



# **Media Interaction With the Public in Emergency Situations: Four Case Studies - Three Mile Island Nuclear Accident, Los Angeles Riots and Rodney King, World Trade Center Bombing, Oklahoma City Bombing**

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Professionally converted for accurate flowing-text e-book format reproduction, this interesting study provides an analysis of media coverage of four major emergency situations in the United States and the impact of that coverage on the public. The situations analyzed are the Three Mile Island nuclear accident (1979), the Los Angeles riots (1992), the World Trade Center bombing (1993), and the Oklahoma City bombing (1995). Each study consists of a chronology of events followed by a discussion of the interaction of the media and the public in that particular situation. Emphasis is upon the initial hours or days of each event. Print and television coverage was analyzed in each study; radio coverage was analyzed in one instance. The conclusion discusses several themes that emerge from a comparison of the role of the media in these emergencies. Sources consulted appear in the bibliography at the end of the report.

INTRODUCTION: THE MEDIA IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS \* THE THREE MILE ISLAND NUCLEAR ACCIDENT, 1979 \* Chronology of Events, March 28-April 1, 1979 \* The Media and Three Mile Island \* Problems with the Nuclear Industry \* The Media at TMI \* The Media and the Public Outcome of the Three Mile Island Accident \* Summary \* THE LOS ANGELES RIOTS, 1992 \* Chronology of Events, April 29-May 3, 1992 \* The Media and the Los Angeles Riots \* The Rodney King Affair \* Television as the Instigator of the Riots \* Television as a Guide to the Rioting \* The Impact of Videotaping \* The Media and Sensationalized Coverage \* Outcome of The Los Angeles Riots \* Summary \* THE WORLD TRADE CENTER BOMBING, 1993 \* Chronology of Events, February 26-27, 1993 \* The Media And The World Trade Center Bombing \* The Media as a Source of Emergency Information \* Impact of the Media Upon Investigators \* The Media and the Public \* Outcome of The World Trade Center Bombing \* Summary \* THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING, 1995 \* Chronology of Events, April 19-21, 1995 \* The Media And The Oklahoma City Bombing \* The Media as a Source of Emergency Information and Relief \* Graphic or Sensational Media Coverage and Privacy Violations \* The Media and the Search for Suspects \* Outcome of Oklahoma City Bombing \* Summary \* CONCLUSION: THEMES IN THE FOUR MEDIA STUDIES \* Media Response Time \* The Media as "Creator" of Events \* The Media as a Source of Emergency Information and Help \* Media Potential to Alleviate or to Exacerbate \* The Media as Jury and Judge \* The Tendency to Exaggerate and Sensationalize \* BIBLIOGRAPHY

Emergency situations arise from a wide variety of natural and man-made events ranging from earthquakes and hurricanes to domestic disturbances and terrorist strikes to nuclear power accidents and airplane crashes. Information about these events can be disseminated by several means, but one of the most important channels for communicating information about emergency situations is the modern mass media. Despite reservations that may be expressed about their ability to play the role of communicator impartially, the media transmit considerable information about the circumstances and hazards of emergencies to a wide audience.

In attempting to understand how the media function, it may be useful to describe journalists' work in terms of

three types of "games." These "games" help conceptualize the ways in which the media generally handle the information they pass forward to the public. The first game may be termed the "gatekeeper game" in which a newsroom, as an organization, sets the rules and packages "the news" for its readers. Journalists decide what information is to be passed on from sources of knowledge to a mass audience, what should be changed, and what information should and should not be passed through media channels.

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