

# Construction of New Emergency Management System under Public Crisis

Wang Laibao

Economics & Management School of Wuhan University, Wuhan, P.R.China, 430070  
National Development and Reform Commission, State Bureau of Material Reserve, Hubei Authority  
of Material Reserve, Wuhan, P.R.China, 430017  
( E-mail: wlb@mx.cei.gov.cn )

**Abstract** Facing the increasingly severe public crises, the current situation of emergency management system and emergency operation infrastructure in China still leave much to be desired. To be a service-oriented government, it is required to perfect emergency management system and handle emergency operations well. This paper establishes a new emergency management system from the following four perspectives: the construction of emergency management mechanism, the perfection of emergency legal institution, the set up of crisis management team and the improvement of material reserve and equipment support.

**Key words** Sudden crisis; Emergency management; Sudden crisis management

## 1 Introduction

As the saying goes, “the history of human evolution is a history of meeting challenges, conquering disasters and advancing constantly<sup>[1]</sup>”, we are always confronted with crises and with emergency tasks to decide. Nowadays, on one hand, we are more and more threatened by traditional or non-traditional, natural or social crises; on the other hand, it is more and more urgent to implement emergency management. Besides, in order to carry out the scientific development theory and to set up a harmonious socialist society in China, it is essential to strengthen the ability of governmental emergency management based on the review of our emergency operations under sudden crises.

Public crises, which are unexpected and unavoidable, can create high levels of uncertainty and threat or perceived threat to an organization’s high priority goals. Some scholars specialized in crisis management defined “crisis” as the following: “It may be an unstable and dangerous social situation, in political, social, economic, military affairs, or a large-scale environmental event, especially one involving an impending abrupt change<sup>[2]</sup>”. “Nowadays, sudden crises are more frequent, more devastating and more powerful<sup>[3]</sup>”. Some scholars suggested that the crisis management, a frontier science with broad and profound contents, should take social crisis as its subject<sup>[4]</sup>. Besides, in other scholars’ viewpoints, governments at all levels -local, state, and national- have played a large role in crisis management. The government should monitor, intervene in, control and eliminate the crisis event before its generation and evolution<sup>[5]</sup>. Above all, crisis management is vital important. Without it, and without a plan to accomplish necessary goals, crises grow and relationships are damaged in the long term, short term, or both. And no organization is immune.

Researches of the construction of public crisis management system are from the following 4 perspectives. Firstly, in terms of mechanism construction, it is claimed to build decision mechanism, supervision mechanism, capital supply and society mobilization mechanism, crisis prevention and information interaction mechanism<sup>[6]</sup>. Secondly, in terms of system theory, we can integrate various participants and social resources and then build harmonious public crisis management system<sup>[7]</sup>. Due to the complexity and variability of crisis events, single mechanism or model can hardly handle crises. Thus, according to the “overall integrating theory”, we should integrate various resources and then construct a unified crisis management in order to improve governmental and social crisis management ability<sup>[8]</sup>.

## 2 Existing Problems of Emergency Management in China

In China, main public crises are as follows: natural disasters, worldwide virus spread, mass disturbance and riots caused by unbalanced economic and social development (see Table 1).

Facing the increasingly severe public crisis situation, the Party Central Committee and state council in China highly emphasized the emergency management; while the current situation of emergency management system and emergency operation infrastructure in China still leave much to be desired. The current emergency management which is not adapted to rapid economic development can not cope with

public crises effectively. There is still a long way to go to guarantee the safety of lives and property to the greatest extent.

**Table 1 Situation of Public Crisis in China**

		Analyses	Cases
The situation of public crisis in China	Natural disasters	Over 70% metropolis, over half of population and over 75% of gross output value of industry and agriculture are distributed throughout coastal areas and eastern plain and hilly areas which are vulnerable to meteorological disasters, marine disasters, floods and earthquakes.	An uncommon flood stroke China in 1998. At the beginning of 2008, low-temperature freezing rain and snow disaster caused different levels of damages among 19 provinces and autonomous regions in South China. In Wenchuan Earthquake, in 12 <sup>th</sup> May, 2008, 69225 people were killed, 374640 injured and 17939 missing, with direct economic losses amount to 845.1 billion YUAN.
	Worldwide virus spread	Worldwide virus spread, the killer of health, has become a severe threat and serious challenge across the globe.	In 2003, the number of the accumulative SARS cases was 5327, 1744 and 665 in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan respectively; while the number of deaths was 349, 300 and 180 in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan respectively. Until 16 <sup>th</sup> October, 2009, the number of accumulative confirmed A/H1N1 flu cases was 26348 throughout 31 provinces and autonomous regions in China.
	Mass disturbance	Based on statistics, there were 8700 mass disturbance events in 1993 in China, while in 2005 the figure is 87000 and over 90000 in 2006. The figure is on a constant rise.	“Weng’an” Event, in 2008, has been deemed as a typical mass disturbance event. The riot in Menglian County, Yunnan Province, in 19 <sup>th</sup> July, 2008; “Longnan” Event in Gansu Province, in 17 <sup>th</sup> November, 2008.
	Riots	Riots have become one of new emergency events that disturb national security.	Riots happened in Lhasa, capital of Tibet Autonomous Region, in 14 <sup>th</sup> March, 2008. Riots plagued Urumqi, capital of northwest China’s Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, in fifth July, 2009.

