to verify stories during the disaster, because no one was exactly certain as to what was occurring. The paper did not appear to play a role in the emergency response system. The newspaper's deadlines and normal time constraints were too slow to be effective in helping with the evacuation. However, the newspaper did attempt to offer a complete explanation of the health effects of phosphorus gas and the causes of the derailment.
The resources of the paper were somewhat expanded. A plane was rented for aerial photographs. Newly purchased cellular phones were used and proved to be a great asset, however during the five days of coverage they ceased functioning.

Throughout the emergency, the Sutton Gazette attempted to maintain its normal operations. Essentially, only the metropolitan desk (38 people) was affected by the accident. Distribution was also affected. It was difficult to deliver papers to the restricted area. Instead the newspapers were delivered to the shelters and distributed free of charge. All other aspects of the operation remained in tact. The major change involved the addition of rewrite persons in covering the spill. In addition, the organization attempted to keep its product as normal as possible both in terms of size and content. Deadlines basically were met and the hard news emphasis of the paper was maintained. The Sutton Gazette viewed the event primarily as a television story, especially at the beginning. The newspaper primarily focused on the in-depth and background aspects of the story, leaving the electronic media to cover the immediate, sensational aspects of the event.
SUMMARY

The response of the local media outlets to the derailment was extensive. This description reveals the manner in which each organization attempted to adapt its normal operations to the emergency. Each outlet supplied extended news coverage. Their normal news processing operations were altered and thus the type of information communicated was altered.

The following chapter examines the organizational activities of these organizations and analyzes the changes and modifications which were undertaken. In addition, it examines the nature of the interorganizational relationships of these outlets.
CHAPTER 3

This chapter is primarily devoted to the analysis of the Sutton case study presented in chapter two. This analysis is based upon the eight issues presented in chapter one. The four intraorganizational issues, i.e., gatekeeping, decision making, the role of technology and reporter autonomy, are discussed first. The interorganizational issues, i.e., the role of press conferences and press releases, sources, the role of television, radio and newspaper, and the sharing of information, are discussed in the later part of this chapter.

INTRAORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

1. Gatekeeping As it was first introduced, the concept of gatekeeping referred to the selection process. The first study in the area focused upon wire editors and how they decided which news items would be used (Gieber, 1969). The work was later expanded. The concept now refers not only to the selection of stories, but also to the manner in which they are processed and prepared for use. (Waxman, 1973; McQuail, 1984)
Gatekeepers may scan five to seven times more potential stories than can be used daily. During disasters, however, this proportion may differ considerably. Scanning a possible 2500 stories a day, a newspaper editor must employ various criteria in choosing only about 300 items for print. Criteria cited by gatekeepers range from personal preferences to professional judgement about what stories would best inform and interest readers. (Bagdikian, 1971)

The gatekeeping process, however, involves more than the selection or rejection of available stories. It encompasses the working processes by which news people, and others, transform any happening into a news event for the purposes of reporting about it, and the ways in which a story gets formulated and presented (Wright, 1986).

On the subject of gatekeeping, Gieber stated:

The fate of the local news story is not determined by the needs of the audience or even by the values of the symbols it contains. The news story is controlled by the frame of reference created by the bureaucratic structure of which the communicator is a member. (1964:178)

In other words, the activities of the gatekeepers are more than individual, they are heavily influenced by the organizational setting and policy.
Waxman's (1973a) study of gatekeepers during disasters brought to the fore the observation that the gatekeeping process is truncated during disasters and thus affects the content. The change in the gatekeeping process can also be placed in the context of the organizational setting, as the organization is altered in the event of a disaster.

In the event of the phosphorus spill in Sutton, the gatekeeping processes in the media organizations were altered. The alterations, however, differed across organizations. Particularly notable is the differences between the changes in the electronic media and the print media. Whereas the gatekeeping process was truncated in the radio and television stations it was elaborated in the newspaper organization.

Both WGGG-TV and WGGG-RADIO aired more live tape than normal. In the case of radio, this involved many live reports from reporters on the scene. In the case of television, many reports were aired live from the scene in addition to live, unedited aerial footage of the fire.

Normally, upon returning from the field a WGGG-TV reporter's first task is to log the visual and audio tapes. This allows easy access to specific segments that can later be edited for the story. The reporter then notes which
segments are to be included in their story and where these segments should be placed. The photographer/editor then edits the material according to these notes to create the final product. The reporter is also responsible for writing the copy for the story which must be proofed by the producer. This entire process was eliminated during the emergency.

Although the WGGG-RADIO gatekeeping process is not as elaborate, reporters are responsible for packaging their own stories which often are proofed by the news director. Packaging a story includes writing the copy and editing taped interviews. This intermediate step was also eliminated during the emergency.

The elimination of certain steps in the gatekeeping process contributed substantially to the confusion surrounding the activation of the Emergency Broadcast System (EBS). Because EBS was activated during a live television interview, WGGG-RADIO was caught off guard. The system requires that WGGG-RADIO be the first media outlet to activate the system, air the tone, and broadcast a generic and specific message. The system was not activated in this manner and as a result WGGG-RADIO switched live to WGGG-TV audio. The television audio was picked up by radio stations across the city and continued to air over both AM
and FM stations for approximately 10 minutes. The absence of the normal editing process and regular process of putting together news programs at WGGG resulted in the loosening of control regarding exactly what was broadcast.

At the Sutton Gazette, the alterations in the gatekeeping process were very different. Rather than eliminating the process of checking stories in advance of printing and choosing what will and will not be printed, the Gazette added a rewrite person to collate information and produce a coherent story. In so doing, the Gazette increased its ability to monitor what stories went to print and what information was released.

Normally, the usual path of gatekeeping does not include such a rewrite person. Usually, reporters give their written story to an assistant metropolitan editor who reads the story, corrects it, edits it, massages it, shreds it and generally "works it." From the metropolitan editor the story goes to the news editor, if it appears on the front page, or the inside editor if it is going in an inside page. This editor reworks the story again and determines its length and placement on the page. It is then sent to a copy editor at the universal desk who makes grammatical and editorial changes and places a headline on the story. Finally it is sent to the chief copy editor who
gives it a final reading and sends it to composition where it is made ready for printing. This entire process remained intact during the emergency with the addition of the re-write process.

In sum, the gatekeeping processes did change in all three organizations in an effort to adapt to and meet the needs of the emergency. The electronic media organizations shortened their news processing operations while the newspaper organization elaborated the process. The type of technology and deadlines employed by the newspaper supplies the organization the extra time to edit copy before going to print. With more than the usual one or two reporters working on a story, the addition of an extra gatekeeper allows the newspaper to process and organize the incoming information. The electronic media do not have the luxury of time to edit material because of its ability and desire to broadcast reports live from the scene.

2. Decision Making.

At each network, executives first determine how far the net will be cast for news - i.e., the cities in which news crews will be deployed, the number of correspondents, and the budget for relaying news from remote locations. Within these limits, assignments editors choose which of numerous possible stories to allocate to a limited number of network crews; and once at the scene, the news crew itself decides which aspects of the happening will be filmed. (Epstein, 1973:182)
This description of the decision making hierarchy at the network level reveals the type of structure employed by media organizations, particularly television operations. Although decisions are made throughout all levels of the hierarchy, the most broad and encompassing decisions are made at the very top. This type of structure is much the same in the print media. The editor usually hires the journalistic staff and "decides what the staff will do, which is the most important single step in the process of journalism." (Bagdikian, 1971:125) However, on a day by day basis, the structure of the media organization does not always allow top management to make day to day decisions. General management is often separated from active decision making. (Bogart, 1971) "New visitors to newsrooms are usually surprised by the lack of constant communication among staff workers and the apparent casualness of decision making on the news." (Bagdikian, 1971:125)

What happens to this division of labor and decision making system during disasters? Data from the Sutton incident indicates that to some extent the decision making process became more of a group process than an individual one delegated throughout the organization.

At WGGG-RADIO, decisions regarding broadcasting rests primarily with the news director. However, the
operation manager became involved in deciding to simulcast over both AM and FM stations. In addition, reporters in the field played an intricate role in the decision to resume normal broadcasting because of their on-site position. Normally, decisions about how much time should be given to a particular story and its placement are standard and routinized and made by the news director or his assistant. During the emergency, the standard rules and regulations were not applicable, and the recommendations of the reporters became crucial.

At WGGG-TV the decision making changed considerably. Most decisions were made collectively by the news director, executive producer, assignment editor and producer. They huddled often, or as often as they felt was necessary. Normally, they huddle twice a day, around 10:00 a.m. to make assignments, and again at 3:00 p.m. to brief anchors about the layout of the evening show as well as to make certain assignments for the next day. Huddles during the emergency focused on decisions regarding the preemptions of programming, reporter assignments and story positions.

The Sutton Gazette maintained its decision making structure to a greater degree than did radio and television. Because the spill story assignments fell to
the metropolitan desk, metropolitan editors worked with their usual beats.

Attempts were made to meet regular deadlines of 8:30 p.m. for the first edition and at 11:30 p.m. for the final edition of the morning paper. The deadlines of 9:15 a.m., 10:45 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. for the afternoon edition were also met save a few minutes.

In sum, the decision making structure in the electronic media organization was altered considerably, whereas the structure in the newspaper organization remained in tact. Aside from the few open pages added to the paper, the approach of the Gazette was to view the event only as a large breaking story. WGGG-TV and WGGG-RADIO approached the event more as a disaster and as "the only story in town."

3. The Role of Technology.

Technology can determine or influence the "time rhythms" of an organization. The time rhythms in turn affect the structure and news processing of the organization. The fact that the print media, and not the electronic media, are labor intensive greatly contributes to this difference. The effect of this difference is that the amount of time and personnel necessary to print a story
is much greater than to broadcast one. In newspaper organizations, developing news and spot news tend to be viewed as one in the same. Television personnel tend to distinguish between the two as they are able to cover these events as different phenomena. (Tuchman, 1978)

Many of these findings held among the media outlets in Sutton. While WGGG-RADIO and WGGG-TV were on the air with their first announcements of the phosphorus spill, the editors of the Sutton Gazette were in the huddle deciding to forego devoting space to the story. Although the spill story did appear as the major story in the morning paper, the electronic media had already devoted hours of on-air time to the story.

Within the newspaper organization it was generally acknowledged that the derailment was a "television story," especially at the beginning. The visual impact of the white phosphorus plume and the urgency of the evacuation message was more suited to television. Monitoring all local news programs was a major event in the newsroom. Editors and reporters would stop their activities and watch the television coverage at times. One can assume that some of their story assignments were inspired by this television coverage. In fact, one of the editors stated that he found watching television unsettling, because he would hear
reports and think "I hope my people are getting that. I hope they are on top of that story."

The centralized, focused nature of the fire and the impressive size of the flames and plume provided extraordinary pictures and thus were utilized continuously by WGGG-TV. In this case, the prevalence and wide acceptance of video tapes and live broadcasting technology worked to the benefit of WGGG-TV. WGGG-RADIO reported live from the scene and played an integral role in disseminating evacuation orders. However, they admitted that their warning messages could not be as powerful and convincing as that of television, because of the spectacular impact of the pictures broadcast on television.

4. Reporter Autonomy. The issue of reporter autonomy stirs considerable debate. Part of the debate revolves around the issue of journalism as a profession. The other involves the question about the degree of autonomy any individual maintains while employed by a bureaucratic organization.

