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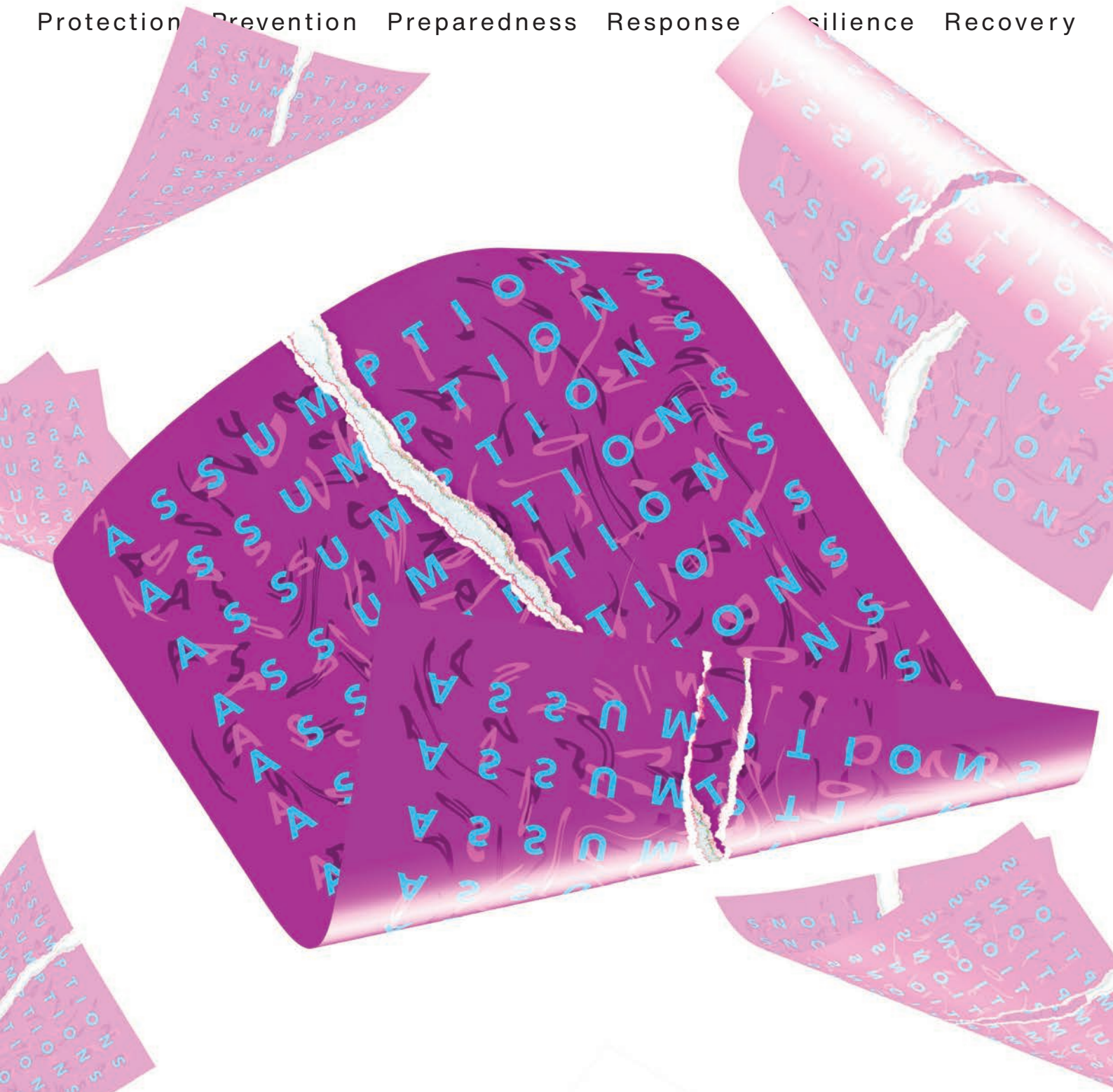


# RIP THEM UP AND START AGAIN?

Travel industry resilience | Covid-19 debate | Cybersecurity | Online tribalism & vigilantism | Frontline responder wellbeing | Karachi floods | Asteroids

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Cover image: Gracie Broom

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# comment

**This edition of the *CRJ* is** about challenging assumptions, unpicking the strands of the Covid-19 pandemic and its multiple cascading consequences, all the while being mindful of how they are conflating with other disasters and emergencies, such as the storms, other extreme weather and wildfires sweeping across the world.

