



Public Administration Research Colloquium

Organized by the Center for Public and Nonprofit Management (CPNM)

Hear leading experts discuss contemporary problems and strategies in public administration research during this monthly event.

Globalization of Disasters: A first-hand report on the Wenchuan Earthquake in China in 2008

By Dr. Louise K. Comfort

Thursday, October 9, 2008

4:00-5:30 p.m.

HPA II – 247

Light refreshments will be served.

Please RSVP by October 7, Tuesday 5:00 PM to Fatih Demiroz at fdemiroz@mail.ucf.edu.

Abstract

Disasters require coordinated action among multiple actors, including international organizations, across many jurisdictions under conditions of urgent stress, heavy demand and tight time constraints. The problem is socio-technical in that the capacity for inter-organizational coordination depends upon the technical structure and performance of the information systems that support decision making among the participating organizations. Interactions among human managers, computers, and organizations under stress are complex and not well understood. Yet, coordinating response operations to extreme disasters is an extraordinarily complex task for public emergency managers. This presentation will focus on the interactions among multiple organizations that evolved in response to the Wenchuan Earthquake in China in 2008, examining the relationships among organizations in terms of timely access to information and types of supporting infrastructure.

Dr. Louise K. Comfort is a professor of public and international affairs at the University Of Pittsburgh. She teaches in the field of information policy, organizational theory, and policy design, and is the principal investigator, Interactive, Intelligent, Spatial Information System (IISIS) Project, 1994–present: <http://www.iisis.pitt.edu>. She has served as principal investigator/project coordinator/coprincipal investigator/team member on 43 funded research projects. She has conducted field research on information processes in disaster operations following several earthquakes in more than 10 different countries, as well as hurricanes and the 2004 tsunami and 2008 China. She holds degrees in political science from Macalester College (Bachelor of Arts); University of California, Berkeley (Master of Arts), and Yale University (doctorate). Her publications include research on complex systems. She is a National Academy of Public Administration Fellow.

