

New Books

Living with Drought. Drought Mitigation for Sustainable Livelihoods (1998)

When Central Queensland University and Charles Sturt University commenced an RIRDC funded project 'Farm Families Experience of the Drought of the 1990s' (RIRDC 99/14) in 1995 - there was little or no literature, either Australian or international, about drought and its impact on communities. The decade long drought in eastern Australia changed that—there is now a body of work associated with the impacts of that drought on the environment; on primary production; on families and on communities. While we tend to think of drought as an Australian phenomenon, other continents experience it too—and in the southern portion of Africa their own drought experience particularly close to our own.

This package—produced as part of an educational strategy by the Southern African Development Community—includes a video-cassette with three short films and a text book which supports the visual material and offers background information and work shop opportunities.

The book identifies that 'recurrent drought is a normal part of life and living in southern Africa', and the video shows graphically how various communities within southern Africa attempt to manage the impact of this challenging phenomenon. However rather than just focussing on the impact - the package attempts to teach what are called 'mitigation strategies', that is, identifying opportunities to plan ahead, rather than just accept each drought as it comes and then forget it when the rains bring relief.

The package 'aims at complementing other disaster management training materials and is therefore directly aimed at a broad cross section of the community. Its purpose is not simply to teach but also to develop participatory learning models among all stakeholders in order to support sustainable development, and to allow those communities impacted to maintain their relationship with the land they own and farm. There are some tensions obvious among these stakeholders—as indeed in any discussion about environment/production—but the video attempts to present the views of all the people and focuses particularly on one drought mitigation success story—the Banga Dam project. Here it shows 'how the partnership between a community and different extension services can strengthen livelihood security by incorporating local knowledge and sound natural resource management'.

It is always useful to learn how similar challenges are being met by other cultures, and in this example, extension personnel, policy makers, field staff, farmers, graziers and Landcare personnel (indeed any one who is or has been touched by drought) would find the package both informative and useful.

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The book and video are available from Intermediate Technology Publications, 103-105 Southhampton Row, London WC1B 4HH, UK.

Email orders from: orders@itpubs.org.uk or in the US from Stylus Publishing LLC, 22883 Quicksilver Drive, Sterling, VA 20166-2012. Email: Styluspub@aol.com. The price is US\$35.00 or £19.95.

Disaster-induced Employee Evacuation

by Thomas E. Drabek

Published by the Natural Hazards Research and Applications Information Centre, Institute of Behavioural Science, University of Colorado.

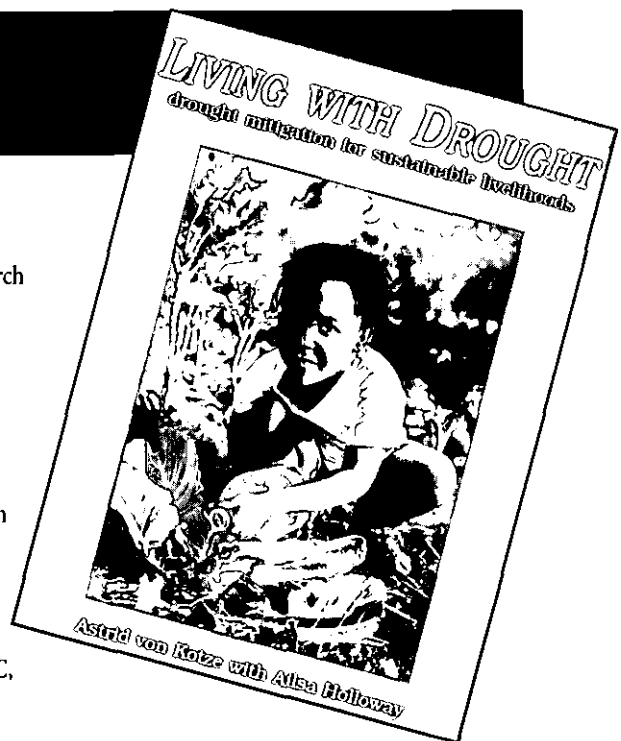
Thomas Drabek has produced for us another advance in researching disasters. Building upon his previous work titled *Human Systems Response to Disaster*, Drabek continues to focus upon understanding human behaviour within organisations when confronted with a potential or real disaster event. The results of his research follow on from interviews conducted with 23 Federal, State and local emergency management managers, interviews with business executives and employees, and an extensive questionnaire. As outlined in this study, Drabek uses seven disaster events, which have occurred across 12 communities. He focuses on the affect these events had on the employees of some 118 businesses.

Drabek establishes excellent comparative criteria for these events. This provides him with good data on which he bases his conclusions.

Using terms like 'Uncertainty of Forewarning', the 'Magnitude of Impact' and the 'Accessibility of Escape Routes' Drabek is able to provide good comparisons related to 'similarities' and 'differences' that arise from the seven disasters studied. Students and practitioners of Emergency Management in Australia, who need to understand more the employees behaviour when faced with the need to evacuate, will find this publication an excellent source of data.

For example, I found it of interest that of the 406 employees involved in this current study, 92% had some prior disaster experience which had triggered a workplace evacuation. 40% of the interviewees had also evacuated from their home because of a prior disaster.

However, according to Drabek's research, only



27% of the 406 employees claimed that they had received some form of disaster training at their place of work. Drabek provides an analysis of workplace training and its effectiveness.

What can we learn from this publication? That will depend on your understanding of both the 'theoretical' and 'behavioural' concepts used by the author.

Thomas Drabek provides us with good discussion on the results of his research. He uses responses from his interviews and the questionnaire to predict employee behaviour and document their concerns.

While based upon disaster events that have occurred within America, his work none-the-less proves a rich source of data for those involved in emergency management. His work will be of particular interest to those who are seeking organisational change that will provide for educative programs and support for the employee whenever a disaster event occurs.

To my knowledge, no comparative research has been published that deals with our employees' behaviour during evacuations that have been initiated in response to a disaster.

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The publication is available from: The Natural Hazards Research and Applications Information Centre, Campus Box 482, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309-0482 USA. Email hazctr@colorado.edu. The cost of the publication is US\$20, plus shipping and handling.