

King County Office of Emergency Management Podcasts *Disasters: Are you ready?*

Disaster Resistant—Resilient

- This week's Podcast is about being disaster resistant and resilient
- Ever since the inception of Project Impact I've used the phrase "Building Disaster Resistant Communities" in a variety of settings, whether it be as a tag line on my email correspondence or at the end of a Project Impact Television show.
- A new term has really come into vogue these days, that being "Disaster Resilient." I now see it being used widely in professional journals and recently I also saw it in the title of some job titles for business continuity. Something like a "Disaster Resiliency Coordinator."
- When I first heard the word and how it was being used it gave me pause to think about the differences in the terms.
- Disaster resistant describes more the preparedness aspects that come into play before a disaster that contribute to an organization's ability to withstand the onslaught of a disaster. FEMA used it as part of their Project Impact to emphasize disaster mitigation in communities, both government and the private sector.
- It also applies to withstanding the effects of a disaster as it is taking place. What we would call the response phase of emergency management.
- Disaster Resiliency has more to do with the end state of an organization. I think of the term elasticity when thinking of resiliency. A bend, but don't break strategy. The ability to absorb a blow and still remain standing.

- Architects and engineers actually design elasticity into newer tall buildings in order to provide some flex in a building subject to high winds and earthquake shaking.
- I also think of resiliency as a more holistic aspect that encompasses disaster recovery more than disaster resistance. How quickly will the Gulf Coast “Bounce back” from Hurricane Katrina is a function of their disaster resilience more than their disaster resistance capability.
- Both of these terms certainly include an all-hazards approach since they are not tied to any one type of disaster, be it terrorism or a natural disaster.
- In the end I’ve decided to use both terms since in my mind they mean different things. So my tag line is now “Our Vision is Building Disaster Resistant and Resilient Communities.”
- I’m sure there will be another new term in the future that someone will come up with to describe the preferred end state for community disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.
- For the time being, let’s all commit to becoming more disaster resistant and resilient when it comes to facing disasters and building a better tomorrow for our generation and generations to come.