

Chapter 3

Gaming and Simulation in Public Education: Teaching Others to Help Themselves and Their Neighbors

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ABSTRACT

Public education is an important component of providing for the safety of individuals and communities. Although it is often not given the resources seen by response units, a good public education program can and does save lives. A good program empowers people to help themselves and their neighbors in times of need until help from professional responders can arrive. This chapter will examine the important role that gaming and simulation currently plays in teaching the public and will lay out ideas on how it can be used for better and more efficient training programs in the future.

INTRODUCTION

Between 2016 and 2019, NOAA (2019) reported more than 50 environmentally-related disasters in the United States that each resulted in more than a billion dollars in losses. This is more than the previous ten years combined. Many speculate that the future holds more devastating events and more of them for the world. While emergency response organizations do a wonderful job in normal circumstances,

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it has been proven in disaster after disaster that individuals need to take care of themselves and their neighbors until help can get to them. Hurricane Katrina changed the traditional mindset of help arriving quickly to realize that help may be days away in an extensive disaster. FEMA (2019) now recommends that families be prepared to survive for up to 72 hours on their own. There is a widespread belief that people want to do the right thing to help themselves and others in times of need. They just do not always know what the right thing is. This is one of the many reasons why there must be an aggressive public education program to teach people how to prepare and respond when emergencies occur. Much has been done in educating the general public on preparing for emergencies and disasters, but there is still a long way to go. As times change, it is reasonable to conclude that traditional methods of teaching preparedness skills in public education need to change, becoming more advanced as well. In a world of technology, including virtual reality, instant internet connection, realistic video games, and more, there are numerous pathways that the imaginative public educator could take to teach individuals and groups how to make themselves and their communities more resilient from emergencies and disasters.

Chapter Objectives

- Discuss the need for public education.
- Describe basic educational principles for adults and children as it pertains to public education.
- Discuss ways in which simulation can be used to teach preparedness and response knowledge and skills.
- Explain ways in which gaming can be utilized to instruct public education topics.
- Summarize what the future of simulations and gaming in teaching Public Education might look like.

BACKGROUND

Many people join the varying fields of emergency services, including emergency management, with the idea of saving lives and helping their communities in times of need. Some even picture that popular vision of the firefighter carrying the child out of a burning building. What person with aspirations of public service would not want that as a part of their history? While it is a great vision and a noble calling, one must face the realization that to affect that kind of rescue takes being at the right place, at the right time, and completing the right actions. The truth of the matter is that most in the emergency services will never have that particular opportunity.

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