

CARRI Releases Initial Research On Community Resilience

by Dr. Tom Wilbanks, CARRI Research Director

The Community and Regional Resilience Initiative (CARRI), part of Oak Ridge National Laboratory's (ORNL) Southeast Regional Research Initiative, recently released the first four in a series of research summaries on community resilience, its dimensions and strategies for enhancing resilience.

This information will provide the framework, essential benchmarks, tools and techniques for communities across the country to help them anticipate, prepare for, respond to and rapidly recover from significant natural and man-made disasters with minimal downtime to basic community, government and business services. The research is part of a series that, when complete, will also include the research CARRI has done in its three partner communities: Gulfport, Mississippi; Memphis, Tennessee and Charleston, South Carolina.

The first four reports look at resilience and what the disaster and research community have compiled about the topic. They examine the vulnerabilities and responses to global environmental changes such as climate change, identify those segments of the population that are the most vulnerable to threats and reveal lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina.

Quick summaries about the first four reports follow:

Community and Regional Resilience: Perspectives from Hazards, Disasters, and Emergency Management

Written by Susan L. Cutter, Lindsey Barnes, Melissa Berry, Christopher Burton, Elijah Evans, Eric Tate and Jennifer Webb from the Hazards & Vulnerability Research Institute

This research paper outlines what makes people and places vulnerable, including location, infrastructure and economic factors; what makes communities resilient, including recognizing and understanding hazards and planning for disaster recover, planning and land use and development, which includes building standards, development regulations, critical public facilities and information dissemination; and barriers to planning for resilience, which looked at federal and state barriers, policies and commitment among governments at all levels.

Community Resilience: Lessons from New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina

Written by Craig Colten from Louisiana State University; Robert Kates, an independent scholar; and Shirley Laska with the University of New Orleans

This report examines the vulnerability and resilience in New Orleans, both throughout its history and after Hurricane Katrina. The study highlights the anticipation of a major hurricane like Katrina and examines the risks that were not addressed, such as disrupted funding to the Corps of Engineers, which left levees incomplete and construction standards for flooding that were not met.

Also examined are the problems that arose during and immediately following the crisis, including disrupted communication and transportation; overwhelmed institutional response and confusion; and the inability of aid and funding to reach those in need. The report also looks at the lessons learned in order to help New Orleans and other communities understand and better prepare themselves for recovery from future disasters.

Community Resilience: A Social Justice Perspective

Written by Betty Hearn Morrow with SocResearch Miami

This study addresses the key social factors that make a community vulnerable and what needs to be changed in order to become resilient. The study shows that issues such as economic status, ethnicity, gender and education level play a tremendous role in a community's ability to be resilient, and that a community is only as resilient as its weakest link. The report shows that in order to change and become resilient, communities must address their education, employment and housing vulnerabilities; find ways to reach high risk populations, which include disseminating information in different languages and at various reading levels, as well as communicating with existing community networks, like women's groups, church networks and communicating to extended families of ethnic minorities through children; and finally, a community must have civic participation at all levels and permanent and sufficient funding sources to be truly resilient.

Resilience in the Face of Global Environmental Change

Written by Susi Moser with Research and Consulting; Institute of Marine Sciences, University of California, Santa Cruz

This report provides relevant insights on resilience from the pertinent global change literature to complement critical insights gleaned from the hazards and ecological literatures by other collaborators to the CARRI project. This study reviews definitions and the emerging understanding of resilience in the social sciences. It also discusses a number of aspects feeding into resilience, such as vulnerability, adaptive capacity, and social capital. Lastly, the report points to some promising research frontiers on resilience in the human dimensions field.

Please visit the CARRI website located at <http://www.ResilientUS.org/> to read each of the research reports in their entirety and to learn more about the CARRI research component.

Further reports will be issued in the coming months, along with a synthesis of the perspectives from different research traditions that can serve as CARRI's integrated perspective.