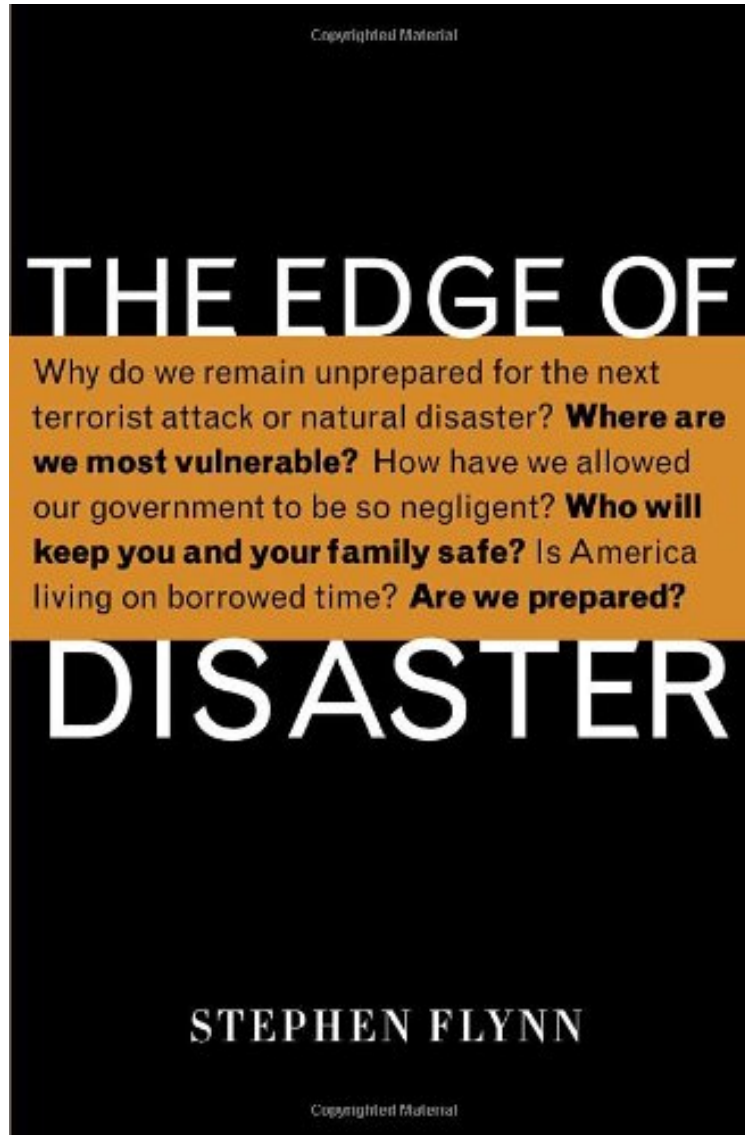


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The Edge of Disaster: Rebuilding a Resilient Nation

Stephen Flynn

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Stephen Flynn : The Edge of Disaster: Rebuilding a Resilient Nation before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Edge of Disaster: Rebuilding a Resilient Nation:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Civil ENGINEER REVIEWER By R. Kendall The author appears to have got this situation correctly, although I am a Civil engineer, the accuracy of all these statements (for say highways, bridges, tunnels, ports, subways, water supplies, sanitary, etc.) would take an army of engineers a lot of time to give a real good accounting. I know that ASCE and the States are telling people that we have some real needs and we'd better

