

## Student Worksheet 3.5

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### Activity 3.5 What if...? Is Your Community Ready for Disaster?

In this activity, you will explore how well your community is prepared for disaster. By considering your community's emergency plans, you will (1) get a sense of how decisions about responding to disasters (or even the effects of global change) are made at the local level in a democracy, and (2) become aware of the values and assumptions that are implicit in your community's preparation.

You have been hired as a consultant by the city council to assess the community's state of emergency preparedness. The city council has told you that their main concern is people's safety (from injury or death). Their second most important concern is the maintenance of services in the community (to provide emergency assistance, to preserve a sense of community, to recover as quickly as possible, etc.). The council has requested a short (2-3 page) report of your findings.

Your task is to conduct a thorough assessment of the city's level of emergency preparedness. You will need to acquire emergency plans from various agencies in the local community. In some cases, you may need to request time for an interview, in person or via telephone, with representatives from local agencies. Consider the following questions as you review the emergency plans:

- What disasters is the city prepared for?
- Are the city's plans comprehensive and exhaustive?
- To what extent do the city's plans identify potential disaster sources from *outside* the local community?
- Do the city's plans consider how *all* members of the local community will be affected by a disaster? If not, who or what is left out and why?

After you have gathered all your information, spend some time planning how best to present your findings to the council. In the report to the council, you may also want to include maps and existing plans, a realistic disaster scenario, or recommendations based on historical findings of past emergencies. Can you suggest ways that the emergency plans can be improved?