### 2.1 Neither compulsion nor coordination of emergency legislation is powerful

In order to deal with all kinds of crisis events, the government enacted the following laws: “Martial Law of the People’s Republic of China” (1996) against disturbances, “The Law of the People’s Republic of China on Precautions against Earthquakes and Relief of Disaster” (1997) against serious natural disasters, “Flood Control Law of the People’s Republic of China” (1997) and “Fire Control Law of the People’s Republic of China” (1998), etc. However, those laws are independent from each other and are short of cooperation, which will make command hard to exercise under urgent situations.

Though “The Law of the People’s Republic of China on Emergency Responses” enacted on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2008 makes progresses on directing basic works, we have to admit that existing laws cannot touch every fields. To be specific, the government is focused on rescuing while has no time to attend to the society order. Hence, the legal system cannot perform its duties automatically until the government announces an emergency. In other words, related laws need to be activated.

### 2.2 Emergency management system is not unified

The existing crisis management system is not unified with the following disadvantages: redundant configuration, overlapping function, bifurcate administration, and segmental management, etc. Unlike other governmental service work, basic emergency operations can not carry out overall planning and coordinate operations. To make things worse, local governments at all levels have still emphasized on trade and investment promotion.

### **2.3 Configuration of specialized teams cannot meet the need**

Related departments, industries and local governments have improved the configuration of specialized rescue teams after the publication of “The Law of the People’s Republic of China on Emergency Responses”. National Earthquake Response Support Service builds rescue teams in 26 provinces across China containing 5000 vocational rescuers. However, those rescue teams are only proficient in their own fields; and apart from the equipment of fire brigade, other teams’ equipments are in bad shape which can only deal with simple accidents. To be specific, firstly, the Special Duties Unit which can response to major disasters is small in amount; secondly, with regard to the police, armed police and the military, they are lack of on-the-spot cooperation and their abilities of urgent operation, blockading the scene and solving problems need further improvement; thirdly, integrated mobilization mechanism is still elementary.

### **2.4 Emergency reserve system remains to be improved**

Nowadays, the emergency material reserve system has not been established yet while the government mainly relies on existing governmental reserve. Though China’s governmental reserve has formed a classified management structure and possessed corresponding capital channels, it is still required to integrate existing material reserve scientifically. Obviously, China is in lack of a flexible system to adjust emergency reserve according to on-the-spot requirements. Moreover, as for local emergency material reserve, there’s still a pretty big gap between planning and implementing: the local government has not established an emergency material reserve system and not fulfilled the financial policy yet.

## **3 Construction of New Emergency Management System under Public Crisis**

### **3.1 Building of efficient emergency management mechanism**

The government should serve as the following roles: “a predictor”, “a communicator”, “a firefighter” and a post-event dealer during different stages of crisis management<sup>[9]</sup>. Building a unified and efficient emergency management mechanism is in urgent need to strengthen social management and public service. Besides, an efficient emergency management mechanism, on one hand, can control or even eliminate the risk and the hidden danger at utmost; on the other hand, it can lower the losses to the largest extent.

Based on state council emergency management, it is advised that we should integrate existing emergency management functions scattered among each department in charge; and then build the national emergency administration department which can create a daily routine emergency management system. Once the state council announces an emergency, the administration department then is authorized by state council and start to direct and handle the emergency aid. This department has the right to establish temporal command center on spot and the right to shift aid resources within the disaster-stricken areas or even throughout the whole country when necessary. During the emergency rescue, the protection of the safety of lives and property and the maintenance of social stability are above all. In the follow-up work, this department assumes the responsibility of evaluation and reconstruction.

### **3.2 Perfection of emergency legal institution**

Legal institution, a significant section of national legal system, is center to public crisis management. It is the basic of legal implementation under unconventional situations. Though sudden crises are unforeseen, emergency legal institution is required to predict perceived events and then study standard procedures and method to deal with accidents and head off dangers. This paper offers the following modifications: enforcing the building of emergency management system via legal system, standardizing crisis management institution, emphasizing routine, authority and enforcement.

### **3.3 Establishment of crisis management team with excellent equipment**

The construction of rescue team is vital important to the safety of people’s lives and properties; is concerned to the final result of governmental crisis management; and is the indicator of governmental ruling examination. The rescue team contains the crisis management team and the specialized rescue team. The crisis management team should consist of qualified experts. In order to minimize the harm under crisis, duties of those experts are as follows: study of general rules, supervision and judgment of origins, publication of early-warning and proposing of dispositions. However, currently, it is urgent to build the specialized rescue team.