Bureaucratic expectations are such that autonomy on the part of the reporter is limited. Primarily the system of rewards and punishments (having stories published with
minimal editing) is used in socializing workers. (Donohew, 1967)

Most reporters and writers insist that they are never told what to write by which they usually mean they are not told to write something they believe to be false. But most are told every day what to write, in the sense that it is a necessary function in the media to decide which of the infinite number of possible subjects to pursue, assign and publicize, and which to ignore. It is through this necessary professional decision making that corporate values and central aims of writers are embedded. (Quarantelli, 1971:286)

In addition to the socialization of the organizational employees, other factors work to limit the autonomy of reporters. The use of traditional sources is one factor. Working on a beat system and concentrating on the use of officials and key sources, reporters have little input regarding whom they interview and what contacts they will use. Furthermore, there is high priority placed on covering predictable events. As much as news organizations like to try to cover breaking news, most of the stories they cover are planned events such as news conferences and scheduled meetings. In so doing, reporters spend a great deal of their time pursuing stories which have already been planned especially for them. They actually spend very little time enterprising their own stories and following through with their own leads. These types of bureaucratic
constraints serve to limit the activities of reporters and help guarantee organizational control.

It was suggested in chapter one that the unpredictability of disasters and the need for information might affect the limited degree of reporter autonomy, especially within the electronic media. The data collected in Sutton seem to support this argument to a certain degree.

At WGGG-TV and RADIO, the general policy was to trust the reporters. During the emergency this policy became a necessity. Sent into the field to follow-up leads and explore story angles, the management at WGGG relied heavily on the reporters skill to fill the expanded air time the station committed to the event. In addition, the increase in the amount of air time committed to live broadcasting reduced the ability of the management to be aware of exactly what information reporters obtained.

In general, producers at WGGG-TV view and edit both film and copy prepared by reporters prior to their broadcast. Live broadcasting robs producers of this luxury. Likewise, at WGGG-RADIO material was not edited before broadcast. WGGG-RADIO during normal times employs only one full time reporter. She, therefore, is the only person pursuing stories in the field. Most of her work and
story leads originate on her daily city beat. In other words, her day to day decisions about what to cover are basically decided in advance by her pre-arranged schedule of contacts. Otherwise, all stories are followed up through telephone calls from the station. This includes the anchor "running through a call down list" of sources, picking up stories from the wires and any leads obtained from within the newscenter shared with the television station. Having four people in the field covering the phosphorus spill, placed individuals in the position of making decisions on their own about what to cover.

To a certain extent, it did not appear that the degree of autonomy had changed for the newspaper reporters primarily because the approach of the Gazette to the derailment was not different from its approach to any large story. Reporters were basically expected to cover this event as they would any other story. Hence, for the staff at the Gazette the event did not warrant any exceptional coverage.

The presence of a need for immediate coverage was a crucial element in determining the degree of autonomy granted reporters in covering the disaster. The electronic media, out of seeming necessity not choice, permit the reporters greater autonomy during the emergency,
while editors at the Sutton Gazette, refrained from granting more independence to its reporters. The Gazette, through its utilization of rewrite persons, maintained safeguards not available to electronic media. In other words, independent decisions made by reporters regarding in-field decisions could be checked by the gatekeeper in the rewrite position and various editors.

INTERORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

5. The Role of Press Conferences and Press Releases.
Press conferences and press releases, also referred to as pseudoevents or media events, can be viewed both as friend and enemy of reporters (Boorstin, 1962) While somewhat skeptical and distrustful of these events, 90 percent of daily news coverage in a newspaper or television newscast may originate from such a source. The amount of reliance an organization gives to such sources often depends upon its size. For example, small radio stations with only two or three reporters by necessity tend to rely more upon press releases and handouts. Moreover, all media outlets are under pressure to fill pages in a newspaper or minutes on a newscast, and for this reason these events are important sources of news for media organizations. Thus, news media can be manipulated into covering press conferences and other pseudoevents because of the economic
and time constraints under which they operate (Jamieson and Cambell, 1983)

In Sutton, scheduled news events and handouts serve as a major news source. Although reporters at all the news outlets expressed that they do not attend all media events, they do rely upon them for story leads and as "pegs" or lead ins for other stories.

However, along with the ritual of attending press conferences, another common practice also ensues at press conferences. Many reporters use press conferences as a tool for gaining easy access to the source of information. It is common practice for many reporters to save their best questions for after the news conference, thereby they may speak to the official afterward and possibly gain some exclusive information. In fact, some reporters feel that press conferences or news releases are not very valuable, but the information one can acquire afterward can make the event worthwhile.

During the emergency period following the derailment, the role of the press conference remained important; although its significance changed. Because the need for information and the amount of time and space devoted to news by the organizations had increased, the information disseminated at news conferences was viewed as
being extremely important. Contrary to normal times, reporters did not have a multitude of press releases and press conferences from which to pick and choose. In fact, they spent a good deal of their time waiting around for press conferences to be held.

An additional reason for the change in the role of the press conference and press release involves the relative unavailability of many officials during the emergency period. The media, for the most part, were restricted from the area in which the command post was located. Since many of the officials were in the restricted area, reporters generally congregated in a parking lot across the street. It was here that the public information officers or officials would come to brief the press. However, just as during normal times, it was not unusual for reporters to try to obtain additional information on an individual basis after the official press conferences. Reporters scrambled to get live interviews with officials following the press conference.

In sum, the importance and heavy reliance upon press conferences and releases basically remained the same during the emergency in Sutton. However, the media's view of them was somewhat more favorable stemming from a greater dependence upon them for information.
6. **Sources.** Operating on a beat system, reporters generally rely upon a limited number of sources. In an effort to control costs, media organizations try to place reporters in positions which enable reporters to remain in one location while scanning the broadest possible range of action and events. In so doing,

> this induces the press to narrow its routine coverage to a relatively small number of individuals whose location in particular organizations or institutions maximizes the probable news value of the information they provide. (Roscho, 1975:75)

This idea of maximal return on minimal investment appears during disaster coverage as well. In part it is due to the fact that there is a great deal of news time to fill and officials are the sources which are easy to find. In addition, many organizations do not have ample personnel to produce extended coverage and therefore choose to position themselves at the command post, or headquarters; the most centralized location for information during disasters. (Quarantelli, 1981)

It has also been noted that media organizations utilize another source of information during disasters which is not traditionally employed. This source is the audience. Radio, in particular, uses the audience as a principle source of information. During emergencies, listeners call in with information and questions regarding
the emergency. The information supplied by the listeners is often disseminated directly over the air. Questions received by the station often serve the purpose of informing the station as to the type of information their listeners want and need. (Waxman, 1973a)

In Sutton, the local media used both official sources and the audience or citizens as sources. However, they were used in different capacities. Emergency officials were used in the usual sense in that the media relied on them for official information and as sources for hard news items. Listeners and citizens, on the other hand, were used more as sources for soft news items or features. Reporters talked to people who remained in their homes as well as those in the evacuation centers. These stories centered around issues such as why some people chose to stay in their homes and why others left, and what it was like to stay in an evacuation center.

In this case, the Gazette and WGGG-TV and RADIO did use the audience as a source. One major reason for this was that in each case arrangements were made for citizen calls to be diverted at the switchboard and not permitted to go through to the newsroom. The rationale for this was to keep the phone lines available for reporters to call the newsroom. All three media outlets, however, tried to
supply their audience with the information they thought they needed or thought they would want.

During the emergency, The Gazette and WGGG-TV and RADIO pursued emergency officials and chemical experts as their major news sources. The additional source, the audience, was tapped for two primary reasons. One reason being that the information they could obtain from citizens at the evacuation center often served as good feature material which could operate as a relief or lighter aspect to the disaster. The second reason is related to the view of many of the reporters that disasters are stories which effect everybody directly and therefore the experience of the citizens during the disasters is considered to be newsworthy. Other types of everyday stories do not have the direct impact on everyone and thus are not considered to be sources of relevant information.

7. The Role of Television, Radio and Newspaper.

It is not simply what television and all-news radio give us (immediacy) but what they deprive us of (distance) that is changing our picture of what lies beyond our own experience. News on the printed page always comes to us with most of the sting removed by the lapse of time between the event and publication, by the abstract nature of words, by the reassuring context of other headline and stories." (Stein, 1972:16)

Although Stein, in this statement, refers to the effect of the different capabilities of electronic media and print
media on the viewer, the issue does have relevance to organizational structure and news processing.

Public opinion polls reveal that television is the major source of news for most people. In 1985, when asked which medium they relied upon most as their major source for news, 65 percent of the respondents named television. This statistic has increased consistently since 1959. (Witt, 1986:310)

Television has replaced newspapers as the prime source of information to the American public. On the average, news viewing increased from 20 minutes in 1965 to 27 minutes in 1975 while newspapers use had decreased from 33 minutes to 26 minutes. (Jamieson and Campbell, 1983)

The value of such opinion polls have been questioned for a multitude of reasons. (See Witt, 1986). For our purposes however, the point is that if people do tend to rely on television for news during normal times than one would expect this to remain true during disaster periods. More importantly, if the media organizations believe these polls accurately reflect the audience preference, then one would expect them to act accordingly during both disaster and normal times.
The literature regarding the role of the different media during disasters indicates that radio is the major medium used by the community to obtain news and information regarding the disaster. This has been attributed to two major factors. One factor is radio's ability to broadcast news immediately as it becomes available. The other reason is that radio is least affected by the functioning of electrical power. Often, during a disaster, electrical power is interrupted and televisions do not work. Portable radios are used in homes and shelters to obtain information. (Waxman, 1973b)

Does this heavy reliance on radio change in a disaster situation in which electrical power is unaffected? In Sutton, electrical power was not affected by the derailment. The local television station’s operations were unaffected. As referred to earlier, The Sutton Gazette and WGGG-RADIO and WGGG-TV viewed this incident as a television story.

Three reasons can be offered for the primary role of television in Sutton during the emergency. First, as already mentioned, the Sutton Gazette could not compete as the up-to-the-minute news source because of its technology and organizational rhythm. Second, WGGG-RADIO, because of its minimal resources, could not cover as many angles and
aspects of the story. In fact, they relied heavily upon information that came through the WGGG-TV newscenter. Finally, the nature of the event made it easy for television to cover. The fire and plume were easy to tape and spectacular to watch. In addition, the WGGG-TV helicopter proved to be a major resource in covering the incident. It provided the reporters with a unique vantage to view the fire which the other outlets did not have. They also were able to show the direction in which the plume was moving, which was crucial information for the decisions regarding the areas to be evacuated. WGGG-TV, therefore was heavily involved in the dissemination of warning messages and evacuation orders.

It has been suggested that part of television's news appeal can be attributed to a halo effect. In other words, because generally television is viewed as the most entertaining medium, people watch it for news information. (Witt, 1986). If indeed the entertainment value of television does contribute to its popularity as a news source, the spectacular footage of the fire and the coverage WGGG-TV gave to the phosphorus spill may have been perceived as the most "entertaining" way of obtaining information about the spill.
8. The Sharing of Information. Although sharing information is rarely a part of an organization's formal policy, there is a considerable amount of evidence to suggest that sharing is a policy practiced with regularity.

In their dealings with one another, most newspapers and television reporters do their best to avoid extreme behavior. They do not let other reporters in on important secrets, but they do provide background information, when asked. Beyond these two norms, though, there are few constants in intermedia relations. Most reporters can identify a threshold in the spectrum from competition to cooperation beyond which they will not be pushed. However, that threshold varies from reporter to reporter and from news organization to news organization. (Gormely, 1976:92)

Gormley (1976) has offered several reasons for this practice. He states that "of all the reasons why newspaper and television reporters cooperate, perhaps, the most important is that they run into each other in the line of duty." (p.110) Other reasons offered include:

1. The increase in cross-ownership has lead to an increase in cooperation between reporters. Organizations owned by one corporation do not view each other as a true competitor.
2. In some cases, friendships and personal bonds may become more important than the desire for scoops or loyalty to a particular news organization.
3. Different media are seen as complimentary organizations rather than as competitors. Hence, television can share with radio and newspaper, radio with television and newspaper, etc., but the same media do not share with each other.
4. Reporters share with each other as a way of reaffirming their own news judgement. If they talk to each other about stories they are covering and information they have, they can
reassure themselves of their news judgement by
discovering that other reporters deem something
as newsworthy.

