

The Brosnan Center Convenes

IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT

Scientific Risk and Scientific Expertise in Hazard Events: Navigating among Diverging Scientific Data and Opinions
AGU San Francisco Dec 17th 2015.

During disasters, whether volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis or major oil-spills and wildfires, decisions makers focus on identifying their immediate best course of action. Their choices can affect thousands of lives, the continuance of trade and commerce, and the sustainability of communities. Often there is little time for reflection. Decision-makers are increasingly calling upon scientists to contribute their expertise to help minimize disasters stemming from natural and human induced hazards. They want scientists to be able to predict the likelihood and severity of disasters and find ways to ameliorate the consequences. The questions that they ask are not scientific ones.- Will it happen? Should we evacuate? How big will the fire or tsunami be? How long will it last? Should we build a sand berm to keep oil offshore? Will I be able to get supplies or ship supplies? Who or what is most at risk? These are practical questions and science can help to minimize the effects of disasters and speed recovery as long as all parties understand how to use science effectively.

During disasters, science cannot always predict with the accuracy sought by decision-makers. Most scientists are unaware of the cascading consequences that they are being asked to minimize. Many scientists, more used to intellectual discourse with colleagues, are suddenly thrust into rooms filled with stressed decision-makers who are facing impending disasters and demanding answers. Importantly too, scientists differ in their interpretation of data and uncertainties. While these differences are the spark of scientific creativity, they are often the bane of disaster decisions. Decision-makers often find themselves trying to choose between apparently conflicting advice.

Our goal is to bridge this gap, to showcase lessons learned, and create guidelines that bring together scientists and their information with those who urgently need the knowledge. At AGU we are gathering experts who have worked effectively on several global disasters from earthquakes and tsunamis to Deepwater Horizon and Hurricane Sandy, and who are developing new monitoring and interpretation techniques. Drawing on their experiences along with the Center's own work we are learning from experiences and developing ideas that will make science more effective in mitigating extreme events. We cannot prevent hazards but we can help to stop them from becoming major disasters.

JOIN US AT AGU when the BROSAN CENTER with Dr. Kris Ludwig of USGS will convene "Scientific Risk and Scientific Expertise in Hazard Events: Navigating among Diverging Scientific Data and Opinions" Thursday, Dec. 17 10:20-12:20 in Moscone South San Francisco Convention Center.

<https://agu.confex.com/agu/fm15/meetingapp.cgi/Session/8760>.

Speakers from NASA, academia, USGS, the center will share their experiences and lessons learned and guidelines for making science effective in disasters.

A very limited number of spaces are available for the pre-event dinner and discussion the night before on Dec 16th. Contact services@brosnancenter.com



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