Under the severe crisis situation in China, according to the requirement of “Be a versatile person as well as a specialist”, elementary rescue resource should be overall integrated and a fast-response rescue

team with polished equipment should be built. To be specific, firstly, an emergency special police with some kind of scale within the PLA and the armed police are supposed to be found. In order to deal with violence and major natural disasters (cross-regional flood, fire and earthquakes), the emergency special police should carry out strict practical training. Secondly, a special rescue team based on fire brigade is supposed to be installed. So as to transform the fire brigade into the main force of handling crises in cities, equipment should be improved and special training should be implemented. Besides, elementary crisis management team should be under constant supervision and local specialized rescue teams should be strengthened. Meanwhile, sections related with land, earthquakes, transportation, water conservancy, forestry, meteorology, safety supervision, environment, electric force, signal communication, construction, hygiene and agriculture should carry forward elementary emergency team construction of their own industries. Moreover, backing against local public safety and fire brigade, local governments should construct county-level rescue teams which can master many skills while specializing in one. (See Figure 1)

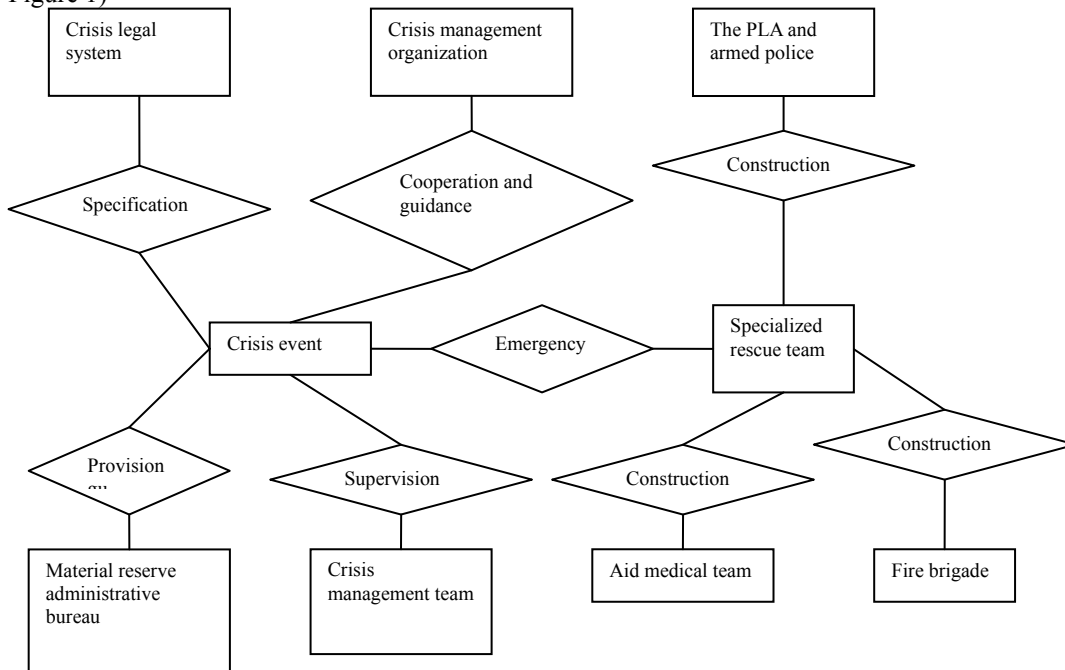


Figure 1 Conceptual Model of New Emergency Management System under Public Crisis

**3.4 Improvement of material reserve and equipment support.**

Establishment of scientific emergency material reserve system is the guarantee of improving rescue efficiency and minimizing crisis losses; and the emergency material reserve system should have the following attributes: scientific and overall planning, graded management, classified reserve, complementary region program, rapid response. To be specific, firstly, the centre government should implement unified planning, arrangement, guidance and coordination. Secondly, local governments at all levels should cooperate with the national material reserve all the time. Besides, the supply mechanism of assembling basic living necessities such as food, medicine, clothes and drinking water should be installed in order to guarantee the basic lives of victims.

**4 Conclusions**

Public service is center to public administration and political reform. Public crisis management, on one hand, is one of the social management duties of the government, on the other hand, is one of service duties of public safety. To be a service-oriented government, it is required to perfect emergency management system and handle emergency operations well. Therefore, in order to maintain social stability, to guarantee the safety of people’s lives and properties, to construct harmonious society and to realize scientific development, it is claimed to build a unified and efficient crisis management system while at the same time, to strengthen the crisis consciousness. This paper establishes a new emergency management system from the following four perspectives: the construction of emergency management

mechanism, the perfection of emergency legal institution, the set up of crisis management team and the improvement of material reserve and equipment support.

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