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A Mindset Shift For The Future

The **supply chain** is a focal point in all emergency management phases. In the **preparedness phase**, emergency managers and suppliers work to ensure that they have all the necessary materials for when a disaster may occur. **During an emergency**, these individuals work to transport and provide these supplies to the people affected by the disaster. Throughout the **recovery and after-action**, emergency managers look to create strategies based on current processes that will increase the efficiency of the supply chain during the next emergency. Even with all this preparation beforehand and hours of planning, COVID-19 turned our whole perspective on how vital and vulnerable our supply chain system can be.



A few years before COVID-19 shocked the nation, Hurricane Maria devastated the northeastern Caribbean, specifically Dominica, St. Croix, and Puerto Rico. This disaster revealed the importance of **supply chain resilience** in emergencies. The 2017 Atlantic hurricane season revealed inconsistencies in public sector emergency relief channels' ability to replace the existing network of supplies. Federal, state, and local government supplies such as water, food, and transportation assets can only be essential **gap-fillers** if built up and prepared over time.

Through the impact of COVID-19, fundamental issues for transporting provisions rose to the top of the priority list. The challenge of the supply chain is **matching supply with demand efficiently**. This hurdle exacerbated the pressure due to the need for a large distribution of COVID-19 emergency supplies. COVID-19 forced emergency managers to focus on finding **successful strategies for shipping and providing supplies** under a limited window and resource stockpile that exposed the bottlenecks that often occur when a pandemic such as COVID-19 forces recovery with a minimal supply.

While we have historically seen bottlenecks in essential resource distribution, the pandemic brought in a hurdle we have not faced recently – **genuine issues meeting the demand**. Even with the Defense Production Act allowing an all-hands-on-deck approach to manufacturing, and private sector manufacturers stepping up in a time of need, states struggled to stand up adequate stockpiles and procure needed medical equipment. This genuine scarcity of goods was a big hurdle for us as a nation to tackle because, until now, our only solution revolved around buying and shipping goods to fill demands.

The **Institute for Public Research at the CNA Corporation** realized changes to the current supply chain strategies would be necessary. They began conducting studies and analysis around seven years ago – helping **Los Angeles** and the **Puget Sound** area **identify gaps** and **develop plans** for supply chain issues. This work focused on adopting a new perspective that involved changing mindsets from **"replacement"** to **"restoration"** regarding **supply chain resilience**. Significant culture shifts like this are challenging to implement, so having this head start before the most significant supply crunch we have seen in decades was invaluable.

With the scarcity of goods issue less of a concern, we now see issues in the current **'endemic' phase**". The supply chain has stabilized, but SLTTs face problems handling expiring stockpiles. The private sector also has a good solution for this, with **David Kaufman, Vice President and Director of Safety and Security at CNA**, discussing the options of vendor-managed inventories. Kaufman emphasized, **"[The nation] needs to look at the supply chain as a more circular system, not point to point."** The products we produce, distribute, and store have shelf lives that should be considered part of this **circular supply chain system** – something that we are working with now with these state personal protective equipment (PPE) stockpiles.

Overall, we have learned a lot about the strengths and weaknesses of our supply chain systems in this country. During the COVID pandemic, CNA took these lessons and compiled a **top ten list** of **policies** that **communities, organizations, and others** should implement and avoid to ensure the **continuous flow of goods**. This list was beneficial to emergency management professionals at all levels, and something CNA could provide to **organizations** during an incident impacting existing critical supply chains.

The theme of changing mindsets from **"replacement"** to **"restoration"** reconfigures how we view supply chain resilience. With this new perspective, emergency managers can work to incorporate the lessons learned through COVID-19 to streamline the supply chain process in an efficient and structured manner.

Leaders win through logistics. Vision, sure. Strategy, yes. But when you go to war, you need to have both toilet paper and bullets at the right place at the right time. In other words, you must win through superior logistics.

- Tom Peters

If you have a state practice you'd like to highlight as part of this series, please contact [Jamie Logan](mailto:jamie@nemaweb.org).

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