start doing something. However, the main gist is definitely correct - Natural Disasters more likely than terrorism for way most people, FEMA is almost a joke (maybe it got better for Hurricane Sandy - say jury still out). And why are we spending all that money and putting all those people in harms way overseas even though we should do something - but fight a WAR! And the Rivers-Levees-Dams disasters waiting to happen are probably not slammed enough. And the Guvmint seems to keep way too much secret so the States/Locals and private entities don't know enough or the hands are tied. We can't protect everything all the time - the idea to concentrate somewhat on hardening targets and being better prepared to react is correct. And have The CIA-FBI-DOD started to cooperate and coordinate better? Pretty well done although i'm by no ways an expert (you have to trained, briefed and involved say directly to be such). Well, maybe a bit too harsh since was printed in 2007 and even he has had to modify some of this stuff. Altogether - good job.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Challenges our myths and assumptions.By George D. Klein, author, DissensionsI found this book to be right on target - Bulls-Eye. Flynn points out all the pitfalls in the current mode of planning responses to disasters and terrorist attacks on the part of government, congress and others. He calls attention to the complacency of the American Public, partly lulled by a secretive government failing to share how it addresses the issues of disaster planning and repairing and maintaining American infrastructure to withstand both natural disasters and terrorism.He rightly points out that NO effort has been made to involve and rally the American Citizenry to respond to disasters or fight terrorism (Where is the war bond drive to fight the global war on terrorism?) Nor have efforts been made to involVe the private sector (except recently, the state of Texas in its Hurricane Evacuation planning will involve energy companies, Walmart, Home Depot and the HEB groceries to assure people's needs are met quickly when the next hurricane comes).In short, we as Americans, according to Flynn seem to be living in a world of make-believe fog. It reminds him of the last days of the Roman empire.He did not mention, that since 9/11 while the US is pre-occupied with a war on terror, the economies of India and CHina have taken off. In fact, the "smart money" is investing in Brazil, Russia, India and China, not the US. Perhaps our weak infrstructure has a role to play.What are the solutions? I have cut and pasted them from another review as a reminder of how urgent the need is to address this issue:1) Force Washington to build national resiliency at home2) Put terrorism in the context of the other threats (see Wikipedia, "Ten Threats")3) Fix the infrastructure now4) Inform the American people, they are our greatest asset5) Tap the ingenuity and resources of the private sector6) Do not underestimate the value of individual preparedness7) Do not allow government to pretend the pandemic will not happen8) Discourage construction along vulnerable coastlines and in flood plains9) Properly fund and support local police and emergency responders10) Promote the concept of resiliency as a global imperative.Buy this book. In fact, buy extra copies for those you love and cherish.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Risk MitigationBy Retired ReaderIt is generally considered that defending the lives and property of its citizens is a central responsibility of all levels of government. In the U.S. the execution of this responsibility by the federal government has been misinterpreted to equate to fighting a so-called war against a phantom enemy called `Terror'. Yet as this book makes clear, National Security, the rubric under which this responsibility falls, incorporates not only protection against manmade and natural disasters, but recovery from them as well. The truth is that it is impossible for any country to provide 100 per cent protection from either and prudence would suggest that robust recovery plans are an essential part of national security.Flynn argues in this book that the U.S. local and federal governments should embrace both risk management and risk mitigation as part of their security strategies. He makes the point that dangers of injury, death, and loss (i.e. risk) are unavoidable, but can be minimized with proper planning and execution. In this book he provides a realistic appraisal of the type vulnerabilities that put the U.S. at risk from manmade and natural forces and suggests methods to mitigate this risk. His suggestions are sound and founded in his own experience as a former U.S. Coast Guard Officer. He notes that some local jurisdictions have actually undertaken risk analysis and mitigation, but that the federal government apparently finds that risk management is a politically incorrect concept.The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the obvious agency responsible for assessing National Security risks and their mitigation, but appears unable or unwilling to do so. Rather than implementing realistic risk management, DHS has chosen to try to provide complete protection against everything and has succeeded in protecting very little. In this conclusion Flynn very much complements the description of DHS given by Clark Kent Ervin in his book "Open Target" (.com).Indeed this reviewer would suggest that readers interested in National Security issues would be advised to read both books.

Why do we remain unprepared for the next terrorist attack or natural disaster?Where are we most vulnerable?How have we allowed our government to be so negligent?Who will keep you and your family safe?Is America living on borrowed time?How can we become a more resilient nation?Americans are in denial when it comes to facing up to how vulnerable our nation is to disaster, be it terrorist attack or act of God. We have learned little from the cataclysms of September 11 and Hurricane Katrina. When it comes to catastrophe, America is living on borrowed timeand squandering it. In this new book, leading security expert Stephen Flynn issues a call to action, demanding that we wake up and prepare immediately for a safer future.The truth is acts of terror cannot always be prevented, and nature continues to show its fury in frighteningly unpredictable ways. Resiliency, argues Flynn, must now become our national motto. With chilling frankness and clarity, Flynn paints an all too real scenario of the threats we face within

