A number of observers have speculated that a “new” style of emergency management has emerged in the United States in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001. To date, there has been relatively little empirical evidence marshaled to assess this claim. This article reports the results of an ongoing project designed to track how the staff of an office of emergency management in a large urban region allocate their time on a routine basis. This project began in the late 1990s allowing for a year-by-year comparison of time allotted to different emergency management functions. Among the findings reported here are that prior to 2002 emergency management staff spent the majority of their time on hazard preparedness projects but this time allocation shifted dramatically when a variety of federal homeland security grants became available to state and local governments. This shift in responsibilities may be a sign that domestic security concerns have supplanted the all-hazards approach to emergency management at the local level. But this paper argues that it may also be a product of the manner in which federal homeland security grants are administered and the dynamics of the intergovernmental structure of emergency management in the U.S.

Key Words: emergency manager, emergency management, regional planning.
Introduction

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the creation of the federal Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina on the city of New Orleans and other parts of the Gulf Coast in 2005 have led to renewed interest in the role local emergency managers’ play in implementing disaster policy and plans. Periodic reassessments of the structure and operation of emergency management in the United States is not an unusual occurrence. For example, the history of disaster assistance and relief policy can be characterized as having brief periods of intense political activity typically following a major disaster or a series of disasters, followed by longer periods where interest in the subject wanes (May 1985a). In addition, the role of well-publicized disasters as “focusing events” leading to policy agenda change has been well-documented (Birkland 1999). Finally, prior discussions of the evolution of emergency management have often highlighted the extent to which changes in federal-level policies affect the role of local emergency managers (Drabek 1991). What is missing from the current debate is empirically-based evidence of the impacts on local emergency managers of the most recent changes in disaster policy.

A number of distinguished students of disasters and hazards have argued that a “new” emergency management has evolved since September 11 featuring a movement away from all-hazards planning, a single-minded focus on planning for and responding to the threat of terrorism, a reemergence of the command and control approach to responding to emergencies, and a marginalization of the mitigation function which had gained popularity during the 1990s (Ellemor and Barnett 2005; Schneider 2004; Miletì 2005; Haddow and Bullock 2005; Hite 2003). The National Academy of Sciences and the Federal Emergency Management Agency Higher Education Project have each sponsored workshops in the last several years where practitioners and scholars speculated on the future of emergency management.¹ These discussions, however, are taking place without a clear understanding of what functions local emergency managers actually perform on a routine basis. This article seeks to inform the debate about the role of the contemporary emergency manager by reporting the results of a time accounting project initiated by the
King County (Washington; USA) Office of Emergency Management (OEM). Since 1999, the staff members of the OEM have tracked their hourly time commitment to various functions and programs. This allows for a year-by-year comparison of how the emergency management staff in a large, urban county facing numerous natural and man-made threats expends their time. The results reported here show that dramatic changes in programmatic focus have indeed taken place in the activities of the OEM staff over the last eight years. Although I do not claim that broad generalizations can be made on the basis of one case study I do believe that this research can provide a starting point for a more empirically-based discussion of the contemporary role of the local emergency manager.

This article proceeds as follows. First, it offers a brief summary of the evolution of emergency management in the U.S. This discussion helps to frame the current debate on the role of the local emergency manager in a post-September 11 world. It then discusses the characteristics of the research setting and the elements of the OEM time accounting system. Next it presents and analyzes the yearly time data focusing on how external factors have affected the OEM staff’s allocation of duties. The article concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of this research and what these findings might mean for the future of emergency management.

The Evolution of Emergency Management

To better understand the contemporary debate regarding the role of the local emergency manager a brief discussion of the evolution of emergency management is necessary. The modern practice of emergency management began during the 1950s with an early focus on civil defense activities owing to “cold war” tensions (Drabek 1991; Haddow and Bullock 2003). Only later did an uneasy alliance develop between civil defense concerns and the management of other types of disasters. Most discussions of the evolution of emergency management note that until recently many local emergency managers had relatively limited roles in the proactive management of risk and the focus of their efforts was primarily on responding to episodic emergencies and disasters. This was due in part to the relatively low importance that most communities placed on managing disasters
and hazards in the face of competing priorities such as economic development (Platt 1999; Stehr 2006). As a result, emergency managers in the past typically had few resources to draw upon, were not usually well-versed in the principles of emergency management outside of their disciplinary specialty, and were generally isolated from other aspects of community decision making (Tierney, Lindell, and Perry 2001, p. 124).