During disasters, reporters tend to congregate at
the command post and at press conferences. In so doing,
they often exchange information with each other. In
addition, the very presence of other reporters at the
command post serves as reassurance for each other that they
are at the right place for the best information.
(Quarantelli, 1981)

A considerable amount of information sharing took
place in Sutton during the emergency period. As mentioned
earlier, a reporter from the Sutton Gazette rode in WGGG-
TV's helicopter the first day. Also, as one might expect
based on the amount of sharing that ensues normally between
WGGG-TV and RADIO, a great deal of sharing took place
during the emergency. Within the first couple of hours
after the accident, a WGGG-RADIO reporter was on the air
giving a live report. He prefaced the report by saying to
the anchor, "If you could pass it along to our friends on
the television side as well..." This type of exchange was
common between the two stations. There was only one
instance in which any of these outlets showed any
considerable concern about protecting its information. A
Gazette reporter learned through a confidential source the
reason for the accident. The information regarding the faulty track and the high temperatures causing the accident was a story the paper made sure to copyright and publish before the other media became aware of the finding.

The reasons for the sharing of information that went on between these outlets could be attributed to any number of reasons. First, they are all owned by the same corporation. In this sense they did not see themselves as competitors in the same way they viewed the other local media. In addition, WGGG-TV and WGGG-RADIO, being sister stations, admittedly shared more with each other than with any other outlet. Finally, all the media organizations viewed the disaster as "belonging to television" and thus the competitive spirit was somewhat relaxed. Each outlet was not trying to achieve the same type of coverage.

DISCUSSION

The local Sutton media were heavily involved in the community response to the phosphorus spill as well as heavily affected by it. Their operations changed both interorganizationally and intraorganizationally. Their usual manner of processing news changed. In response to the emergency, each outlet devoted more time and space to news than usual. Table 1 summarizes the findings in this
chapter and indicates the changes in the different media outlets along the eight dimensions considered.

Table 1 summarizes the findings regarding organizational change in Sutton. A great deal of similarity exists between the television and radio stations as opposed to the newspaper outlet. For example, within the electronic media, the gatekeeping processes were truncated (it was elaborated within the newspaper organization), and technology greatly affected their coverage of the spill. In addition, the electronic media outlets experienced changes in their decision making processes, whereas the process remained in tact within the newspaper outlet. Also, the amount of autonomy granted the reporters during the emergency remained about the same at the newspaper but was increased for the reporters at the television and radio stations.

Certain alterations, however, were experienced similarly by all three outlets. These similarities are found along the interorganizational dimensions. For all three outlets, press conferences and press releases remained important but served purposes different from those during non-disaster times. The audience became an important source for news during the disaster as did the sharing of information among reporters.
In Sutton, television played the most prominent role in the dissemination of news. Its ability to broadcast live in conjunction with ability to broadcast video tape of the fire was critical. The newspaper, on the other hand, focused primarily upon in-depth and background aspects of the event.

Table 1: Summary of Changes In The Different Media

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<th>Organizations Along Each Of The Eight Dimensions</th>
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### Intraorganizational Issues

1. **Gatekeeping** - The process was truncated within the electronic media outlet and elaborated within the newspaper outlet.

2. **Decision Making** - The process within the radio station included positions at lower levels in the hierarchy, within the television station it became a group process, while at the newspaper it remained unchanged.

3. **Technology** - The electronic media aired a great deal of live coverage instantaneously, while the newspaper outlet was unable to respond as quickly.

4. **Autonomy** - The degree of reporter autonomy increased within the electronic media outlets, yet remained very much the same within the newspaper outlet.

### Interorganizational Issues

5. **Press Conferences and Releases** - The role of these events remained important; although their significance changed.

6. **Sources** - Official sources were used a great deal for hard news items. However, the audience also became an important source; primarily for soft news stories.

7. **The Role of Television, Radio and Newspaper** - Television played the primary role in disseminating information during the impact period. Newspaper became prominent during the post-impact period, covering background and in-depth angles.
8. Sharing Information - The amount of information sharing among the media outlets increased considerably.

The following chapter will examine these findings in light of five other communities impacted by disasters. Specifically, we will focus upon similarities and differences across media organizations within each community.
CHAPTER 4

The goal of this chapter is to test the generalizability of the findings from Sutton. It will attempt to determine if similar organizational patterns can be found in mass media outlets in other disaster impacted communities. The findings as analyzed in chapter 3 will be compared with findings from five other communities. These communities vary in size, as do the organizations considered. The disaster agents also differ across communities. These variations will be considered in so far as determining whether or not they have any effect upon organizational response. The methodology used in the collection of the data presented in this chapter is the same as that used in the collection of the Sutton data.

THE COMMUNITIES

1. On Sunday morning at around 7:15 a tornado touched down in the southeast town of Carlyle. Although the tornado "hopped" across the town, the major damage was to a trailer park in the northwest section of the community. Only one death was associated with the tornado, however, the trailer park in the town of 12,000 was almost completely flattened.
The thrust of the response came from the emergency operations center at the police station which contained representatives from the City Government, the Mayor's office, Fire Department, Police Department, Sheriff's office, and County Judge's office. A media center was set up at a car dealership at the far end of town. Although the media initially convened at this location, they did not stay. Most of the reporters tried instead to enter the impacted area or contact officials at the EOC.

Carlyle and its neighboring city fall in the bottom third of the 210 rated media markets. It is comprised of approximately 110,000 area of dominant influence (ADI) households. Within the city of Carlyle there is one radio station and one daily newspaper with a circulation of approximately 4,790. It is also serviced by three television stations, one newspaper and eight radio stations located in a nearby city. All the media outlets of Carlyle and the nearby city were heavily involved in covering the tornado.

The local newspaper in Carlyle is small. It employs approximately 20 people, four of whom work in the news department. These four people are the news editor, city editor, sports editor and society editor. At this newspaper, the editors also serve as reporters and
photographers. The local radio station is also small. It employs seven full-time and five part-time people. Two of these people work in the news department. The power at the station was interrupted and they were unable to broadcast until 9:30 a.m., almost two hours after the tornado had touched down.

2. The data from Byerton include information from two separate events. The city was hit by two hurricanes within a three year period. The same media outlets were examined in both cases. In 1983, Byerton was hit by a hurricane packing winds reaching 115 m.p.h. Torrential rain, high winds, and eight tornadoes impacted the west end of the city. A total of 21 deaths were attributed to the storm. The 1986 hurricane did not hit Byerton directly, however the outlying areas did suffer from a substantial amount of damage.

The media outlets in the city were actively involved in the coverage of this second hurricane because the impacted area does fall within its ADI. Byerton ranks among the twenty largest media markets. The market includes 1,326,000 ADI households. The city of 1,200,000 people contains 26 radio stations, seven television stations and two daily newspapers.
The organizations focused upon in the Byerton studies are the largest in the community. The radio station, an all news network affiliate, employees between 80 and 90 people. Thirty of these employees are connected with the news department. The television station, also a network affiliate and rated second in the Byerton market, maintains a staff of 190 to 200. The news department consists of 90 employees. The local Byerton newspaper examined is ranked among the top 10 in the country. It employees approximately 1300 people, with 176 assigned to the news department. The city desk, which was the division most involved in the hurricane coverage, consists of 35 reporters, four assistant editors and one editor in charge. The newspaper's daily circulation is approximately 320,000. The size of these organizations are markedly different from those in Carlyle.

3. The third city considered is Hormby, a city in the south central region of the United States. It was hit unexpectedly by heavy rains on Memorial Day weekend, which resulted in a great deal of flash flooding. An estimated 12 inches of rain fell in a six to seven hour period. A total of 14 lives were lost and 296 people were injured.

The 13 radio stations, five televisions stations and two daily newspapers in Hormby are part of a market
which falls within the top quarter in the United States. It services 430,800 ADI households. The radio station examined in depth is an affiliate of a major network and is basically a talk/news radio station. Six of the stations 18 employees are connected with the news department. Likewise, at the television station, also a network affiliate, 37 full-time and 7 part-time people are directly associated with the news department. Finally, the newspaper organization studied employs 120 people. The daily circulation of the paper is 129,848.

4. Madeira was pounded with heavy rain for a about a week. Many people in the low lying areas were evacuated to temporary shelters which also were eventually evacuated as the flood waters rose to an unprecedented level. Although most of the badly affected area was about 20 miles outside the city, the local media were heavily involved in the response.

Madeira is the home of ten radio stations, one television station and one daily newspaper. In terms of rank, the city of Madeira is considered to be a supplementary area to a nearby major city. This city ranks among the top five largest markets, however, the media outlets in Madeira service 124,800 households.
Of the ten local radio stations, only five are truly competitive and only two produce any kind of news. The local station concentrated upon in the study maintains a staff of four in its news department. The local television station has a permanent news staff of 16 people. The station is not a network affiliate and normally broadcasts only two half hour newscasts a day.

5. On New Year's Eve 1986 at around 4:00 p.m., a large hotel in the city of Dickerson caught fire. Firefighters fought to extinguish the fire which engulfed the hotel and adjoining casino while rescue squads sought to help survivors. Although the fire was squelched and initial rescue efforts ended by nightfall, the final figure of 96 dead was not known until a few days later.

Dickerson is a city of 440,000 people located on a small resort island. Although it is unranked, the media market approximates the size of Denver, the 19th largest market in the nation. Within the city there are 21 radio stations, six television stations and five major daily newspapers.

As with the other communities, one outlet from each type of media was studied in depth. The radio station and newspaper are owned by the same corporation and are located in the same building. The television station, housed in an
adjacent building in the same complex, is owned by a separate company. The radio station has a news department consisting of 22 full-time people. It is the oldest radio station on the island and the first to adopt an all-news format. The newspaper has a daily circulation of approximately 135,000. The city desk, which was in charge of the disaster coverage, maintains a staff of 20. The television station is rated number one for news on the island and is a network affiliate. The department consists of 20 full-time employees and is considered to be a small department within the organization.

It should be noted that it is customary for newspaper organizations to close for the New Year's holiday, and therefore there were no editions planned to be produced on the first of January. Only one 12 page special edition was ever published that day. Furthermore, the television and radio stations had all planned to air only canned programming that evening. At the time of the first report of the fire, many employees of the media organizations had either left for the holiday or were preparing to do so.

The scenarios and organizations discussed above represent a wide array of community and organizational size and structure. The disaster agents differ, as do the size
of the communities and organizations. At this point, we will turn toward the analysis of these five cases in light of the findings in chapter three. The eight major points discussed previously in this study will serve as the guidelines for this discussion as well.

COMPARATIVE DISCUSSION OF SUTTON AND FIVE OTHER COMMUNITIES

INTRAORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

1. Gatekeeping. The Sutton case study supported earlier work which suggests that the gatekeeping processes within media organizations tends to be truncated considerably. It was also found in Sutton, however, that the gatekeeping at the newspaper was elaborated, suggesting that perhaps the nature of the organizational rhythms allowed for this extra step in the process. Similar findings were revealed within other media organizations in other communities.

Within the communities of Hormby and Byerton, similar patterns were found regarding the gatekeeping processes within the electronic media organizations. In both cases, these organizations focused attention solely on the disaster, while all other news items were ignored.

