



# The First 72 Hours: A Community Approach to Disaster Preparedness

*Margaret O'Leary*

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The First 72 Hours is the seminal anthology of the perspectives of public and private sector leaders who came together after September 11, 2001 to design more disaster-resilient communities. Under the umbrella of the Suburban Emergency Management Project, these leaders learned from national experts and one another that all disasters are intensely local at first and that most communities are "on their own" immediately following disaster impact-often for as long as 72 hours. This new awareness mandated updating strategies to improve disaster preparedness, particularly in light of the threat of terrorism. A wide gamut of perspectives are laid out in the book, including those of doctors and hospitals, city managers, police officers, firefighters, paramedics, American Red Cross volunteers, hospital accreditors, the media, business managers, utility companies, emergency managers, public health officials, academics, and elected public officials. In their own words, these individuals convey the importance of learning how to map the myriad organizations involved in local disaster preparedness and response; analyzing, refining and rehearsing local disaster roles; and getting to know individual personalities when in specific roles. The First 72 Hours is an essential resource for professionals and private citizens alike who want to know what kinds of questions must be asked and answered to better prepare their communities to survive future disaster. "There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all."-Hamlet, act 5, scene 2

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