

China

Disaster Emergency Management in China

Natural disasters occur frequently in China, affecting more than 200 million people every year. In 1998, the direct economic loss exceeded 300 billion RMB. Natural disasters have become an important restricting factor for economic and social development. The Chinese government devotes great attention to disaster reduction and has achieved significant results through efforts over 40 years.

In China, the study of disasters has entered a phase of rapid development since the mid to late 1980s and has resulted in some important achievements.

Disaster management is an applied science to improve measures for disaster prevention reduction, preparation, alarm, response and recovery by observation and analysis of disasters (Carter, 1993). In the cycle of disaster management, emergency response is the key phase although its duration is shorter than the others.

Disaster emergency management

The Ministry of Civil Affairs of China assumes the work of organizing and coordinating disaster relief, supervising and promulgating information on disasters, managing and distributing disaster relief funds and central government materials and monitoring their use.

An emergency plan has been developed by the Ministry of Civil Affairs based on the conference on emergency planning for disaster relief in China of May 2003. The Ministry divides the work of responding to unexpected natural disasters into three grades based on the scene of disaster losses, and enacted the "Work rules for response to unexpected natural disasters of the Ministry of Civil Affairs of China" in June 2003.

To standardize and offer a template for local disaster emergency plans, the Ministry of Civil Affairs drafts the basic content of emergency plans for disaster relief to be implemented in cities along main rivers and cities covered by the earthquake monitoring net in 2003.

The Ministry of Water Resources has developed the work of flood control construction and has organized community manpower to establish more than 370 groups to rush to deal with emergencies. In April 2002, the China Seismological Bureau established a national seismic emergency assistance group, which will be operated both on the mainland and overseas. In recent years, the China Meteorological Administration has strengthened its monitoring of meteorological disasters to forecast and release information on disastrous weather.

China has promulgated laws such as the "Law on Flood Control of P. R. China" (in effect since January 1, 1998) and "Law on Earthquake Control and Disaster Reduction of P. R. China" (in effect since March 1, 1998). In particular, the State Council of China has promulgated "Regulations for a destructive earthquake emergency" (effective since April 1, 1995), which consists of specific regulations for emergency work following a destructive earthquake.

Problems of disaster emergency management in China

The theoretical study and practice of reaction to natural disasters has many problems, and there is a large gap in comparison with the level of disaster emergency management of developed countries.

- (1) Work on government emergency management is primitive, and inconsistent with theoretical studies and technology. The management level of different governmental organizations is not balanced.
- (2) Propaganda and education on disaster emergencies are insufficient.
- (3) The level of theory and practice for various classes of disaster is different.
- (4) The management of natural disaster emergencies is different in various regions. The level of study and management in regions with relative developed economies or frequent occurrence of disasters is higher than that in regions with relatively undeveloped economies.
- (5) There is no comprehensive law for manage disaster reduction across the whole country.

Establishment of emergency management

A complete and effective system of natural disaster emergency management must be established, including a capably organized system of administration, self-contained legal system, scientific and precise expert consultations, development of technical equipment and a system for maintaining practical materials.

Constitution of emergency plan

- (1) The emergency plan must be a scientific and operational policy that institutes a framework indicating guidelines for the emergency work of government organizations.
- (2) The emergency plan should accord with related laws and regulations.
- (3) Once a disaster occurs, the emergency plan can be activated, and different measures for emergency preparation and safeguards can be carried out.

Acquisition and assessment of disaster information in emergency management

Some disaster information management systems for simple classes of disaster (including flood, drought, forest fire, earthquake, snow, sandstorm, and so on) have been established and the study of disaster emergency inspection and assessment has been expanded. This constitutes a comprehensive system of huge natural disaster inspection and assessment supported by GIS and RS technology. However, these systems are still in the study and testing phase, and the question of how to complete and utilize them should be resolved as swiftly as possible.

- Background

Natural disasters occur frequently in China, affecting more than 200 million people every year. They have become an important restricting factor for economic and social development.

- Objective

To establish an emergency relief management system in China.

- Term/Time Frame

Since the mid to late 1980s.

- Activities Undertaken

- developed an emergency plan;
- enacted "Work rules for response to unexpected natural disasters";
- organized more than 370 community groups to deal with emergencies;
- established national group for seismic emergency assistance;
- promulgated the following laws:
 - "Law on Flood Control of P. R. China";
 - "Law on Earthquake Control and Disaster Reduction of P. R. China";
 - "Regulations for a Destructive Earthquake Emergency."

- Contact Details

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