Within the radio organizations, the usual steps of writing, editing and recording news stories were eliminated. With little time to record stories or bring
tapes back to the station, there was a considerable increase in the amount of live coverage broadcast during the emergency. This increase was deemed necessary in order to keep listeners abreast of the situation. As was the case in Sutton, reporters were expected to call in stories from the field and do live updates over the telephone.

Likewise, television stations also experienced a truncation in their gatekeeping processes. In Hormby, editing and processing of material was abbreviated. Video tape was not edited as carefully as usual and significantly more live tape was aired. Although the television station in Dickerson does not have the capability to do live coverage, the gatekeeping process was still affected. Video tape was rushed via courier from the field back to the station. This tape was then aired unedited and was accompanied by a descriptive narrative.

Comparatively, the print media was affected in a very different manner. At the Sutton Gazette an extra step was added to the gatekeeping process. This alteration was also found in the newspaper organization in Madeira. During the height of the flood emergency two rewrite people were assigned to the disaster coverage. These two people, chosen for their writing abilities, remained at the
office while reporters called in information. These rewrite people then combined all of the incoming information into complete stories.

This pattern found within print media organizations emerged even within the small operation in Carlyle. The city editor became "the designated writer." In other words, it became his responsibility to collect all the information regarding the tornado and write the stories. In one respect, this denotes a variation from the usual process, while in another respect, it does not. The variation rests in the fact that other editor/reporters worked on the tornado stories. Generally, the different editors work exclusively on their own sections. During the emergency, however, they all became involved in the story which had decidedly fallen under the domain of the city desk. Because of this collaborative effort, the city editor in a real sense became an editor. Normally the city editor writes his own stories and headlines, and decides on their placement. Thus it could be argued that during normal times the gatekeeping process at this newspaper only involves one position or step. During the emergency it was elaborated somewhat. It should be noted however, that the elaboration of the gatekeeping in Carlyle appeared to have emerged out of necessity, while within the larger newspaper
organizations in Sutton, Byerton and Hormby was considered to be more of a luxury.

2. Decision Making. The media outlets in Hormby and Byerton are very similar in size to those in Sutton. Outlets of this size generally have a well defined authority structure within the news department. Often the chain of command originates with the news director and includes the assignment editor and producer. During the disaster, the authority structure in both television and radio stations in Hormby, Byerton, as well as Sutton, became more of a centralized group process. In other words, the system of processing news which is usually spread throughout the hierarchy becomes focused. One group of individuals, generally those mentioned previously, take on the decision making responsibility. The group acts as a unitary decision making body rather than as individual units involved in different aspects of the decision making process. This pattern was found in the television station in Sutton. The news director, executive producer and assignment editor huddled often in efforts to coordinate the decision making.

The decision making structure at the print media organizations is generally much less affected by the disaster situation than is that of the electronic media.
The newspaper organization in Hormby did not undergo the alterations experienced by the electronic media. The decision making structure remained basically unaffected. Similarly, there were no major changes found at the Sutton Gazette. In part, this may be attributed to the time element. Newspaper organizations are not under pressure to produce a news product immediately and hence they have the time to allow decisions concerning processing to run its normal course.

3. The Role of Technology. Within the media organizations in Sutton it appeared that the technology of particular types of media organizations did affect their operations. In every city studied, radio and television stations experienced major alterations while newspaper outlets experienced minimal changes.

The ability to broadcast live reports is the key factor responsible for the impact of technology on news processing and structuring during disasters. This ability forces these outlets to pre-empt programming and/or advertisements, while newspapers have the ability to add additional space to the paper and avoid the preemption of news. Therefore, the electronic outlets must adapt to the change in the environment immediately; while the newspaper outlets experience a lapse of time.
Technology also influences the nature of news content. Television and radio stations have the ability to broadcast information as it becomes available, while newspapers have the time to process the information and fill the story with background information. Furthermore, the nature of the technology prevents newspapers from supplying readers with breaking news and hence they tend to supply news which is less temporal and in depth in nature.

These differences between the media were found in Sutton. They were also found in the other cities examined. In Hormby, some of the major issues which arose immediately at the newspaper after the impact were the need to allocate space and the recruitment of personnel to cover the emergency. However, because the electronic media outlets must respond before they can gear up and adapt to the situation, the outlet must shuffle programming and personnel.

In Dickerson, where the television stations do not have the capability to air live coverage, the nature of the broadcasts and the needs of the station were of a different nature. Forty minutes elapsed between the time television reporters were first sent to the scene of the fire and the time the first footage of the fire aired. A good portion of that time was devoted to transporting the video tapes
back to the station. During those forty minutes the station was able to adjust and prepare for the unanticipated coverage.

For the radio station in Dickerson, the time element was critical and appeared to have worked against the organization during the disaster. Generally radio stations' ability to immediately report works to their advantage. Due to a problem with communications, however, the three reporters sent into the field to cover the fire all returned to the station thinking that the other two reporters were still at the scene. The news director decided that it was not worthwhile, after those initial three hours of coverage, to send the reporters back into the field. He felt that they had already lost their audience, and, therefore would resume coverage the following morning. For radio stations, timeliness is extremely important.

For the newspaper organization in Hormby, responding to the emergency meant addressing different types of needs. Because the technology involved in the production of a newspaper is slower than that of television, the newspaper in Hormby was able to call in extra personnel and make decisions regarding the newshole well in advance of actually producing the news product.
In Dickerson, the local newspaper had not planned on publishing a paper the morning of New Year's Day. Although they did send reporters to the scene on New Year's Eve, they did not put out a paper the next day. They decided that by the time they contacted all the people involved in the production of the paper, it would be too late to issue an extra edition. Also, it was decided that it was economically more feasible to wait for the regular edition the following day.

4. **Reporter Autonomy.** In agreement with the findings from Sutton, there appears to be a general consensus across organizations and across communities that reporters are given more autonomy during disasters than during normal times. However, there also is a considerable amount of consensus regarding the amount of autonomy awarded reporters during normal times. Normally, reporters are said to be given a substantial degree of autonomy, while during disaster times they are given even more.

In both Byerton and Hormby reporters at the television stations were given an increased degree of autonomy during the disaster period. In these types of disasters, a hurricane and a flood, the news directors and producers anticipated that reporters might have difficulty contacting the station for permission or guidance in
covering the event. Therefore, the reporters were told to do the best they could.

It is also the case that most media organizations claim that reporters normally are given a great deal of autonomy and freedom to follow up stories and choose angles. Therefore, the amount of autonomy granted reporters during disasters is really only a slight increase. They are not treated very differently.

It appears, however, that in situations where channels of communication are not disrupted due to weather conditions or other factors, or where the disaster does not greatly disrupt the normal operations of the organization, there is more interaction between reporters in the field and the station. This is especially true for newspaper organizations since their operations tend to change the least. For example, reporters in Carlyle were in close contact with their offices as they were located outside of the impacted area. Also, reporters in Dickerson were able to reach their main offices with regularity because the hotel fire had not interfered with communication channels. This was also found to be true in Sutton. Reporters frequently called back to the main office with information about the fire or for instructions regarding their work in the field.
During disasters, it appears that rules for contacting the main office or station do seem to be relaxed somewhat. This pattern may be a consequence of downed telephone lines or problems with radio equipment, or, in some cases there may not be time to reach the home office regularly for instructions or updates as to what is happening.

INTERORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

5. The Role of Press Conferences and Press Releases. The role of press conferences and press releases is different during normal times and disaster periods. Although there seems to be a fair amount of agreement about the minimal usefulness of the information provided by them, they seem to hold more value during disaster times.

In Sutton, press conferences were not held with great regularity and were often delayed for hours. This became very bothersome to the reporters. They were much more dependent upon them than usual. This sentiment was also expressed in Byerton and Dickerson. Press conferences were viewed as important and helpful, since information was scarce and officials were often hard to reach. In Madeira and Carlyle press conferences were not given, and this situation was viewed as problematic for the media. The media outlets in these communities stated that they would
prefer for the emergency officials to give press conferences. Although they recognize that press conferences reflect information given in a "controlled environment called by somebody for reasons of their own," they are still worthwhile during the emergency. During the emergency these organizations are always searching for as much information as possible.

The only case in which there was a dissenting view came from the newspaper in Byerton. The view expressed was that press conferences are not of much use to the newspaper because they tend to contain "instant" information which is of little use to the newspaper. However, even in this case the reporters always attended the conferences in case there should be some valuable and useful information.

The findings from Sutton were similar to those found in the other communities. In each situation there was an increased dependence upon press conferences. Although media outlets do attend many press conferences and follow up on many press releases during normal times, they do not usually have a great deal invested in attending any particular one. Regularly, there are many more press conferences scheduled than any one outlet could cover. Therefore, they are in a position to choose which they will
attend. During emergencies, however, they are very committed to covering any aspect of the emergency.

6. Sources. In Hormby, listeners were used as sources for the radio much in the same way as in Sutton. Listeners called the radio station with information and eyewitness accounts. They did the same in Sutton.

The audience also was used in this capacity in Carlyle. This radio station is very small (only four people). They relied heavily upon listeners for information, updates, and eyewitness accounts.

The Hormby television station relied principally upon official sources. This approach or "command post view" was also adopted by the television stations in Madeira and Dickerson. The official sources tended to be traditional sources for the reporters in these communities.

The Byerton television station also relied heavily upon official sources, however, this alliance was a departure from their regular practice. During normal times, this television station tries to focus upon the citizens of the community. In other words, they rely on citizens as their major source. They talk to citizens about their reaction to current events and issues and how they feel these events will affect themselves and the local
community. Therefore, the sources this station contacted during the emergency were not their traditional sources, but ones which they tend to use only minimally.

Both officials and citizens were used as major sources for news in Sutton. In each of the other five cases, both citizens and officials were used, however the degree of reliance on each varied by organizational size and disaster agent. The smaller organizations, such as those in Carlyle, relied upon citizens to provide information that its small staff could not gather. Likewise, in areas where the nature of the disaster agent made travel and contact with officials difficult, citizens were relied upon for news. In Hormby the flooding was so great that reporters were unable to travel. The same was true in Byerton during both hurricanes. It was not unusual for reporters to become stranded in certain areas or to be caught in areas where there were no working telephones.

In Sutton, these obstacles did not exist and therefore citizens were used more as supplemental sources rather than as primary ones. This pattern was also found in Madeira. The flooded area was somewhat focalized and limited in scope. The media organizations were not located in the impacted area and it was relatively easy for
reporters to commute to and from the scene and to call back to the office when they had reports.

7. The Role of Television, Radio, and Newspaper. In Sutton, the local television station's ability to broadcast live and remote from the helicopter played a critical role in the community's response to the emergency. The newspaper, on the other hand, played more of a secondary role in which they covered the more in-depth and background aspects of the event. While television acted as a medium for the officials, radio served as a medium for the citizens.

In Hormby, the flood made travel impossible and prevented reporters from reaching officials. The station therefore relied heavily upon citizens for information. The station took on a near talk show format, in which citizens called in with questions or information regarding the situation. In this way the station became a conduit for the citizens, not the officials.

The Madeira radio station also noted that its role was different during the emergency than during regular times. During the emergency it was involved in reporting to its listeners breaking news and up to the minute updates. While "on your average Tuesday morning we are giving them the same news that they can get in a newsstand."
And to be honest with you some of it comes right out of the newspaper."

Television and newspaper played very different roles during the hurricane in Byerton also. The television station became more official oriented and primarily broadcast official instructions and orders. They viewed themselves as having a "judicial responsibility" which they do not have during normal times. They felt that what they broadcast became a "matter of public safety."

Meanwhile, the newspaper in Byerton viewed itself as a chronicler. They stated facts about the storm. They also gave standard information, such as what to do before, during, and after the storm. They also gave tracking charts. Their coverage was more than just blow by blow descriptions about the storm. They included information regarding preparation and the hurricane history of the area.