Most observers trace the transformation of modern emergency management to the concerns expressed in a report released in 1978 by the National Governors’ Association (Petak 1985; Drabek 1991; Britton 1999). This report was instrumental in the decision to create the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 1979 which attempted to unify a highly fragmented approach to managing disasters at the federal level. Perhaps more significantly, the report was the first to fully articulate the concept of comprehensive emergency management which recognizes that the mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities of disaster planning need to be viewed from a unified perspective. This more holistic approach to emergency management was eventually codified in federal law with the passage of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988 which, among other things, required communities to plan to mitigate risks associated with reoccurring natural hazards. Changes were also taking place at this time in the level of professionalization in the ranks of emergency managers, a trend documented by Thomas Drabek (Drabek 1987; 1990).

The mid-to-late 1990s might be considered the “golden age” of emergency management in the U.S. FEMA under the leadership of James Lee Witt, took steps to encourage more comprehensive disaster planning at the regional and local levels. For example, FEMA launched a national initiative to promote community-based disaster mitigation called Project Impact: Building Disaster Resistant Communities. This project was designed to incorporate decisions about risk and risk-avoidance into the very fabric of community planning. It promoted the idea of building partnerships between community stakeholders as a way to encourage sustainable economic development through the recognition that disasters occur owing to interactions between the physical and built environments.
The concept of “community resilience” also gained prominence during this time period. Dennis Mileti defines the concept this way: “Local resiliency with regard to disasters means that a locale is able to withstand an extreme natural event without suffering devastating losses, damage, diminished productivity, or quality of life and without large amounts of assistance from outside the community” (Mileti 1999, pp. 32-33).

Although there is wide variation in the practices of particular communities, it seems warranted to conclude that by the close of the last century the principles underlying the practice of emergency management had changed significantly when compared to earlier time periods. Generally speaking, the role of the local emergency manager had evolved from focusing on the challenges posed by isolated emergencies and disasters, to a more holistic approach attempting to integrate mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities, and finally to a broader role involving political and organizational institution building, and strategic thinking about sustainable development and community resilience. Significant changes were about to take place that would once again alter the landscape of emergency management.

The first of these changes was the election of George W. Bush in 2000. Bush appointed Joe Allbaugh, his 2000 campaign manager and an individual with no background in emergency management, as the director of FEMA. The administration decided to cancel Project Impact and to undertake a major reorganization of FEMA (Haddow and Bullock 2003). These actions led a number of people in the emergency management community to question the Bush administration’s commitment to all-hazards planning (Tierney 2005; Haddow and Bullock 2003). The second change occurred dramatically on September 11, 2001 with the terrorist attacks in New York City and at the Pentagon near Washington, D.C. Following September 11, planning to detect and prevent terrorist attacks all but eliminated federal-level interest in natural disasters in general and hazard mitigation projects in particular. Significantly, FEMA was stripped of its cabinet-level status and was placed within the newly created DHS. These changes have been widely criticized by both emergency management practitioners and by prominent members
of the academic community who study extreme events (Holdeman 2005; Tierney 2005). In the view of some observers, a single-minded focus on deterring terrorism violates two fundamental principles of emergency management: the all-hazards approach to planning that emphasizes vulnerability and risk assessments that take into account all types of events, and comprehensive emergency management which focuses on integrating loss-reduction strategies across the different phases of disasters (mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery). It is likely that this state of affairs contributed to some of the problems experienced during the response to Hurricane Katrina (Somers 2005). More generally, it highlights some of the problematic aspects of “shared governance” between federal and sub-national stakeholders in the implementation of disaster policies (May 1985b; May and Williams 1985).

