

ABOUT NCDP

The National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP), Columbia Climate School, Columbia University is an academically based, interdisciplinary center focused on the capacity to prevent, respond to, and recover from disasters. NCDP’s approach combines research, policy, education, and high-level advocacy to ensure that the best thinking — and best practices — become part of our national disaster preparedness and recovery systems.

NCDP studies the readiness of governmental and non-governmental systems; the complexities of population recovery; the power of community engagement; and the risks of human vulnerability. NCDP is committed to understanding the prevention and most effective response strategies for large-scale disasters. These are the most complex and challenging, whether caused by climate change, biological hazards, critical infrastructure failure, cyber-attacks, or nuclear threats.

NCDP research also reflects a particular interest in resilience and vulnerability geared for individuals, communities, and society. NCDP provides rapid-response research in an emergency—and is one of the few centers worldwide that have also conducted longitudinal research on populations affected by disasters. NCDP plays a critical role in policy development and raising awareness of disaster preparedness and planning issues that are “under the radar.” Supporting the practice community is a vital part of NCDP’s mission: the Center has trained over 100,000 responders and decision-makers. In a disaster or public health emergency, NCDP is a trusted source of information for the media and the public. In all aspects of research, policy, or practice, NCDP is committed to addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism (DEIA).

RESEARCH ► POLICY ► PRACTICE

NATIONAL CENTER FOR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS (NCDP)

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The National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP)

Focus Areas



ENHANCE SYSTEM READINESS

Disasters are complex events. Our capacity to respond to a disaster depends on the ability of numerous response systems to work together. The ability of systems to respond effectively in the immediate and long-term aftermath of a catastrophic disaster is the product of many factors: organizational policies and practices, encompassing both the public and private sectors; sufficient information gained through situational awareness, robust early warning systems, and comprehensive communication strategies; significant preparedness and training; appropriate resources; and the capacity to innovate at a moment's notice. NCDP researches the dynamics of emergency response systems and the policies and practices in place.



EDUCATE AND TRAIN THE WORKFORCE

Since NCDP's founding in 2003, NCDP has provided professional training for more than 100,000 learners through web-based, instructor-led, and virtual training. Current training programs for the whole community focus on post-disaster economic and housing recovery, mass care community sheltering and relocation assistance, pandemic preparedness and response, and individual and household preparedness. Trainings include collaborative activities, planning tools, tool kits, case studies, and geographic information system resources that learners can incorporate into their work practices.



FOSTER COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

NCDP places a high priority on community outreach — working with the community we serve and providing an assessment of the post-disaster environment, and consultation on immediate services which could meet the needs of affected and underserved populations. NCDP actively supports community-engaged programming by working with community agencies and area non-profit groups to improve citizen readiness, prepare the community for disasters, and increase awareness about disasters and other emergencies. NCDP supports community preparedness through technical assistance, training and education programs, drills and exercise support, and planning guidance for public health emergency preparedness and response activities. In addition to practice-based community engagement, NCDP researchers regularly employ techniques that support, inform, and drive pre- and post-disaster research by recognizing the value of local knowledge.



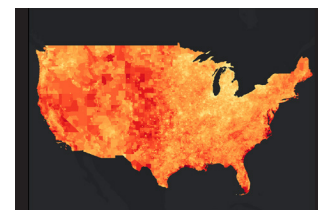
UNDERSTAND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

With the increased impacts of climate change, we can expect to see more disasters due to extreme hazards and growing vulnerability to those hazards. As with other disasters, historically underserved communities are disproportionately at risk. Vulnerable populations also include those managing physical and/or mental health conditions, cognitive impairments, and individuals dependent upon assistive devices or complex medical regimens to survive. NCDP has focused attention on understanding what makes certain individuals and groups vulnerable, considering how vulnerability varies by the disaster's phase and by social circumstances, and exploring the relationship between vulnerability and recovery.



ANALYZE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE DISASTER RESPONSE

Disasters are extraordinary and unpredictable events. Once the response and the initial efforts to restore critical services have faded from the news, the long road to recovery begins. A common observation is that some communities are hit harder and take longer to recover than others. NCDP researchers are intensely interested in what makes a community resilient in the face of a disaster: why are some individuals, households, and places quicker to recover than others? Our research seeks to create a knowledge base that will guide government, foundations, and others as they work to build—or rebuild—resilient communities. In addition to researching aspects of disaster recovery, NCDP has been active in helping individuals, organizations, and communities make informed investments about which steps to take to understand and mitigate hazards and prepare ahead of a disaster.



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