The data suggest that the role each type of media played in each disaster was very similar. Newspaper, radio and television to a considerable degree adopt different roles and cover different aspects of the storm. This differentiation or specialization appears to be an elaboration to the slight specialization which exists during normal times.
8. The Sharing of Information. To a certain extent, the degree to which organizations share information with one another rests on the size of the community. As is the case in Sutton, there appears to be less sharing of information in Byerton, Hormby and Madeira, than in Carlyle and Dickerson. There are various reasons for this practice. There is, however, a common element throughout all these communities. In all cases, there were indications that the amount of sharing increased during the disaster.

In Byerton, media organizations maintain a very competitive relationship. When there is a sharing of information, it is usually in exchange for another piece of information, or for a ride in another's helicopter or plane. There are strong official organizational policies regarding this arrangement. During the hurricane, the official policy did not change, however informally there was more sharing of information. Reporters in the field aided one another. Also evident in Byerton and other communities was more sharing among reporters from different types of outlets than among those from the same type. This pattern is not surprising since these media take on different roles during the emergency.

In contrast, there is a great deal more sharing of information in the smaller communities of Carlyle and
Dickerson. The market in Carlyle is very noncompetitive. This noncompetitive relationship refers only to the local radio station and newspaper. The media outlets in the larger neighboring city maintain a competitive relationship. It is not unusual for the local radio station to call the newspaper with information and ask or request that they investigate the piece and find out some background information. This cooperative relationship was enhanced during the emergency. These outlets are so small that there was more than enough news for each. They had no qualms about giving leads to each other that they alone could not follow, due to a shortage of personnel or time.

Dickerson media outlets also boast of maintaining very noncompetitive relationships with each other. Most of the people who work in the mass media attended the same local university. Therefore, many of the reporters are friends and often call each other or meet informally. Moreover, there is considerable personnel turnover among organizations and many people in upper management positions know one another from previous jobs. During the hotel fire, the news director at one station often exchanged information with a former co-worker who was a news director at another station. This information was then passed to reporters to pursue or was put on the air without additional verification. In Dickerson, sharing is not
uncommon among different types of media organizations or among the same type.

The findings in Sutton regarding this area are similar to those found in the other communities. Although no formal policies regarding sharing exist, it is a common practice which is exercised with greater frequency during emergencies.

Summary and Conclusions.

It has been demonstrated that the findings drawn from the Sutton case were also found in varying degrees in five other communities. Although somewhat influenced by community size, organizational size and the characteristics of the disaster agent, there are common elements which exist in all the communities. (See Table 2 and 3 for a summary of these findings.)
Table 2: Summary Of Findings Regarding Intraorganizational Issues In Sutton and Five Other Communities

**Intraorganizational Issues**

1. Gatekeeping - Differential patterns of gatekeeping between the electronic media and print media in Sutton, in general were found in the five other communities.

2. Decision Making - The pattern of collective decision making in the electronic media in Sutton was also found in the five other communities. However, as in Sutton, the print media outlets in the other communities tended to remain the same as during non-disaster periods.

3. Technology - As was the case in Sutton, the ability to air live coverage and broadcast instantaneously was critical to television and radio in all the communities (except Dickerson). The newspaper outlets remained limited by print technology.

4. Autonomy - In Sutton, it appeared that reporters from all outlets except the newspaper were given an increased amount of autonomy. This pattern generally pervaded throughout all the media outlets in the other communities.

Media outlets in Byerton, Hormby and Madeira appeared to experience similar changes of a similar degree to that in Sutton. In all four cases, these outlets were of similar size and are located in relatively large communities. Comparatively, the alterations in the outlets of Carlyle and Dickerson, although similar, were of a lesser magnitude.
Table 3: Summary Of Findings Regarding Interorganizational Issues In Sutton And Five Other Communities

Interorganizational Issues

5. Press Conferences and Releases - With the exception of the newspaper outlet in Byerton, all outlets, including those in Sutton, relied heavily on press conferences and press releases during the disaster period.

6. Sources - Similar to the Sutton pattern, the media tended to rely heavily on both official sources and the audience as a source for news. Carlyle, Hormby and Madeira, however, relied more heavily upon official sources.

7. The Role of Television, Radio and Newspaper - In each community, the newspaper tended to focus upon in-depth and background issues of the event, while the electronic outlets vied for the role of primary disseminator of up to the minute information.

8. Sharing Information - Although the amount of information sharing generally increased among all media in all communities, more sharing was evidenced in the smaller communities of Carlyle and Dickerson than in Sutton and the other larger communities.

Table 4 summarizes the findings from this study. It examines each organizational dimension of each type of media outlet in each community. It reveals that many of the findings from Sutton are also found in the other communities. Although, the table does suggest that the patterns across organizations are similar, it must also be noted, however, that these patterns appear in varying degrees across outlets, as well as, across communities.
Table 4: Similar and Dissimilar Organizational Patterns Between Media Outlets in Sutton and Media Outlets in Five Other Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Carlyle</th>
<th>Byerton</th>
<th>Hornby</th>
<th>Madiera</th>
<th>Dickerson</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>T R N</td>
<td>T R N</td>
<td>T R N</td>
<td>T R N</td>
<td>T R N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Gatekeeping</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Decision Making</td>
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<td>+ + o</td>
<td>+ + o</td>
<td>o o o</td>
<td>o o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Technology</td>
<td>o o o</td>
<td>o o o</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
<td>o o o</td>
<td>- + +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reporter Autonomy</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
<td>+ o o</td>
<td>+ o o</td>
<td>o o o</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Press Conferences and Releases</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>+ + -</td>
<td>o o o</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sources</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Television, Radio and Newspaper</td>
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<td>+ + +</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
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<td>8. Information Sharing</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

T = Television
R = Radio
N = Newspaper
+ = similar pattern
- = dissimilar pattern
o = insufficient data
Sutton produced findings which do appear to be generalizable. The similarities are most prevalent in similar size communities although they also exist in smaller communities. Sufficient data were available to reveal that similar patterns exist in all organizations across all five communities along the dimensions of gatekeeping, decision making, sources, the role of television, radio and newspaper, and the amount of information sharing.
CHAPTER 5

Our primary purpose has been to understand mass media behavior during disasters. In order to accomplish this goal, an extensive case study was constructed and findings from it were compared to findings from five other communities. The analysis focused upon issues of change in organizational structure and alterations in news processing during disasters. These two dimensions were examined through a focus upon eight specific intraorganizational and interorganizational issues. These topics included 1) gatekeeping, 2) decision making, 3) the role of technology, 4) reporter autonomy, 5) the role of press conferences and releases, 6) sources, 7) the role of television, radio and newspaper, and 8) the sharing of information.

FINDINGS

The findings suggest that there are many similarities in the organizational activities of different media outlets across various communities, such as an increase in the amount of information sharing among reporters, gatekeeping, and the increase in the amount of autonomy granted reporters. However, some differences can be observed. Primarily, these differences concern the role
of press conferences and press releases and decision making. In general, the empirically observed patterns associated with the other six dimensions were strikingly similar. What might explain the observed differences?

Three suggestions can be offered. First, one should consider the size of the affected community. Carlyle and Dickerson are both relatively small communities. It is within these communities that various patterns can be observed. The variable which seemed to affect the amount of information-sharing among reporters in a community is the degree of familiarity among them. The communities in which the reporters knew each other best and had normally rather extensive patterns of interaction, were the communities in which the most sharing occurred. The reporters in the small communities knew each other and were friends. Hence, they talked informally to each other, did favors for each other, and used each other for reassurance regarding their own news judgement.

Second, the size of the organization involved is a relevant factor. The smaller the organization, the greater the degree of reporter autonomy. This finding is consistent with the suggestion that individual autonomy tends to be more limited in bureaucratic organizations. In the communities examined, the larger media outlets tended
to be more bureaucratic. Consequently, the reporters tended to have less freedom because of organizational rules and limitations. The reporters working in the media outlets in Carlyle and Dickerson evidenced more autonomy than those in Sutton, or any of the other five communities. They were less restrained by formal organizational policy than the reporters in the larger organizations of Byerton and Hormby.

Third, the characteristics of the disaster agent seems to bear some relationship to organizational response. The communities which were struck by diffuse agents, such as floods, tornadoes and hurricanes, evidenced a somewhat different pattern of response than did those which experienced focused, isolated agents. To a limited degree, the hotel fire in Dickerson and focalized flooding in Madeira resulted in organizational responses more similar to that observed in Sutton than did the agents associated with the other communities. The similarities rest primarily with the use of the audience as a major source of information. In the communities impacted by diffuse disaster agents, the media outlets' facilities suffered damage and, therefore, had to rely more upon the audience for information due to their lack of mobility and their inability to reach emergency officials. When reporters were unable to go into the field due to flooding, or when
the means of communication were disrupted between the reporters in the field and the station, then, out of necessity, the station relied on calls from the audience for information and distributed the information as eyewitness accounts.

One caveat must be noted concerning the generalizability of these findings. This study has focused exclusively upon media outlets which, if not the largest in the community, were the most prominent and most actively involved in news coverage of the disaster. Therefore, the findings from Sutton, which are based on data from the three major media outlets, are being generalized to media outlets of similar standing in other communities. The degree, however, to which these findings may be generalized to smaller and less prominent media may be limited.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE FINDINGS TO PREVIOUS FINDINGS

How do the findings from this study compare to what is already known regarding the activities of the mass media in disasters? While some previous findings are supported or elaborated upon, others are contradicted.

The data regarding the gatekeeping processes in these organizations were clear. Concerning the electronic media, the findings were similar to those offered by Waxman
(1973a). The gatekeeping processes were truncated during the emergency. Waxman's study, however, was limited solely to the gatekeeping activities within radio stations. This study extended the examination of gatekeeping processes into the print media. A significant difference was found. Rather than being truncated, the gatekeeping processes within the newspaper organizations were elaborated. Through the addition of rewrite people, newspaper organizations were able to elaborate upon their news processing system. This elaboration allowed them to extensively process and filter incoming information. While the electronic media tended to broadcast "everything" pertaining to the disaster, in an effort to fill air time, the print media condensed all the incoming information into collaborative stories in an effort to conserve space. The needs of these types of organizations are different during a disaster, and consequently they adapt in dissimilar ways. Simply put, (proportional to the amount of incoming disaster information) the electronic media have more time to fill during disasters; newspaper outlets have less. The respective alterations in the gatekeeping processes, therefore, are adaptive measures needed to respond to this emergent situation.

The findings concerning the sources commonly used by media organizations raise some questions regarding the
command post view. (Quarantelli, 1981) These findings do not contradict the notion that the media rely upon officials as sources of news, however, they may not be the exclusive sources as has been suggested. In other words, the use of the audience as a source of information appears to be quite prominent. Its prominence may serve to counter-balance the command post view to a certain degree. Therefore, while the command post view is definitely present during disasters and officials are sought as news sources more during disaster times than normal periods, the audience also is an important source of news. Particularly with the increased use of equipment permitting live coverage, electronic outlets can place reporters at many different locations; they are not confined by equipment to the command post.

A substantial amount of information-sharing was observed to occur among reporters. The sharing tended to be informal in nature and heightened during the emergencies. Information was often scarce and needed. At command posts, evacuation shelters, hospitals, and other sites, reporters congregated and swapped information.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO DISASTER STUDIES

The Disaster Research Center’s four-fold typology categorizes organizations in disasters based upon their
structure and tasks. The typology categorizes organizations based upon whether or not they maintain their old structure during disasters or develop a new one, as well as if they engage in regular or non-regular tasks. (Dynes, 1970:141) This typology is designed to categorize all responding organizations.