Although the impacts of these events on the practice of emergency management at the state and local levels have not been extensively studied, some clues emerge from a series of reports released by the Century Foundation (formerly the 20th Century Fund). In 2002 the Century Foundation commissioned reports on the homeland security activities in four states—Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. These reports were intended to assay the changes taking place in state and local emergency management following the creation of DHS. The final reports are remarkably similar in their central findings. One theme that emerges from these reports is that state and local officials in the four states continue to believe that the all-hazards approach to managing extreme events is the most appropriate path to follow. However, many of these officials also believe that federally-based homeland security directives and funding priorities created an imbalance where preparedness for natural disasters suffered as the focus on terrorism-related events increased (Kettl 2003). In addition, these reports detail the extent to which homeland security efforts have become an “add-on” responsibility for local emergency managers without the necessary levels of funding and guidance to prepare for and respond to the whole range of threats—both natural and man-induced—facing their communities. Finally, the reports emphasize both the necessity and the desirability of creating regionally-based organizational
arrangements to manage homeland security funding from the federal government (Comfort 2003; Stehr 2003). The large influx of new grant dollars targeted at domestic security beginning in 2002 raised fears among officials representing smaller communities and rural areas that they would be left out. Regionally-based structures were intended to allay these fears and to more equitably manage and distribute federal homeland security grant dollars.

As this brief summary of the evolution of emergency management makes clear, the overall context in which local emergency managers do their jobs has undergone substantial change. But what have been the impacts of these changes on the activities of a regional office of emergency management?

**The Research Setting: King County Washington**

King County is located in the Central Puget Sound area in the western part of Washington State. The County is large and very diverse in terms of both its physical and social makeup. Approximately 1.8 million people live in the county—making it the 12th largest in the U.S.—and over 80 different languages are spoken by its inhabitants. There are 39 cities (the largest being Seattle) and over 125 special purpose districts in the county.

The King County region faces a wide-variety of both natural and human-induced threats and, as a consequence, it has a relatively sophisticated and professionalized emergency management planning and response structure. The county has experienced 23 presidential disaster declarations ranging in severity from riverine flooding to the magnitude 6.8 Nisqually earthquake in 2001. Several major earthquake fault lines crisscross the region, and Mount Ranier, which is near the city of Seattle, poses the threat of volcanic lahars should it erupt as Mount St. Helens did in 1981. Since 2001, the city of Seattle and the surrounding region has consistently appeared near the top of lists of areas thought to be at an elevated risk for a terrorist attack. The Puget Sound region is an important international transportation center with a major airport, numerous seaport and seaplane bases, and over 2,000 miles of coastline. The state operates an extensive ferry system in the Puget Sound region that serves over 26 million people each year. The County is also in close proximity
Other potential targets and threats facing homeland security planners include food safety (the seaports in Seattle and Portland, Oregon funnel much of the Pacific Northwest’s agricultural production into the region), urban water system safety, oil and gas pipeline security, and electrical power generating plants. As a consequence of these and other threats, the city of Seattle and King County together have administered over $100 million in grants from DHS since 2002 (King County 2006).

The King County Office of Emergency Management

Time Accounting System

The King County OEM in its current form was established in 1991. Prior to that time, the OEM was formally part of the county sheriff’s department. As of January 2007, the OEM had 17 staff members working at its headquarters in the Regional Communications and Emergency Coordination Center in Renton, Washington. This represents a large increase in staffing capacity compared to 1999 when a total of six employees worked at OEM. The current staff includes the director and assistant director, four administrative support employees, and eleven program officers who are responsible for functional specializations such as public education, homeland security, planning and logistics, training and exercises, and operations and regional planning. The operating budget in fiscal year 2007 was approximately $1.5 million.

Beginning in 1999, the Director of the OEM instituted a time accounting system for all staff employees. Similar in concept to the “billable hours” technique employed by law firms, this system was implemented in order to better track how employees were allocating their work time to different projects. Individual employees report on a daily basis the number of hours they spend on specific activities such as administration, training and exercises, emergency operations center activations, public education, meetings with other public safety officials, regional hazard planning, response to individual emergencies, and managing public assistance programs. The time spent on these specific activities and projects is then aggregated to reflect the number of hours allocated to each phase of the cycle of hazard planning: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.
In addition, time spent on administrative duties is also calculated. Beginning in 2002, the creation of DHS and a large increase in homeland security activities necessitated the creation of an additional category. Obviously, these calculations require some judgment on the part of the reporting staff because there is not always a clear separation between the phases of disaster planning implementation. That said many of the activities fit relatively easily into one of the four phases or into the homeland security program management category. In addition, because the system has been in place for some time a high degree of consistency has been achieved.

