



CHAPTER 3

RISK ASSESSMENT: CIVIL DISTURBANCES

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DESCRIPTION

The following descriptions are from the Idaho Statutes, as they may relate to civil disturbances:

TITLE 18 - CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS

- 18-6401. Riot defined. Any action, use of force or violence, or threat thereof, disturbs the public peace, or any threat to use such force or violence, if accompanied by immediate power of execution, by two (2) or more persons acting together, and without authority of law, which results in:
 - (a) Physical injury to any person; or
 - (b) Damage or destruction to public or private property; or
 - (c) A disturbance of the public peace; is a riot.
- 18-6404. Unlawful assembly defined. Whenever two or more persons assemble together to do an unlawful act, and separate without doing or advancing toward it, or do a lawful act in a violent, boisterous or tumultuous manner, such assembly is an unlawful assembly.
- 18-8102. "Civil disorder" means any public disturbance involving acts of violence by an assemblage of two (2) or more persons which acts cause an immediate danger of or result in damage or injury to the property or person of any other individual.

Civil unrest spans a variety of actions including labor unrest, strikes, civil disobedience, demonstrations, riots, and rebellion. Civil disturbances arise from acts of civil disobedience, often spontaneous, involving large numbers of persons, generally caused by such political grievances and urban economic conflicts or a decrease in the supply of essential goods and services. Civil disturbance is often a form of protest, arising from highly emotional social and economic issues which are outlined in the table below:

AIDS-HIV	Bike Transportation	Feminism	Immigration	Poverty
Anarchists	Children	Food / Hunger	Left-Socialism	Prison Reform
Animal Rights	Civil Liberties	Gay/Lesbian/ Bisexual	Literacy	Race Relations
Abortion Anti/Pro-Choice	Consumer Advocacy	Grass Roots Democracy	Mental Health	Tax Reform
Anti-Government	Death Penalty	Gun Control	Peace	Trade
Anti-Nuclear	Drug Decriminalization	Housing/ Homelessness	People with Disabilities	Union
Anti-Racist	Environment	Human Rights	Police Reform	Welfare

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As recently as 2011, Boise experienced *Occupy Boise*, an episode of civil disturbance that launched from the **Occupy Together** movement, spurred by the September 17 **Occupy Wall Street** protest. Local officials expended time and resources planning for contingencies and dealing with permit issues.¹



Source: Boise Weeklv



Source: Boise Weeklv

The protest against corporate entities for political reasons remained peaceful. This group exercised their first amendment rights. Unfortunately, not all civil disturbances end up this way.

¹ Boise Parks & Recreation Commissioners Meeting, 2011



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Civil disturbance severity depends on the nature of the disturbance. The high profile World Trade Organization (WTO) 2000 conference in Seattle resulted in mass arrests, civilian curfews, and over 20 million dollars in property damage. Compare this episode to the Rodney King beating which unleashed 7 days of violence, \$1 billion in property damage, and left 50 people dead. It is not possible to predict the potential severity of civil disturbance; however, it is necessary to think about the potential of such a disturbance. Incidents like these are less likely to occur in a smaller city, due to the noncontiguous nature of suburban development patterns.

Mob violence is segregated into three separate forms, including riots, lynchings, and vigilante groups. Mobs are typically associated with the disorder and lack of respect for the law. Uncontrolled, unorganized, angry, and emotional, these commons masses, otherwise known as mobs, share a common purpose.²

There is a low, medium, and high range that can be associated with the severity of the hazard of civil disturbance. Such



Source: ThinkStock.com

disturbances may originate from a Political rally or university football game celebration getting out of control or demonstrations by environmental logging protestors. Police dispatched to control traffic corridors or intrusion on private property is considered a low severity civil disturbance. Disruption of businesses and potentially, property damage, are assessed as a moderate civil disturbance. In these cases, police intervention would be required to restore order without employing chemical agents or physical force. A severe civil disturbance would involve rioting, arson, looting, and assault, where aggressive police action (tear gas, curfews, and mass arrests) may be required.

In general, a high hazard severity rating would be assigned to an event where emotionally charged and highly contentious business or police action engendered the outrage of a certain segment of the population. While the hazard severity would be high, there would be a moderate vulnerability in such an event and low probability, and as such, a low risk rating is assigned to a high severity civil disturbance.

² Alvarez, A. (2008). *Violence The Enduring Problem*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.m. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.



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A moderate hazard severity rating would be assigned to a localized event that resulted in damage to property, police action, or some physical harm to the people involved, either protesters or police. In that the vulnerability to such an event is moderate, the severity is moderate, and the probability is moderate, a moderate risk rating is assigned to the potential moderate civil disturbance event.

A low hazard rating would be assigned to a localized event that resulted in minimal to no property damage, no police action (though potential police presence), and no physical harm to the participants, bystanders, or police. As such, while there may a high probability rating for such forms of low severity civil disturbance, and while the vulnerability rating may be moderate, a low severity hazard would be given a low hazard rating.