Many cosy assumptions about emergency preparedness systems, society, security and international relations have clearly been misguided and, in part, this stems from a historical lack of emphasis on preparedness and mitigation in favour of post-crisis response. On p28 Eric McNulty notes: "The ever greater demands we place on responders are the result of design failures in our institutions and communities," asking, "How often have you seen ... honorifics bestowed on those who labour on mitigation, preparedness and recovery?"

This leads us to the status of the complex horizontal and vertical relationships between governments, emergency preparedness experts, responders and, most importantly, the public. Assumptions are all too often being made about public involvement in – and experience of – emergencies, as emphasised by David Wales on p16.

When systems are found wanting and citizens don't feel that their needs are being addressed or recognised by authorities, unrest and dissent can proliferate. Starting on p60, *CRJ* looks at some of the manifestations of such unrest, from lockdown tribalism to overzealous digital behaviour. These trends affect us all – business, emergency planners, responders, governments, communities and individuals – and Jennifer Hesterman provides a sobering reminder of what happens when online crime, terror and vigilantism spill over into the real world (p64). This is backed up by the heightened vulnerabilities highlighted by authors in our cyber feature (p40).

*CRJ* is not for tearing down systems that work, nor does it advocate the indiscriminate ripping up of assumptions. But failure to ask questions and debate the more difficult subjects that have been skirted around for many years, can only lead to crippling atrophy.

# Insarag Guidelines – fit for purpose

The International Search and Rescue Advisory Group has reviewed its guidelines for dealing with the sudden onset of events involving large scale structural collapses. Here, **Anwar Abdullah** outlines the group's strategy

Established in 1990, the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (Insarag) supports capacity-building at all levels. In particular, it develops and promotes globally accepted standards for urban search and rescue (USAR) assistance, co-ordination methodologies and tools, as well as mobilisation and information exchange protocols among relevant stakeholders. The network also encourages co-operation and experience-sharing between members and partners.

The *Insarag Guidelines* were endorsed by the *UN General Assembly Resolution 57/150* (December 2002) on: 'Strengthening the Effectiveness and Co-ordination of International USAR Assistance' and provide a systematised methodology to deal with the sudden onset of disasters that involve large scale structural collapses.

The methodology provides a process for preparedness, co-operation, and co-ordination of all humanitarian assistance providers. Its development was based on the collective experiences of its member states and organisations that have existing national USAR capability.

## Main reference material

As a working document, it is constantly reviewed with input from lessons learnt in major national and international USAR operations, exercises and certification processes. The guiding principle is that this should be the main reference material, effectively serving the needs of users. The *Guidelines* have been restructured from a single volume to three volumes, which allows specific users to access the necessary information more easily.

Volume I provides an overview of the Insarag network, giving policymakers an understanding of the role, responsibility and obligation of their organisation in supporting and rendering humanitarian assistance. It also spells out the linkages with other parts of the UN establishments and partner organisations and provides information that will determine a state's decision to be part of this set-up and commit the necessary efforts and resources to support it.