**Data and Analysis**

Table 1 shows the OEM staff’s yearly allocation of time by project type between the years of 1999 and 2006. The total number of staff hours expended increased dramatically during this period from 12,417 hours to 31,921 hours, an increase of approximately 155%. This, of course, reflects the increase in staffing levels from six employees in 1999 to seventeen employees in 2006. From an overall perspective, the data show that relatively little staff time was allocated to mitigation, response, and recovery activities during the reporting period. Indeed, on average only 7% of total staff time was expended per year on these three phases of hazard preparation and response (2.6% on mitigation, 3.1% on response, and 1.3% on recovery). One explanation for the relatively low levels of time expended on response and recovery is that these activities do not take place unless there is a relatively large-scale emergency or disaster within the county’s jurisdiction. The year in which the highest percentage of time was spent on response and recovery (9.5% in 2001) coincides with the year of the Nisqually earthquake. However, since the earthquake’s epicenter was in neighboring Pierce County and it did not cause widespread damage, a large-scale mobilization on the part of the King County OEM was not required.

Another explanation for the relative lack of time allocated to response and recovery by OEM staff can be traced to the intergovernmental structure of the emergency management system in the U.S. This system distributes responsibility for mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities widely among...
government jurisdictions and to various disciplinary-based specializations. For example, the King County OEM has no so-called first responder capacity *per se*. These responsibilities fall on local jurisdictions such as cities who maintain law enforcement, fire protection, and emergency medical services agencies. The primary role of the OEM in the Incident Response System is to coordinate the activities of other agencies at the county and municipal levels, and provide public information to the media and the general population via the Joint Information Center. This decentralized system may also explain why the amount of time expended on mitigation activities at the county level is relatively small. Mitigation activities are largely undertaken by cities and municipalities who have the primary legal authority to impose land-use planning requirements, regulate building codes, and to use other mitigation tools. Thus, the county-level emergency management role in mitigation in this case is limited to coordinating regional hazard planning.

If the OEM staff was not spending much time on mitigation, response and recovery activities, what projects were occupying their time? On average, the largest allocation of staff time during the time period studied was devoted to preparedness activities (39.7%),

Table 1. Employee Time Allocation By Project Type, King County (WA) Office Of Emergency Management, 1999-2006*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2292)</td>
<td>(1740)</td>
<td>(1629)</td>
<td>(2495)</td>
<td>(2193)</td>
<td>(9130)</td>
<td>(7355)</td>
<td>(7810)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLS Grants</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(1979)</td>
<td>(5784)</td>
<td>(13472)</td>
<td>(15999)</td>
<td>(10962)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitigation</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(409)</td>
<td>(433)</td>
<td>(217)</td>
<td>(653)</td>
<td>(1664)</td>
<td>(545)</td>
<td>(112)</td>
<td>(64)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparedness</td>
<td>73.4%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(9109)</td>
<td>(7686)</td>
<td>(7812)</td>
<td>(7537)</td>
<td>(5839)</td>
<td>(6165)</td>
<td>(6935)</td>
<td>(10517)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recovery</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(32)</td>
<td>(462)</td>
<td>(259)</td>
<td>(316)</td>
<td>(171)</td>
<td>(230)</td>
<td>(561)</td>
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<td>(15951)</td>
<td>(29733)</td>
<td>(31641)</td>
<td>(31921)</td>
<td>(155334)</td>
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* Numbers in parentheses denote hours of time per year dedicated to each function by all staff employees. Total hours do not include sick leave, vacation time or vacant positions.
homeland security grant management (31.0%) beginning in 2002, and to administrative functions (22.3%). But, these eight-year averages mask significant changes that took place in the roles and responsibilities of the county emergency management team.

The most important change reflected in these data is the percentage of time devoted to hazard preparedness activities over time. In 1999, 2000 and 2001, approximately three-quarters of staff time were spent on preparedness projects. These activities included training and exercises, logistics, maintenance of the emergency operations facility, public education efforts, and meetings with other public safety personnel from around the region to enhance coordination. Beginning in 2002, effort devoted to preparedness began to decline as more staff time was allocated to homeland security grant management. In fact, by 2003 about the same amount of time was spent on homeland security grant management (36.3%) as on preparedness activities (36.6%). By 2005, slightly more than half of all staff time was expended on homeland security projects while only about 22% was spent on preparedness activities. In the final year for which data is available the amount of time allocated to homeland security grant management declined to 34.3% while the level spent on preparedness projects increased over the prior year to 32.9%.