The four types of organizations which emerge are established, expanding, extending and emergent. The first, established organizations, are organizations which maintain their old structure and continue to engage in regular tasks. Expanding organizations adopt a new structure, yet engage in regular tasks, while extending organizations maintain their old structure, but adopt non-regular tasks. The last type, emergent organizations, adopt a new structure and non-regular tasks. These organizations typically become involved in community disaster response in the above sequence. When only the first two types of organizations respond to an event, the event is considered a local community emergency. The additional involvement of the latter two denote a major community disaster. (Dynes, 1970:141)

The role of mass media organizations in disasters may be viewed in one of two ways. First, one may visualize mass media outlets as outside organizations solely involved
in covering the disaster as an event. Second, one may consider these organizations as being part of the responding community in much the same way as police departments, fire departments, and the Red Cross. It is the second orientation that has been used throughout this study. Therefore, these organizations should fall some place within the four fold topology of organizations.

The data suggest that mass media organizations can be classified as established organizations. Established organizations tend to be bureaucratic and complex. They tend to have "clear cut lines of authority, designated channels of communications, and explicit communication roles." (Dynes, 1970:140) During disasters, these organizations attempt to perform only traditional tasks and utilize their regular personnel. They may, however, undergo internal alterations. Decision making may occur at lower levels within the organization. (Dynes, 1970)

Media organizations match these characteristics. Although they vary in degree, each organization has a complex, bureaucratic organizational structure. However, more importantly, these organizations adhere to their traditional tasks of reporting news and supplying audiences with information. Although they did experience internal alterations, these alterations facilitated the
organizations' abilities to perform their traditional tasks. Moreover, they utilized their permanent staff. Additional people were not employed by the organizations; at most people from other departments within the organizations were temporarily reassigned to the news department.

Regardless of the fact that media organizations can be viewed as established organizations, there is still some ambiguity surrounding the role of the media. As previously mentioned, the media can be viewed as actors in the response system or as outsiders reporting the event. Determining which role the media adopts is not only an issue for the particular media outlet to decide, but also one for the other responding organizations to determine. It is at this juncture of determining the role of the media that potential conflict may arise if expectations between the media organizations and other organizations are not the same.

If both media outlets and other emergency relevant organizations accept the media's role as part of the response team, then the organizations can operate within an integrated system. The media can operate as an integral part of the warning system or aid officials in the dissemination of information. On the contrary, media
outlets can act as outsiders reporting the event and their relationship with the emergency relevant organizations can more closely resemble their usual normal time relationship. However, should there be an absence of understanding among the organizations, conflict and antagonistic relations may develop due to the unfulfilled expectations of the organizations involved.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO MASS COMMUNICATION STUDIES

This study has taken an organizational approach to the study of mass media organizations in disasters. It has attempted to illustrate how these organizations are affected by a sudden and dramatic change in the environment. This relationship between the mass media organization and the environment is critical. The study of these organizations under disaster situations serves to highlight this relationship.

During non-disaster or normal times, the mass media organizational structure allows the organization to order the environment in such a way that it is able to report only a limited number and type of event out of an infinite number. Simply put, the mass media organization is not equipped to report every event or to "mirror reality."
Studies by Tuchman (1978), Gans (1979) and Epstein (1973) attempt to demonstrate how media organizations work within organizational limits and economical and temporal constraints. In an effort to operate within these constraints, and within the timing and rhythms of the organization, organizations rely upon such devices as beat systems, press conferences, press releases, wire services, other media outlets and the like. These mechanisms allow the organizations to report many events without actually attending them or at least with very little effort. In part, restraints such as these are responsible for the different types of coverage and stories reported by the different types of media. Their particular technology and the normal timing and patterns of organizational activity facilitate the coverage of certain events. The timing of an event has a substantial effect upon whether or not it will be covered. The chances of an event being covered by the media greatly depends upon when it takes place. Simply put, the earlier an event takes place the greater are its chance of obtaining media coverage. Therefore, press conferences and other pseudoevents are often scheduled at times which are most amenable to the media. However, because of the differences in technology and deadlines, certain events are more easily covered by the electronic media and other events by the print media.
However, the result of these organizational limitations is that many possible newsworthy events are never covered because they fall outside of the news net. Simply put, media organizations, like most organizations, must make their environment as predictable as possible. Day to day these organizations, therefore, can rely on the environment to fit their organizational limitations and needs. However, in the event of a disaster, the environment is altered and the organization is placed in an unpredictable and unplanned situation. How does the organization fare? This study has attempted to answer this question.

The changes within the environment can have a substantial effect on the organization. The extent of this effect varies, and rests upon the ability of the organization to respond, i.e., its resources, flexibility, and the degree of effort it undertakes to meet these alterations in the environment. Many small media outlets do not experience any change at all because they make no effort to respond to the new situation. The organizations focused upon in this study, however, are of the type and size which do tend to attempt to adapt to the altered environment. What does adaption to the altered environment actually entail?
First, the unpredictability of the situation tends to throw off the normal organizational rhythms. The organization can no longer rely upon the daily routine of events to occur in its environment. For example, the normal Tuesday night town council meeting or the Thursday night basketball game may not be held as scheduled. In addition, the normally convenient time for press conferences may not be met. These types of changes can be extremely problematic for the normal deadlines and press times of media organizations. Furthermore, certain normal, traditional sources and beats, such as the county courthouse, may become unimportant or irrelevant while others, such as the Red Cross or Salvation Army, may become critical. Reporters may not know the representatives from these organizations or have the degree of rapport with them that they have with their traditional sources. Hence, reporters may face difficulties contacting sources and obtaining information. Moreover, and perhaps most critically, rather than having an over abundance of news, these organizations suddenly are faced with the possible problem of having a shortage of information to fill the time or space devoted to news.

The effects of the altered environment and new demands lead to alterations in the organization. Instead of the organization shaping the environment, the
environment shapes the organization. Gatekeeping processes are truncated or elaborated, decision making becomes a collective process, reporters are granted more autonomy and sharing information becomes a prominent norm. In effect, the news net is shifted to capture different kinds of news items. The goals of the organizations and its values are shifted to meet the new situation.

Therefore, the study of mass media organizations during disasters reveals the fact that these organizations are not specifically designed to report the unexpected or the unpredictable happening. They can only do so with a substantial amount of alteration and adaptation. It is through the examination of these alterations and adaptations that insight is gained into the structure, norms, and beliefs and values of mass media organizations.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It has been suggested that future research should focus upon what we now think we know, or at least strongly suspect, about mass communications in disasters. Thus, there ought to be studies attempting to confirm, for example, the truncated gatekeeping which seems to occur at emergency times, the differential media deviation from normal everyday operations, the influence of organizational size in mass media changes at times of disasters... (Quarantelli, 1987:26)
It is these issues that this study has attempted to address. However, more still needs to be accomplished in these areas. Although, the organizational dimensions have been treated as discrete issues, there are interrelated. In particular, the role of technology influences several of the other issues discussed. It appears that the ability of the electronic media to broadcast instantaneously contributes to certain changes within the organization. These changes are not found within the print media organizations. These affected organizational aspects include the gatekeeping process, decision making patterns, and the role of television, radio and newspaper.

Regarding gatekeeping, this study revealed that the truncation of the gatekeeping process is not necessarily the case in all media organizations; the print media appear to be an exception. The technological ability of the electronic media to broadcast live contributes to the need for a truncated gatekeeping process. During emergencies, the organization is under new time pressures and deadlines. These new constraints require that the gatekeeping process be truncated in order to meet the expectations of up-to-the-minute reporting of the emergency situation. The print media's technology, on the other hand, prevents the organization from disseminating news as quickly. Therefore, the types of organizational changes found in the
Electronic media are not found within in the print media. The lack of change within the print media is due to the maintenance of deadlines and normal time constraints.

Another factor which may contribute to the sharp differences between the print and electronic media is the manner in which these type of outlets tend to view themselves. Whereas the electronic media outlets tend to view themselves as monitors of the situation and suppliers of late breaking news, newspaper organizations do not view themselves in this manner. As a result, newspaper organizations do not attempt to compete with the electronic media for this role, but tend to adopt the role of chroniclers with the ability to supply background and in-depth information in their news reports. In other words, the print media tend to retain more of their traditional structure than the electronic media because the nature of their reporting does not change as drastically. In addition to the media outlet's view of themselves, research should also focus upon the views and expectations of other outlets and organizations in the local community. Expectations of the audience should also be considered.

Moreover, because this research focuses upon the largest, most involved media outlets in the local community, the findings may not be representative of the
smaller outlets in the communities. Future research should examine these smaller outlets in order to discern the extent to which these findings can be generalized.

Finally, an area not touched in this study is the effect of these organizational issues on news content. How do changes in the gatekeeping processes or in decision making processes affect news content. In addition, how do increased degree of autonomy, a heavier reliance upon press releases and news conferences, and a shift in the sources contacted affect content.

The study of mass media during disasters can serve students of disasters and mass media. Mass media organizations can serve a vital role in the response of a community to a disaster, and, therefore, can be studied as emergency relevant organizations. Likewise, the alterations within mass media organizations during disasters affords researchers the opportunity to obtain greater insights into the operations of these outlets and their relationship to society.
APPENDIX

MEDIA INTERVIEW GUIDE

We want to talk about some of the specifics aspects of your operation, both in normal times and during this emergency. But, before getting into the specific aspects, I would like simply to get a general, overall picture of your operations in this emergency.

Maybe we can go back to when your organization first got involved, and what your organization has been doing to the present time...sort of an overall view of what you have been doing. Let's start with when you first became involved with reporting about the event, and take it step-by-step up until the present.

1. When did you first hear about the _______ (agent)?
   
   PROBE: WHAT WAS THE CONTENT OF THE FIRST MESSAGE? (TRY TO GET A VERBATIM REPORT OF THE MESSAGE)

2. How did you first hear about the _______ (agent)?
   
   PROBE: WHO DID YOU FIRST HEAR IT FROM? (NEWS SOURCE)
   WHAT WAS THE MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION? (E.G., PHONE, RADIO, ETC.)

3. From the time you first heard about the _______, what did you do?
   
   PROBE: LOOK FOR GATEKEEPING FUNCTIONS: WHAT TYPES OF DECISIONS WERE MADE ABOUT WHETHER OR HOW THE STORY SHOULD BE COVERED? WHAT DECISIONS WERE MADE ABOUT WHO SHOULD BE SENT INTO THE FIELD?
   WHY THEM RATHER THAN OTHERS? IN WHAT WAYS WAS TIME A FACTOR IN THESE DECISIONS? WHAT SOURCES OF INFORMATION WERE TAPPED?
Now I would like to ask some questions related to four broad categories of interest: (1) organization, (2) activities, (3) work product, and (4) history of your organization. Let's begin with organization. By "organization" I mean the way in which your station (newspaper) is organized and the personnel and resources that are available.

**ORGANIZATION**

**Pre-disaster Division of Labor**

(ASK FOR A COPY OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART: "You know, we might be able to save a lot of time here if I could see a copy of your organizational chart. Would you happen to have a copy available?" (HANG ON TO THIS CHART THROUGHOUT THE INTERVIEW, THEN ASK IF YOU COULD MAKE A COPY OF IT WHEN THE INTERVIEW IS COMPLETED.)

1. What are the major divisions of your organization?

2. How many people are employed in each of the major parts, as well as within the organization as a whole?

3. Now, let's talk about the news operation. Could you tell me about the number and type of personnel that work within your news department (or who have responsibility for news gathering and/or dissemination)?

   **PROBE:** NUMBER OF POSITIONS
   TITLES OF POSITIONS
   RESPONSIBILITY OF POSITIONS
   FULL TIME VERSUS PART TIME POSITIONS

4. Do any of the people you just told me about have additional responsibilities outside the news department (or multiple responsibilities within the news department)? e.g., doubling as an entertainment critic with other responsibilities?