LOCATION, EXTENT, AND MAGNITUDE

Because of their often spontaneous nature, it is difficult to identify specifics; however, information gathered in advance may warn officials and provide locations of future civil disturbances.

PAST OCCURRENCE

There have been several episodes of civil disturbance in Idaho. Chinese immigrant mining disturbances date back to 1885, and miner strikes and confrontations are recorded in the 1890's. During this decade, Idaho Governors requested federal assistance on two separate occasions in efforts to suppress insurrection. (Coeur d'Alene Miners' Dispute (1892-1899)) Minor incidents resulted from disorderly conduct at races or firework

celebrations which required law enforcement intervention and jurisdictions changed policies to prevent future disturbances. Other diverse incidents include protests for moving nuclear waste through Idaho and individual hydrogen-sulfide suicides. Kootenai County spent time

and resources preparing for and maintaining law and order during the Aryan Nation parades in the 1980's and again in 2000. Even non-violent

gatherings can have similar consequences as a violent civil disturbance. The 2001 Rainbow Family gathering in Idaho's remote Sawtooth Mountains led to a state declaration.



2001 Rainbow Family Gathering / Source:

http://www.ubyouth.org/Events/2001_Rainbow/Rainbow%20Gathering%202001.htm

FUTURE OCCURRENCE

It can be assumed that civil disturbances will continue to occur in the future, but these events are



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usually difficult to predict. Some forms of civil disturbance are potentially anticipated. In the case of the race riots that erupted after certain legal verdicts, the ensuing civil disturbances could have been predicted. The WTO organizers have been heavily criticized for not having anticipated the extent and nature of the protests. It is fair to say that in many instances, there is some amount of reasonable warning possible to help prepare for civil disturbances.

RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER HAZARDS

Civil disturbances generally do not influence or impact the initiation of natural hazards. It is plausible though, humans could be the cause for either a wildfire event or a dam/levee/canal failure. Such an incident would most likely be classified as a terrorist event. Idaho Governor, Butch Otter, has directed school safety assessments be conducted as a result of school shooting in other parts of the country. Many resources have been devoted to protecting citizens since the attacks of September 11, 2001. Just the nature of a planned or spontaneous civil disturbance will ensure collateral damage to property and/or environmental assets.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

There may be risks posed to the natural environment because of a civil disturbance event. Any damages, such as the destruction of vegetation or the contamination of waterways, would likely be incidental to the physical intrusion of protestors, and not a deliberate act of destruction. The natural environment would be assigned a low impact and vulnerability rating.

DEVELOPMENT TREND IMPACTS

Civil disturbances can occur anywhere in the urban, rural, or natural environment. Normally, development of new or expansion of existing areas will not directly impact this human-caused hazard.

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND STATE FACILITY IMPACTS

Civil disturbances can occur anywhere, potentially impacting any structure or infrastructure across the State.

VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

Manmade facilities, such as homes, businesses, and other essential infrastructure, such as dams, utilities sites, and other public common areas are vulnerable to civil disturbance because civil violence, by its very nature, is most often directed at objects that reflect civil values - property, industry, and services. During the WTO protests, it was the recognized brand name stores, such as the GAP and Starbucks, which were first to be singled out as token representatives of the global commercialization that the WTO protesters were opposing. As such, the manmade environment would receive a high impact and vulnerability rating. Idaho houses many high-profile international corporations, which could be potentially targeted.



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The systems most likely impacted by civil disturbance include community systems, such as the police, fire departments, and emergency medical teams. Straining such limited services, particularly in rural counties, could be disastrous. Transportation systems could also be impacted if transit routes are blocked, such as major corridors through Idaho including Interstate 84 or Highway 55, or if the civil disturbance has rendered part of the city unsafe, like the Capitol building in Boise. At this time, no detailed State vulnerability assessment is available as it relates to civil disturbances.

LOSS ESTIMATION

Society, as a whole, pays for the costs of violence - if not directly as a victim, indirectly through justice toward the perpetrator(s). It is estimated that personal crimes average \$105 billion annually through medical costs, lost earnings, and program costs related to victim assistance, as well as travel and related expenses for victim's participation through the court system.³ Other public gatherings, not classified as civil disturbances or mass mobs, such as Special Olympics held in Idaho, both feed into the economy and strain public resources as well. Although local storeowners benefited from the Rainbow Family, local and state jurisdictions resources and finances were strained. Separate from USFS expenditures, the overall estimated cost to the Idaho State Disaster Fund was in excess of \$200,000, including over \$90,000 in reimbursements to Valley and Boise counties. At this time, no detailed State loss estimation is available as it relates to civil disturbances.

MITIGATION RATIONALE

No long-term mitigation actions can attempt to reduce the occurrence or impacts from future civil disturbances. Further efforts are required to clarify and identify future implications and threats as they relate to THIRA.

GENERAL MITIGATION APPROACHES

The low probability and unique nature of these human-caused events make any attempt at mitigation a difficult task.

³ Alvarez, A. (2008). *Violence The Enduring Problem*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.