One explanation for these changes in time allocation can be traced to how federal homeland security grants have been implemented. There are seven major DHS grant programs which make allocations to state and local governments: the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP), the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program (LETPP), the Emergency Management Performance Grant Program (IMPG), the Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS), the Citizen Corps Program (CCP), and the Critical Infrastructure Protection Program (CIP—funded only in FY 2003) (Maguire and Reese 2006). Funds for five of the seven program—SHSGP, LETPP, CIP, EMPG, and CCP—are appropriated and allocated to state governments for use in conjunction with units of local government. As noted earlier, the reports commissioned by the Century Foundation emphasized that states were utilizing a region-based approach to administering federal homeland security funding. This is certainly the case in the state of

Stehr: Changing Roles of Emergency Managers
Washington (Stehr 2003). Since King County and the surrounding area is home to approximately 60% of the state of Washington’s six-million residents and the region is believed to be at a high level of risk for a terrorist attack, a significant portion of the state’s federal homeland security grant funds have been funneled into the area. According to figures calculated by the Congressional Research Service, the state of Washington received a total of $225.69 million in homeland security grant funds between fiscal year 2003 and 2006 (Maguire and Reese 2006, p. 51). As Table 2 shows, approximately 45 percent of these funds over the four years were allocated to King County with the majority of these monies being distributed among its regional partners through sub-grants (King County 2006).

Table 2. Federal Homeland Security (HLS) Grants Allocated to the State of Washington and to the King County Region, FY 2003-2006 (All dollar amounts in millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State of Washington</td>
<td>$79.08</td>
<td>$65.50</td>
<td>$45.32</td>
<td>$35.79</td>
<td>$225.69</td>
<td>-54.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King County</td>
<td>$46.50</td>
<td>$26.80</td>
<td>$21.10</td>
<td>$7.50</td>
<td>$101.90</td>
<td>-83.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of State HLS Funds Administered by King County OEM</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Maguire and Reese 2006; King County 2006.

As the largest county in the most populated and hazard prone region of the state, King County OEM was the logical candidate to manage a large amount of federal to state “pass through” funding for local homeland security activities. This region-based approach to administering homeland security grants reinforces what is already a highly decentralized emergency preparedness and response system. There are 165 separate governmental jurisdictions in King County when cities, school districts, and special use districts are included, and each of them has responsibility for some aspect of disaster preparedness. Approximately forty separate jurisdictions or agencies were allocated funding for individual projects funded by DHS in the King County region between 2003 and 2006.8 Thus, the King
County OEM has played a central role in the management of federal homeland security grants and this fact is reflected in the distribution of staff time.

The relative decline in the time devoted to homeland security grant management in 2006 is partially attributable to a conscious effort on the part of OEM leadership to shift the management of federal grants to temporary staff members who were hired through those grants. This frees up permanent employees to work on other projects. But the decline is also due to the fact that total federal homeland security funding to state and local governments has gone down each year since 2003. Nationwide these grant funds have decreased by 40.1% when comparing FY 2006 to FY 2003 (Maguire and Reese 2006, p. 56). In Washington state, DHS grants have declined by 54.7% over the same time period, and in the King County region they have decreased by nearly 84% (see Table 2). One consequence of this decline in funding is that there are fewer sub-awards for OEM to manage. As other federal budget priorities squeeze out homeland security funding for state and local governments another round of changes in the role of the local emergency manager may soon be upon us.

**Summary and Conclusions**

What are some of the implications of the research reported here? One interpretation is that critics of the current approach to emergency management and homeland security in the U.S. are correct in arguing that the federal focus on domestic security has led to decline in preparedness activities for natural hazards at the regional level. It is reasonable to assume that prior to 2002 preparedness activities were primarily focused on naturally-occurring events. This interpretation cannot be completely confirmed using the data reported here because it does not address activities undertaken by other government jurisdictions in the region. For example, the city of Seattle has continued to fund Project Impact largely through its own resources. In any case, mitigation was not a focal area for county-level OEM staff prior to 2002, the year in which federal emergency planning initiatives were refocused on terrorism. But, as was noted earlier, mitigation projects are likely to be the responsibility
of local governments. Certainly, the data reported here show that there was a pronounced decline in time allocated to county-level preparedness projects from 2002 to 2005. The question is to what extent did this state of affairs lead to a decrease in public safety? It would be useful from a comparative perspective to gather data of the type reported here in other settings including rural areas, and jurisdictions that confront a different array of hazards than does King county Washington. For example, we might find that areas with more recent, frequent or severe environmental hazards shifted less of their staff time to homeland security efforts in the aftermath of September 11 or returned more quickly to a natural hazards focus once the immediacy of the terrorist threat was gone.