Volume II explains the different Insarag systems and methodologies. It comprises three manuals:

- Manual A maps out an overall framework to help a state develop a national capacity and mechanism in USAR as part of its national emergency response framework. The manual defines the process of identifying and supporting existing USAR resources or developing new capacity through the creation of systems and processes. Capacity development could begin from the first community responder, to developing an Insarag recognised USAR team – from light to medium and heavy teams – and eventually achieving certification by Insarag;
- Manual B describes the roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders during USAR operations, such as the UN, affected and assisting countries as well as international USAR teams. It spells out the five components of USAR capability –management, search, rescue, medical and logistics – within the USAR response cycle; and
- Manual C defines the minimum operational standards for international teams operating within the Insarag network. Teams preparing to undergo an Insarag External Classification/Reclassification (IEC/R) must have a deep understanding of the expected planning, preparation and delivery requirements. By following these standards, teams will be prepared to offer professional services, operate in a collaborative manner and provide timely, lifesaving assistance to an affected population.

Volume III is a field operational guide for all USAR managers and team members. Developed as a quick-reference guide with field and tactical information for all missions, exercises and training sessions, it comprises the five USAR capability components mentioned above and includes a section on safety and security.

After a comprehensive two-year review, several amendments and additions have been made to the Guidelines. Key inclusions in the new *Guidelines 2020* are:

- National Accreditation Process (NAP) and Insarag Recognised National Accreditation Process (Irnap) – one of the critical aspects in developing the national capacity is the establishment of a NAP for the teams. This allows a state to manage, monitor and establish national standards. The NAP of a member state can then be recognised by the Irnap, after which member states may decide to issue nationally-accredited teams with a standardised patch endorsed by Insarag;
- Classified Light USAR team – Insarag will now classify this team, which must possess all five key USAR components and have the ability to conduct search and rescue operations in collapsed or failed structures. It must be capable of conducting USAR operations to ASR3 Level and is expected to have the operational capability to work only at one work site for one work period, ie 12 hours per day for five days;
- Pre-greening for an IER – one of the key differences between the IEC and IER process is pre-greening, where the team leader IEC/R classifier, the USAR team and the mentor discuss and agree on the elements of the relevant checklist to be demonstrated, presented or explained prior to the IEC/R exercise. This is one of the key responsibilities of a team's mentor;
- Beyond the rubble – this is an offer of assistance by the USAR teams to the affected community during the transitional phase between the USAR and the early recovery/relief phase;
- Guidance notes and technical reference library – these serve as two 'live' knowledge management platforms on Insarag's website. All Insarag-endorsed documents are placed under the guidance notes, while the technical reference library is a knowledge repository for best practices;
- Guidelines review process – a regularised five-year review cycle led by the Insarag guidelines review group (GRG). It should reflect an evolution in practice, embrace new technology and development and act as lean and easy reference material for policy and decision-makers as well as USAR teams; and
- Receiving mechanism – as part of national capacity building and strengthening, it is important for countries to develop a receiving mechanism that facilitates decision-making in identifying, requesting and accepting international assistance in a timely manner. This will augment the state's disaster management capacity by analysing national risks and identifying possible gaps. In developing a national receiving mechanism, it is useful for countries to take reference from *UN General Assembly resolution 57/150* that states: "The affected State has the primary role in the initiation, organisation, co-ordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory."

It is hoped that the new *Guidelines* will bring the Insarag standards and capabilities to new heights and further enhance preparedness and readiness in member states. The revision will facilitate better, seamless co-ordination and response, allowing teams to render immediate and effective assistance to the affected countries. Even as the *Guidelines* are to be implemented in 2021, concurrent work streams are already in place to prepare for the future.

A transitional guidelines review group has been formed to undertake the implementation of the new *Guidelines* and engage communities and partners for inputs and feedback. The team will also work with stakeholders to identify new areas for consideration and inclusion in the next review.

In addition, discussions are already happening about reinforcing quality standards, advancing flexible assistance, enhancing preparedness efforts and bolstering partnerships and augmenting international assistance arrangements, as well as implementing new technologies and information management.

The new features, along with other community-led initiatives, will help to shape future *Guidelines* to ensure they always remain fit for purpose. CRJ

■ *More information can be found at www.insarag.org*

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