



UNIVERSITY OF
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 Department of Fire Protection Engineering




What Human Behavior in Fire is NOT...


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An Ideal Situation




- Well-designed procedure implemented with current, accurate information
- Occupants respond promptly to the instructions provided
- Once initiated, move directly to a place of safety
- Occupants use the egress routes efficiently



An Ideal Situation, cont.





Credit: Guylene Proulx

Panic and the Media

- The perpetuation of the panic myth



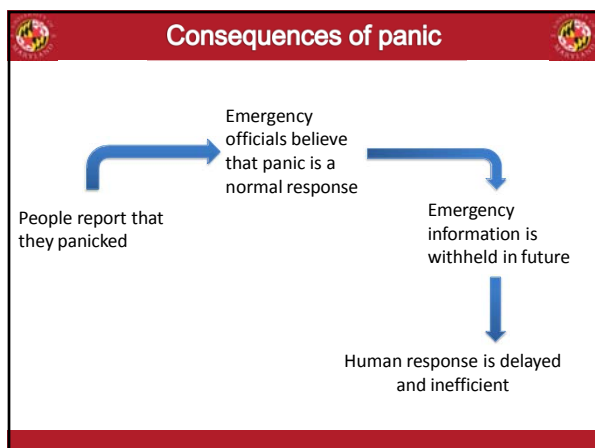




Best, 1977

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What is Panic and When Can it Occur?

- Behavior must be anti-social, competitive
- Wenger (and Janis and Mann) – conditions for panic
 - Danger is perceived as a specific threat and this results in a social crisis;
 - Limited escape routes exist (rapidly being closed off);
 - People believe that escape is possible;
 - Competition rather than cooperation is necessary for escape;
 - Lack of ties to other individuals.







The Myth of Role Abandonment




- Role abandonment (Natural Hazards Observer May 2007)
 - Definition – emergency officials abandoning their posts before/during a disaster
 - Role conflict between their professional duties and desire to take care of self/others (i.e., family)
 - Dynes and Quarantelli – studied over 100 disasters – role conflict was not a serious problem
 - How may we relate this to fires?
- Consequences – We may reduce the responsibilities we give to those who are best suited for the job




The Myth of Disaster Shock/Inactivity



- Disaster shock/inactivity (FEMA Training document – Chp 8)
 - Definition – A state of shock – docility, disoriented thinking, general insensitivity to cues in the immediate environment
 - Melick (1985) – 3 important conclusions
 - Appears most frequently with rapid onset, low forewarned events – widespread damage, injuries, deaths
 - Small proportion of population affected
 - Lasting only for small period of time (a few hours, not more than a few days)
- Consequences – We do not anticipate that individuals will save themselves or others; may overcommit emergency responders



Summary



- There are certain beliefs or myths about human behavior that should be further explained (and even debunked!)
- The ideal situation is unlikely to occur
- Panic, role abandonment, and disaster shock are rare.