Another way to view these research findings is to focus on the extent to which the region-based approach to homeland security grant funding may have reinforced efforts to enhance inter-governmental and inter-agency collaboration. The fact that that homeland security became such a high priority after September 11 and that many new resources became available to state and local governments not only renewed interest in the emergency management function but also created an environment where regional partnerships became more attractive. In the case of King County, a number of structures and programs have been instituted to facilitate regional planning for homeland security. For example, the Emergency Management Advisory Committee (created in 1992) for the Central Puget Sound area expanded its responsibilities in 2002 to provide input on regional homeland security funding priorities. This group has 26 members representing a wide variety of public and private interests. Other committees and workgroups in the region are undertaking similar efforts. Prior research has shown that one of the critical components of effective policy implementation when many agencies and jurisdictions are involved is the presence of an entity that facilitates the creation and maintenance of relationships of the inter-organizational networks (Provan and Milward 1995; 2001). Along this same line of inquiry, a number of studies have examined the operational qualities and effectiveness of disaster preparedness networks and the role they play in enhancing community hazards planning (Kirschenbaum 2004; Lindell, Whitney, Futch and Clause
1996; Gillespie and Colignon 1993). While it is beyond the scope of this research to speculate on the causes and consequences of network building, it is clear that the King County OEM has played a central role in facilitating a regional approach to hazard planning.

This research highlights the extent to which changes in federal level priorities can impact local level emergency management operations. Periodic changes in the make-up of the Congress and the leadership of the executive branch often leads to alterations in federal emphases in the area of disaster planning policy. This makes long-term planning problematic at the local and regional level. Thus, the ability to cope with uncertainty is a critical aspect of the job of the emergency manager.

Approximately eight years ago in these pages Neil Britton asked, “Whither the Emergency Manager?” (Britton 1999). Among the challenges he identified were developing a better understanding of what role emergency managers play in community decision making and what skill sets they should possess. One could conclude on the basis of the research reported here that increasingly emergency managers must have well-developed skills in the art of managing intergovernmental relations. A number of factors including the high profile nature of the attacks of September 11 and Hurricane Katrina, the rising economic and social costs of disasters, the increasing number of people living in hazardous areas, and the on going threat of terrorist attacks have led many communities to embrace a more active role in emergency management. These factors have also led to a more clear understanding of the importance of intergovernmental and inter-organizational partnerships to enhance public safety (U.S. GAO 2002). As a consequence, the emergency manager of the future will need to understand and embrace the multi-disciplinary and intergovernmental aspects of contemporary emergency management.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank Eric Holdeman, Director, and Jeff Bowers, Assistant Director, of the King County (Washington) Office of Emergency Management for their assistance on this research project. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.
References


Notes

1References to these two workshops can be found at Hite (2003) and Mileti (2005).
These reports may be accessed at the Century Foundation’s website (www.homelandsec.org) under the Homeland Security Project. Visited February 9, 2007.

It is noteworthy that Ahmed Ressam was apprehended at a ferry terminal in Port Angeles, Washington in December 1999 attempting to enter the U.S. from Canada in a car loaded with explosives. These explosives were intended to be used in a terrorist attack at the Los Angeles International airport.

For more information on the variety of hazards facing this region see Stehr (2003).

Four staff members are exclusively dedicated to administrative support duties including a confidential secretary, an administrative specialist, and a finance officer. The director, the assistant director, and various project officers also code their time as “administration” when their duties are not directly related to program management.

It could be argued that the addition of more staff meant that the same amount of hours could be spent on preparedness activities even though the relative percentage declined. But Table 1 shows that the total amount of preparedness hours in 2003 (5839) was about 36% less than in 1999 (9109). Only in 2006 did the total hours allocated to the preparedness function reach the 1999 levels.

The other two programs—UASI and MMRS—provide grant dollars directly to urban areas.

The list of individual projects can be found at www.metrokc.gov/homelandsecurity. Visited February 9, 2007.

This insight was provided in a personal communication with the Assistant Director of the King County OEM.