

Technocratic vs. Vulnerability Approach to Emergency Management

Technocratic

- Focus is on physical processes of hazard
- Style is hierarchical, managerial problem solving
- Applies technology, engineering, money
- Tends to be top-down approach
- General philosophical orientation is utilitarian and the conquest of nature
- Philosophy of science emphasizes the linear and bounded system (Newtonian physics analogy)

Vulnerability

- Focus is on socio-economic-political factors
- Style is decentralized, community based problem solving
- Applies local knowledge, pressure, imagination, creativity
- Tends to be bottoms-up approach
- General philosophical orientation is egalitarian and co-existence with nature
- Philosophy of science emphasizes the non-linear, open systems, and complexity (Quantum Physics analogy)

Source: Adapted from Enarson, Elaine, Cheryl Childers, Betty Hearn Morrow, Deborah Thomas, Ben Wisner. 2003. *A Social Vulnerability Approach to Disasters*. Emmitsburg, Maryland: Emergency Management Institute, Federal Emergency Management Agency, p. 2-22. (Authors note they adapted this material from a presentation made by Wayne Blanchard on “The FEMA Higher Education Project” at the Emergency Management Institute in July, 2000).