# Disaster Recovery: Faster, Better, or Safer?

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**Abstract:**

Natural hazards such as earthquakes and tsunamis and hurricanes can be the source of community disasters when they occur where there are human settlements. The recovery of a community often requires the use of resources from the local, national, and even international level. The knowledge and technology for repairing and replacing the physical structures continues to improve. However, the recovery of a community is defined not just through the replacement of houses and workplaces, but also through the re-establishment of social interaction patterns. Research into the factors that affect the recovery of families from the disruptions created by damaging natural events finds the issues related to decisions for reconstruction of a city and issues related to family recovery to be intertwined. Reconstruction focused on housing at the expense of re-establishing jobs can hinder rapid family recovery. Families often have access to assistance both from relatives and from formal programs and have reasons for choosing one over the other. Many of the issues that arise during the period of community recovery are related to conflicting goals. The choice of one goal over another may be necessary. Past experience indicates that the reconstruction process is likely to be able to emphasize only two out of the three common reconstruction goals of rapid recovery of infrastructure, a city that is a better place to live than before, and a city that is less vulnerable to the same disaster again. The same is true for housing recovery. The three most important outcomes for housing recovery--housing that is quickly available, that meets families' social and economic needs, and that is safer in future disasters—cannot all be achieved. It is important that international programs bringing resources and expertise to the recovery process also provide for a high degree of local participation in deciding on the goals and help provide certainty about the course and timing of the actions