5. Does your organization employ any "free lance" news gathers? (e.g., "stringers") If so, how many and in what capacity?

**Emergency Period Division of Labor**

6. Has the number of your personnel involved in news gathering changed at all since the emergency
began? If yes, how has it changed?

7. Has the organization of the newsroom changed at all since the emergency began? If yes, how has it changed?

PROBE: EXAMINE AND LOOK FOR ANY CHANGES IN THE ABOVE DIVISION OF LABOR

Pre-disaster Resources

8. Could you take a look at this list of resources and tell me which, if any, are available to your station (newspaper)?

PROBE: ARE THERE ANY RESOURCES FOR NEWS GATHERING NOT INCLUDED IN THE LIST WHICH ARE UTILIZED BY YOUR STATION (newspaper)?

Emergency Period Resources

9. Since the emergency began, has there been any change in the resources that are available for newsgathering? If so, what is the nature of those changes?

Pre-disaster Normative Structure

[QUESTION FOR RADIO ONLY]

10. Do you have a reporters handbook, or a set of rules and regulations regarding the production of stories? If so, can we have a copy? If not, what are the general rules that are followed here by reporters, editors, producers, and news readers in producing stories on a daily basis?

PROBE: WE ARE TRYING TO GET AT SUCH ISSUES AS PROTECTION OF SOURCES, JOURNALISTIC ETHICS, ACCEPTED PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING A STORY, EDITING A STORY, ETC.

[QUESTION FOR TELEVISION ONLY]

10. Do you have a reporters handbook, or set of rules and regulations regarding the production of stories? If so, can we have a copy? If not, what are the general rules that are followed here by reporters, cameramen, editors, and producers in producing daily stories?
10. Do you have a reporters handbook, or set of rules and regulations regarding the production of stories? If so, can we have a copy? If not, what are the general rules that are followed here by reporters, editors, and production staff in producing the daily news?

PROBE: (WE ARE TRYING TO GET AT SUCH ISSUES AS PROTECTION OF SOURCES, JOURNALISTIC ETHICS, ACCEPTED PROCEDURES FOR FILMING A STORY, EDITING A STORY, CUTAWAY SHOTS, ETC.)

[QUESTION FOR NEWSPAPER ONLY]

11. Have there been any changes in the rules and regulations during the disaster? If so, what is the nature of these changes?

[PROBE FOR RADIO ONLY]

PROBE: LOOK FOR CHANGES IN RULES REGARDING EDITING OF STORIES, DIFFERENCES IN "GOING LIVE," AS OPPOSED TO FILING REPORTS, ETC.

[PROBE FOR TELEVISION ONLY]

PROBE: LOOK FOR CHANGES IN RULES REGARDING EDITING OF STORIES, DIFFERENCES IN "GOING LIVE" AS OPPOSED TO FILING FILMED REPORTS, USE OF MINI-CAMS, ETC.

Pre-disaster Ideological Structure

Values

12. Let's begin with a rather broad question. Exactly how does your station define "news?"

What types of stories do your editors (and producers) tend to favor? What criteria are employed
in determining which stories are most “newsworthy?”

[PROBE FOR RADIO AND NEWSPAPER ONLY]
PROBE: WE ARE SEARCHING FOR GENERAL JOURNALISTIC VALUES ABOUT NEWS. I.E., HARD VERSUS SOFT, INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL, LOCAL, ETC.

[PROBE FOR TELEVISION ONLY]
PROBE: TRY TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VISUAL ASPECT OF THE STORY INFLUENCES IT'S SELECTION. I.E., THE TENDENCY OR PRESSURE TO "SHOOT BLOODY."

13. Exactly how does your organization define a disaster or emergency?

Beliefs

14. As an organization, what role do you see the station (newspaper) performing in the community on a daily basis?

PROBE: WE ARE LOOKING FOR SOME NOTION OF HOW THE STATION (NEWSPAPER) VIEWS THEIR ACTIVITIES IN LIGHT OF OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Emergency Period Ideological Structure

15. What types of stories do your editors, reporters (and news director) tend to favor in the coverage of the disaster?

PROBE: GET COMPARISON WITH QUESTION #12

16. As an organization, what role do you see the station (newspaper) performing in the community during the disaster?

PROBE: WE ARE TRYING TO DETERMINE IF THEY SEE THEMSELVES AS PART OF THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, OR JUST AS REPORTERS OR CHRONICLERS OF THE EVENT

Pre-disaster News Infrastructure
17. What are your normal sources of news?

PROBE: DO YOU SUBSCRIBE TO ANY WIRE SERVICE? IF YES, WHICH ONE (S)? WHAT PERCENT OF NEWS COMES FROM THEM? DO YOU SUBSCRIBE TO ANY SYNDICATED SERVICES? IF YES, WHICH ONE(S)? WHAT PERCENT OF NEWS COMES FROM THEM? DO YOU RECEIVE MANY PRESS RELEASES AND PUBLICITY ANNOUNCEMENTS? IF YES, HOW MUCH DO YOU RELY UPON THEM FOR NEWS?

Emergency Period News Infrastructure

18. During the disaster, what were the major sources of news for your station (or newspaper)?

PROBE: ATTEMPT TO DETERMINE TO WHAT EXTENT TRADITIONAL NEWS SOURCES WERE UTILIZED AS OPPOSED TO NEW, DIFFERENT, NON-TRADITIONAL SOURCES

Pre-disaster Interorganizational Relationships

19. With what organizations do you normally have contact within the community?

PROBE: PROBE FOR BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL CONTACTS. E.G., GOING TO LUNCH, ETC. DETERMINE THE DEGREE TO WHICH ROUTINIZED CONTACT IS MAINTAINED WITH EMERGENCY RELEVANT ORGANIZATIONS

20. During your normal operations, do you have any contact with other local media organizations? If yes, then

PROBE: WHICH ORGANIZATIONS (SPECIFICALLY OTHER TYPES OF MEDIA OUTLETS)? WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE CONTACT? DO YOU SHARE COPY OR NEWS MATERIAL? DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN "POOL" COVERAGE?

21. Are there any formal, written agreements of understanding among the local media? If so, with whom and what is the nature?
22. During normal operations, do you have any contact with media from outside the community? If so, with whom and what is the nature of the contacts?

Emergency Period Interorganizational Relationships

23. During the disaster, with which organizations have you been involved?

PROBE: DETERMINE THE DEGREE TO WHICH CONTACT WITH EMERGENCY RELEVANT ORGANIZATIONS OCCURRED

24. During the disaster, have you had any contact with other local media organizations? If yes, then

PROBE: WHICH ORGANIZATIONS? WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE INTERACTION? DO THEY SHARE MATERIAL? DO THEY PARTICIPATE IN "POOL" COVERAGE?

25. Are there formal, written agreements of understanding among the local media for coverage of disasters? If so, what is the nature of them, and can we have a copy?

PROBE: BE ALERT TO FORMAL, WRITTEN AND INFORMAL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE NEWSPAPER, RADIO, AND TELEVISION OUTLETS

26. During the disaster, have you had any contact with media outside the community? If yes, then


PRODUCT

[FOR TELEVISION AND RADIO ONLY]

Pre-disaster Content

1. How many newscasts do you have each day? What are the hours at which news is broadcast, and how long is each broadcast?

2. Approximately how much of your broadcast day (in
terms of percentage) is devoted to news during normal times?

PROBE: WHO DETERMINES HOW MUCH NEWS IS BROADCAST? ON THE AVERAGE, HOW MANY DIFFERENT STORIES ARE INCLUDED IN EACH BROADCAST?

[FOR NEWSPAPER ONLY]

1. What is the average size of your daily newspaper?

2. Approximately how much of your paper (in terms of percentage) is devoted to news stories in normal times?

PROBE: WHO DETERMINES THE SIZE OF THE PAPER? HOW MANY DIFFERENT EDITIONS DO YOU USUALLY PUBLISH IN A 24 HOUR PERIOD?

Emergency Period Content

[FOR TELEVISION AND RADIO ONLY]

3. (Refer to the proceeding questions) Has there been any change in the number of newscasts during the disaster?

4. Did the percentage of your broadcast day devoted to news change during the disaster? If yes, then

PROBE: WHO MAKES THE DECISION CONCERNING EXACTLY WHAT CONSTITUTES AN EMERGENCY AND HOW MUCH EXPANDED COVERAGE IT MERITS? WAS THERE ANY CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF DIFFERENT STORIES INCLUDED IN EACH BROADCAST?

5. (If the station devoted more time than usual to news during the disaster), what, if anything, had to be preempted to make the necessary time for this increase in news?


[FOR NEWSPAPER ONLY]
3. (Refer to preceding questions) What has been the size of the paper during the disaster?

4. Did the percentage of the paper devoted to news coverage change during the emergency? If so, how did it change?

PROBE: WHO MAKES THE DECISION CONCERNING EXACTLY WHAT CONSTITUTES AN EMERGENCY AND HOW MUCH EXTRA COVERAGE IT MERITS?

5. (IF THE NEWSPAPER HAS DEVOTED MORE TIME THAN USUAL TO NEWS DURING THE DISASTER), what, if necessary space/time for this increase in news?


ACTIVITIES

Let's talk a bit about activities. By "activities" I mean the way in which your organization operates in both normal and emergency time periods in covering the news. What I am hoping to get here is an understanding of how news stories are processed within your station.

Pre-disaster Work Schedule

1. Let's talk briefly about work schedules in the news department. Are there work shifts? If so, what are they? What are the responsibilities of each shift? How many people normally work during each shift?

[FOR TELEVISION AND RADIO ONLY]

2. What is the deadline for the completion of each news program?

PROBE: FIND OUT WHAT IS THE TIME DEADLINE FOR A FINISHED SCRIPT AND HOW MUCH TIME BEFORE GOING ON THE AIR THIS REPRESENTS
2. What is the press run for your paper?

PROBE: IF THERE IS MORE THAN ONE EDITION, FIND OUT WHAT TIME THE PRESS RUN FOR EACH, I.E., WHEN IS THE NEWSPAPER PUT TO BED?

Emergency Period Work Schedule

3. During the disaster, had this work schedule changed? If yes, then

PROBE: HOW HAS THE WORK SCHEDULE BEEN ALTERED? WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH NEW SHIFT? HOW MANY PEOPLE WORK DURING EACH SHIFT?

[FOR TELEVISION AND RADIO ONLY]

4. Has the deadline for completion of stories been altered during the disaster? If yes, then how has it been altered?

[FOR NEWSPAPER ONLY]

4. Has the time of the press run been altered during the disaster?

Pre-disaster News Processing

5. How do you normally hear about news stories?

PROBE: TRY TO DETERMINE SOURCES OF STORIES, THE EXTENT TO WHICH STORIES ORIGINATE WITHIN THE STATION’S STAFF OR COME FROM OUTSIDE, ETC.

6. Once you hear about a potential story, who decides if it is worth covering?

7. Who normally assigns stories to reporters?

8. Who and how many people are normally assigned to cover a story?

PROBE: WHY THESE PEOPLE RATHER THAN OTHERS? (IF IT VARIES WITH THE STORY, DETERMINE WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE THE DECISION ON HOW
9. Who is responsible for making decisions in the field? (TO THE INTERVIEWER: This is a question concerning discretion. Ask if reporters act on their own decisions or if they must clear their decisions with supervisors before taking action.)

10. Does your station (or newspaper) have beat reporters, general reporters and/or specialized reporters?

PROBE: WHAT ARE THE BEATS? WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THE REPORTING STAFF IS GENERAL, SPECIALIZED OR BEAT REPORTERS, ETC?

