The readings for this week are stellar in the sense that they provide insight on the future of emergency management and the need for solutions that are rational. The history of Emergency Management is explored in great detail in each text, Haddock and et al focus on the logistics of EM and several avenues to explore regarding the need for cooperative collaboration between all levels of government and NGOs during times of disaster, Ward and Wamsley stress the need for a thorough analysis of the Emergency Management system which is able to develop a stable system of response capable of managing any disaster.

One of the important points raised by both authors has been the increasing dependence upon the federal government for assistance when initially it was that of local governments and private organizations that dealt with relief efforts during the first major disasters. Each of the authors manifest visions that the future of EM looks very dismal and bleak if it does not receive a major overhaul in upcoming years regarding the complexity of its systems and the inability of it to adapt. This is true within the context of the constant cycle of reform, failure and reorganization of FEMA that has been often consistent with every major disaster that overwhelms the system.

As the magnitude of disasters increase, so should the role of government in effectively seeking the best response. Does that mean that government should act as the sole source of response? No! If the private sector can perform the same tasks as the federal government more effectively and efficiently, than it should have those responsibilities. The federal government has contracts for all types of services including defense and engineering; it shouldn’t be a problem to have one that deals with disaster response, mitigation, planning, and preparedness. What should be the role of the government in this hypothetical scenario? It should serve only as the facilitator between all levels involved: local, state, and non-governmental organizations. It should also strive for competitive bids to keep the cost down.

Disasters are constantly evolving and so should EM. According to Ward and Wamsley, “Change may be the only constant.”(EM: The American Experience, 217) The only way to have an emergency management system that works is if the system is actively changed- solutions must have rationality and analysis must be all-inclusive. Several issues that should receive some form of research in upcoming years should be the relationship between EM and politics and the effects that it has on citizens. And most importantly- the continuous decline of funds to FEMA, one of the most needed federally funded programs.

Critical Points:

- Responsibility has to start with voters: Voters should not elect representatives who will not take responsibility for appointing incompetent administrators.
- Future of Privatization of Emergency Management: Competitive Sourcing A76, 2001: Law to improve the competition between private and government sources to greatly improve the performance and efficiency of federal based programs. Why is this not receiving any attention?

- Local government has to be held accountable for its prevention and preparedness actions. Federal government should withhold funds from those that refuse to have a proactive plan in preparation and prevention.

- Safety of public should be a common goal. Why does Congress continue to confirm inexperienced leaders to FEMA but not to GAO and FRS? Are lives of citizens not as important as money or other economic resources?

- Why is mitigation not as important as response? (“I won’t lose my job if I don’t mitigate, but I will lose my job if I don’t respond?) Why does it receive the least attention in the disaster cycle?

- Of all the many Hurricane Katrina committees, why didn’t any of them identify common factors or provide systematic analysis to help prevent future occurrences of breakdown within the EM system?