HURRICANE SHARON

Managing rescue and recovery triage

A category 5 hurricane[1], Sharon, strikes the northeast coast of the United States bringing devastating wind damage, fires, and severe flooding that punish New York City and the northern coast of New Jersey. Millions are without water, electricity, and basic survival needs of food and shelter. Thousands are totally isolated, and hundreds are presumed dead.

Your group, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's regional response task force, is assigned to direct the rescue and recovery of those whose lives remain at risk. The on-going devastating effects of Sharon place hundreds, perhaps thousands, in immediate peril. Time is of the essence. Unfortunately, the material and human assets set aside for emergency response have been severely compromised and your management task force is made aware that only two operational rescue teams are available.

You have before you the following requests for immediate assistance necessary to save threatened lives and resources.

A section of **Staten Island** took a direct hit from Sharon experiencing a storm surge of 15 feet and devastating nearly everything in its path. Information available to you makes clear that some 200 families ignored a mandatory evacuation notice. Many children were among those left behind. There are no reports on how many may have survived, but there have been isolated communications indicating that survivors remain and are in grave peril.

The damage to **Atlantic City** was great. Those who remain at risk in the area are mostly tourists who were unable to flee before the storm hit. The wealthy business owners in the region will be hurt economically if the tourists are not rescued promptly. The Governor of New Jersey just called claiming that he received a personal promise from the President of the United States that assistance would be immediate and adequate. Hundreds of known survivors are trapped in upscale but devastated hotels along the coast.

The **Bronx** is home to the poorest inhabitants; many of whom heard the warnings of the impending hurricane but had no adequate means of transportation by which to escape. Prior to the storm public transportation had been diverted so as to accommodate more "well-established" neighborhoods. Sketchy information indicates that thousands of potential survivors are at risk.

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[1] Sustained winds of 157 mph and greater.

Long Island is home to the Governor of New York's immediate family. She has economic interests in the area. After the storm hit the Governor issued an executive order declaring Long Island the top priority in rescue and recovery. She identified important resources for the state of New York at risk in Long Island as her rationale for the prioritization. Your task force suspects the order to be a result of her personal interests. You have no direct information on the status of the area or possible survivors.

Two of your team members are from **Queens** where they are coaches to youth soccer teams. Prior to your meeting and before phone service was lost, these two members each received desperate phone calls from their soccer players. You don't know how many people are at risk in Queens but you do know that at least two 15-year-old girls, well-known to members of your task force, are crying for help.

At the last minute your team gets word from the President of the United States that a federal prison, home to thousands of women, is flooded. The prison is located near **Bridgeport** and there was no way for them to avoid Sharon. He reported that it appears that many will perish unless help comes immediately.

Time is of the essence, your resources are depleted, and you have only two rescue and recovery teams. For this exercise, assume that there is no difference in logistical capabilities, i.e. the two teams can get to any of the rescue areas in the same amount of time. Where should your response team send them? How would you make that decision?

Fairness	
Outcomes	
Responsibilities	
Character	
Liberty	
Empathy	
Authority	
Rights	

This is a fictional thought experiment written by William J. Hawk, James Madison University