[FOR TELEVISION AND RADIO ONLY]

11. What is the latest time that a reporter can file a story with an editor in order to make a broadcast?

[FOR NEWSPAPER ONLY]

11. What is the latest time that a reporter can put a story on the editor's desk?

12. What happens to the story after it is brought or sent in from the field?

PROBE: WHO IS THE FIRST PERSON THE REPORTER GIVES IT TO? WHAT DOES THAT PERSON DO WITH IT? (DECISIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, ETC) WHERE DOES IT GO FROM THERE?

(TRY TO GET A RUNNING ACCOUNT OF HOW THE STORY IS PROCESSED. PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO "DECISION POINTS" WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION. TAKE NOTE OF WHO HAS THE AUTHORITY TO MAKE FIRM DECISIONS CONCERNING THE FATE OF THE STORY AS OPPOSED TO WHO HAS AUTHORITY TO MERELY MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE FATE OF THE STORY.)

[FOR TELEVISION AND RADIO ONLY]

13. Who makes the final decision concerning what is ultimately broadcast? (eg. length, placement, in newscast, etc.)
13. Who makes the final decision concerning what is ultimately printed?

14. Do you utilize a "morning huddle?" If yes, then

PROBE: AT WHAT TIME DOES THE MEETING OCCUR?
WHO IS PRESENT AT THE MEETING? TO WHAT DEGREE ARE THE DECISIONS REACHED AT THIS MEETING DETERMINANT OF THE CONTENT OF THE NEWSCAST (OR THE PAPER)?

Emergency Period Activities

15. Did the process you have just described (questions 5-14) change in any way during the disaster? If so, how?

YOU MAY WISH TO GO THROUGH QUESTIONS 5-14 AGAIN. PROBES FOR EACH MIGHT BE USED TO VERIFY IF ALL CHANGES WERE MENTIONED.

DETERMINE IF CHANGES IN THE GATEKEEPING PROCESS OCCURRED. BE SENSITIVE TO CHANGES IN REPORTING TECHNIQUES (E.G., USE OF TEAMS AS OPPOSED TO INDIVIDUAL REPORTERS) AND EDITING

16. Has the disaster affected your organization's ability to contact usual sources of information? If yes, what alternative news gathering techniques have you employed?

17. Has the disaster affected your organization's ability to verify stories? If yes, how, and what have you done to rectify this?

18. Has your organization experienced any increase or decrease in calls from the public, other media or organizations, i.e., have you experienced telephone overload?

PROBE: HAVE YOUR LINES BEEN TIED UP DUE TO CITIZENS' CALLS? HOW ARE YOU HANDLING THESE CALLS? ARE THESE REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION INFLUENCING WHAT YOUR ORGANIZATION BROADCASTS (OR PRINTS)?
19. Now I would like to compare what you have just told me with what happens during normal time periods. Could you tell me approximately how many calls from citizens you normally receive on a daily basis?

PROBE: HOW MANY LETTERS FROM CITIZENS DO YOU RECEIVE NORMALLY? HOW MANY PERSONAL VISITS FROM CITIZENS DO YOU NORMALLY GET? WHAT IS THE USUAL NATURE OF THESE CONTACTS? E.G., COMPLAINTS, SUGGESTIONS, ETC. (WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO DETERMINE IS THE TYPICAL CONTENT OF THESE CITIZEN CONTACTS)

REFERENCE GROUPS

We are interested in determining who most strongly influences what you and/or other reporters cover and broadcast.

1. Do legal factors, such as libel suits, influence your work? If yes, then

PROBE: IN WHAT WAY? WHAT TYPES OF SAFEGUARDS DO YOU EXERCISE FOR PROTECTION?

2. Do political factors influence your work? If yes, then

PROBE: WHAT TYPES OF POLITICAL FACTORS AND HOW? (BE SENSITIVE TO FCC REGULATIONS AND THE FAIRNESS DOCTRINE)

3. Do economic factors influence your work? If yes, then

PROBE: WHAT ARE THE MAJOR ECONOMIC FACTORS? (LOOK FOR COSTS OF AIR TIME, LIMITATION OF MINICAMS AND EQUIPMENT, ETC. DO THEY FEAR LOSING ADVERTISING BY RUNNING CERTAIN STORIES?)

4. What groups of people most strongly influence what you cover and broadcast (or print)? In other words, who do you respect as being qualified to evaluate the quality of your work? Whose comments do you respect? Whose do you take into account?
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PROBE: PROBE FOR AUDIENCE, ADVERTISERS, SUPERIORS, PEERS/COLLEAGUES, FAMILY AND FRIENDS, AND NEWS SOURCES IF THEY MENTION AUDIENCE, THEN ASK: WHO IS IN THE AUDIENCE? WHAT TYPE OF FEEDBACK DO YOU GET FROM THE AUDIENCE FOR ANY REFERENCE GROUPS MENTIONED, PROBE FOR THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF FEEDBACK

5. Did the disaster have any effect upon these reference groups or factors? (PROBE IN EACH AREA FOR ANY EFFECT)

SPECIFIC DISASTER CONCERNS

1. In what way, if any, does your organization consider disasters to be inherently different from other news events?

PROBE: DOES THE ORGANIZATION TREAT THEM DIFFERENTLY IN TERMS OF: EMPHASIS UPON HARD VERSUS SOFT, OR FEATURE, STORIES/WITHHOLDING INFORMATION FROM THE PUBLIC DURING MASS EMERGENCIES? PROBE TO SEE IF THESE ARE RELATED TO MYTHS ABOUT PANIC, ETC.

(WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO DETERMINE IS NOTIONS OF PANIC AND OTHER MYTHS OF DISASTER BEHAVIOR. WE WANT TO KNOW IF THEY FEEL THAT CERTAIN TYPES OF INFORMATION MAY INCITE ADVERSE OR DESTRUCTIVE REACTIONS ON THE PART OF PRIVATE CITIZENS)

2. What is your organization's view of the role of the press conference?

PROBE: DO THEY FAVOR PRESS CONFERENCES OVER OTHER TYPES OF NEWS GATHERING DURING DISASTERS? DO THEY SEE THE PRESS CONFERENCE AS AIDING THEM, OR AS BEING A MECHANISM TO DISTRIBUTE INFORMATION TO OTHER EMERGENCY RELEVANT ORGANIZATIONS DURING DISASTERS?

3. What were the two or three major problems your organization had in covering the event?

PROBE: PROBE IN THE AREAS OF: NEWS GATHERING, NEWS PROCESSING, EQUIPMENT, AIR TIME, DISTRIBUTION

4. How did you attempt to solve these problems?
5. Were these attempts successful, why or why not?

6. What two or three things did your organization do best? i.e., what are you most proud of in your coverage of this disaster?

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY AND PREPAREDNESS

Now I'd like to ask you just a few questions about your organization's disaster history and planning efforts.

1. Is your community especially prone to certain types of disasters? (e.g., hurricane in coastal regions; floods in flood plains; earthquakes along fault lines; etc.)

2. Has your organization had any prior experience with disasters in the last five years?

   PROBE: IMPACT OR THREAT?, AGENT?, WHEN?, MAGNITUDE OF THE IMPACT?, NATURE OF ORGANIZATIONAL INVOLVEMENT?

3. (IF ANSWERED YES TO QUESTION #2) As a result of your organization's previous experience, were any changes made?

   PROBE: OPERATIONAL CHANGES?, POLICY CHANGES?, MECHANICAL CHANGES?, RESOURCE CHANGES?, OTHER?

4. Have you personally had any prior disaster experience? If yes, then

   PROBE: AGENT?, WHEN?, NATURE OF INVOLVEMENT?,

5. Does your organization PRESENTLY HAVE A DISASTER PLAN? If yes, is it written (formalized) or unwritten (informal)?

   PROBE: ASK FOR A COPY OF THE PLAN. ASK FOR A DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN OR INFORMAL AGREEMENT. WHAT KIND OF BACK-UP EQUIPMENT DO YOU HAVE? HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT CONTACTING STAFF DURING THEIR OFF HOURS? HAS THE PLAN BEEN EXERCISED?
6. (IF ANSWERED "YES" TO QUESTION #5) Does your plan or agreement indicate tasks or activities which should be undertaken in the event that your facility is damaged or destroyed by the disaster? If yes, then

PROBE: DETERMINE THE NATURE OF THESE ACTIVITIES

7. As a result of your experience with this disaster (or past disasters) what advice would you offer to someone in a position similar to yours who has not had any prior disaster experience?

PROBE: DETERMINE WHAT IMPORTANT LESSONS WERE LEARNED

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Now to wrap up the interview, I'd like to ask you a few factual questions concerning the background of your organization. This should only take a couple of minutes of your time.

[FOR TELEVISION AND RADIO ONLY]

1. Confirm the complete name and call letters of the station

2. How many years has it been in existence?

3. Ownership?

   PROBE: IS THE STATION A LOCAL OUTLET OF A LARGER STATION

4. Power (kw) and directionality of beam?

5. Hours of Broadcast?

6. Network Affiliation?

7. Programming format?

8. Time devoted to:
   a. advertising
   b. music
   c. talk programs
   d. network programming
   e. local programming
9. Market, region, size, and local ratings for local news?

[FOR NEWSPAPER ONLY]

1. Confirm the complete name of the newspaper
2. How many years has it been in existence?
3. Ownership:
   PROBE: IS THE ORGANIZATION A LOCAL OUTLET OF A LARGER CHAIN?
4. What is your daily and Sunday circulation?
5. Do you publish any regional editions? If so, how many?
6. What is the size of your market region?
7. What percent of space is devoted to:
   a. advertising
   b. entertainment
   c. local news
   d. state news
   e. national news
   f. international news
   g. sports
   h. features
   i. other
### MEDIA RESOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME 1</th>
<th>TIME 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. VEHICLES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Helicopter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plane</td>
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<td>Boat</td>
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<td>4-wheel Drive Vehicle</td>
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<td>Station Wagon/Van</td>
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<td>Pick-up truck</td>
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<td>Automobiles</td>
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<th>TIME 1</th>
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<td><strong>2. MODES OF COMMUNICATION</strong></td>
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<td>Telephones</td>
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<td>Telephone Lines</td>
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<td>Unlisted Numbers (Hotlines)</td>
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<td>CB/Shortwave Radios</td>
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<td><strong>3. WIRE SERVICES</strong></td>
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<td>AP</td>
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<td>REUTERS</td>
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<td><strong>4. EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT</strong></td>
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<td>Generator(s) - With Gas</td>
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<td>Spare Transmitter and/or Parts</td>
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<td>Spare Antenna/Dish</td>
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<td>Spare Parts in General</td>
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<tr>
<td>First-Aid Kit, Etc.</td>
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<td>Blankets, Cushions</td>
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### TELEVISION RESOURCES

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<th>TIME 1</th>
<th>TIME 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remote Live Broadcasting Equipment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>*Permanently Mounted in Truck</td>
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<td>*Portable</td>
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<th>TIME 1</th>
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<td><strong>Electronic Field Production</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>*ENG Devices</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Battery-Operated Mini-Cam</td>
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<th>TIME 1</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Film Camera (s)</strong></td>
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</table>
Studio Cameras
Portable Videotape Recorders
Portable Sound Recorders/Players
Portable and/or Studio Editing Equipment
Other (specify)

RADIO RESOURCES

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<th>TIME 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Portable Sound Recorders/Players</td>
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<td>Portable and/or Studio Editing Equipment</td>
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NEWSPAPER RESOURCES

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<tr>
<td>Production Facilities:</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Printing Presses</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Typesetting Machines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Camera (s)</td>
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


Donohew, Lewis. 1967. "Newspaper Gatekeepers and Forces in the News Chain" Public Opinion Quarterly 31:


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