our own borders. A terrorist attack on a tanker carrying liquefied natural gas into Boston Harbor could kill thousands and leave millions more of New Englanders without power or heat. The destruction of a ship with a cargo of oil in Long Beach, California, could bring the West Coast economy to its knees and endanger the surrounding population. But even these all-too-plausible terrorist scenarios pale in comparison to the potential destruction wrought by a major earthquake or hurricane. Our growing exposure to man-made and natural perils is largely rooted in our own negligence, as we take for granted the infrastructure handed down to us by earlier generations. Once the envy of the world, this infrastructure is now crumbling. After decades of neglect, our public health system leaves us at the mercy of microbes that could kill millions in the next flu pandemic. Flash flooding could wipe out a fifty-year-old dam north of Phoenix, placing thousands of homes and lives at risk. The next San Francisco earthquake could destroy century-old levees, contaminating the freshwater supply that most of California relies on for survival. It doesn't have to be this way. *The Edge of Disaster* tells us what we can do about it, as individuals and as a society. We can and, Flynn argues, we must construct a more resilient nation. With the wounds of recent national tragedies still unhealed, the time to act is now. Flynn argues that by tackling head-on, eyes open the perils that lie before us, we can remain true to our most important and endearing national trait: our sense of optimism about the future and our conviction that we can change it for the better for ourselves and our children. Steve Flynn offers the answer not only to protecting America from terrorist attacks and natural disaster but also to revitalizing our democracy. This book is a must-read for all members of Congress, 2008 presidential candidates, and ordinary citizens who want to build a better and safer future. Anne-Marie Slaughter, dean, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University Advance praise for *The Edge of Disaster* Steve Flynn has done it again. Like *America the Vulnerable* before it, *The Edge of Disaster* is the must-read book for every American, elected official, and presidential candidate who is committed to ensuring that our nation continue to thrive in perilous times. Mark Warner, former governor of Virginia Since 9/11, protecting our nation against a terrorist attack has consumed policy makers in Washington. What Stephen Flynn points out in *The Edge of Disaster* is that much of this effort has been directed overseas, often at the expense of our homeland and its much more likely areas of vulnerability. Laying out a series of potential disasters both manmade and natural, Flynn calls for a greater emphasis on preparedness and the ability of communities and the nation to recover. Painting an often frustrating and infuriating picture of missed opportunities, *The Edge of Disaster* is a call to action. The time to act is now. We can only hope that policy makers are listening. Christine Todd Whitman, former governor of New Jersey and former administrator, Environmental Protection Agency (2001-03) Steve Flynn's book makes the very persuasive argument that national security preparedness is linked to natural disaster preparedness. By investing significantly in our critical infrastructure, in citizen preparedness, and most importantly in leadership, we can be better prepared for all hazards. A great book that I highly recommend. James Lee Witt, former director, Federal Emergency Management Agency Steve Flynn has become a relentless contributor to the dialogue on prioritizing the work of the post-9/11 security environment. *The Edge of Disaster* calls into question the neglect of domestic preparedness in favor of the Department of Defense-driven offensive in the global war on terrorism. The book offers provocative challenges to both our elected and our private-sector leaders, and both should read it thoroughly. Admiral James M. Loy, former commandant, U.S. Coast Guard, and former deputy secretary of homeland security

From *Booklist* Homeland Security expert Flynn examines the vulnerability of the U.S. to disaster--natural and man-made--and what the nation must do to fortify its security. By exploring several well-documented and frightening scenarios, Flynn exposes our weaknesses and the consequences of our failure to adequately plan for disaster. Among the scenarios he explores: an avian flu outbreak in New York; destruction of a chemical plant in New Jersey; a San Francisco earthquake that compromises levees and leads to massive flooding. Flynn points to threats from our blithe disregard for the dangers all around us, including chemical plants and oil refineries operating in close proximity to crowded communities. We can't plan for every disaster, but the nation can be better prepared, Flynn maintains, and he offers advice on how corporations and the government can reduce the risk of disaster. Among his suggestions: making sure energy management and public-health systems have enough resources and building more power-transmission lines to keep lights on when temperatures rise. Flynn's book reads like a thriller but has the added punch of reality. Vanessa Bush Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved About the Author Stephen Flynn is among the world's most widely cited experts on homeland security and trade and transportation issues. A senior fellow with the National Security Studies Program at the Council on Foreign Relations since 1999, he is the author of the critically acclaimed bestseller *America the Vulnerable*. Flynn lives in Connecticut with his wife and daughter. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Chapter 1A BRITTLE NATION The United States has become a brittle superpower. We are the world's economic and cultural 900-pound gorilla and spend more on our military muscle than the rest of the world combined. Yet we increasingly behave like the occupants of a grand old mansion who have given up on investing in its upkeep. We depend on complex infrastructure built by the hard labor, capital, and ingenuity of our forbears, but we seem oblivious to the fact that it is aging and not very gracefully. Bridges are outfitted with the civil engineering equivalent of a diaper. Public works departments construct temporary patches for dams that leave those living downstream one major storm away from waking up to a wall of water rolling through their living rooms.

Our electricity comes to us via a decades-old system of power generators, transformers, and transmission lines that has utility executives holding their breath on every hot day in July or August. It is not just modernity's hardware that is being neglected. Two decades of taxpayer rebellion have stripped away the means for emergency workers to help us when we need them. Today, most city and state public health departments are not adequately funded to manage their routine work. A flu pandemic would completely overwhelm them. A growing number of firehouses have been shuttered in recent years, and firefighters must make do with radios that often are unable to support communications with neighboring departments. In many cities across the country, there are fewer police officers on the streets today than there were in 2001, and those still on the beat have only limited access to the kind of protective equipment that would allow them to operate in a contaminated environment. Emergency room services have been a major casualty of medical care belt-tightening, forcing ambulances to routinely engage in countywide scavenger hunts for a place to bring their patients. Federal agencies such as the Coast Guard operate with a rickety fleet of aged ships and aircraft that routinely break down during patrols. In short, on any given day, our first responders are barely treading water. That means that there is little to no capability to deal with large-scale disasters such as major hurricanes, terrorist attacks, and disease outbreak. Like the spoiled offspring of well-off parents, we seem blissfully ignorant of what is required to sustain the quality of our daily lives. Washington has shown little interest in challenging this national state of complacency. Rather than address the myriad soft targets within the U.S. border, the White House has defined the war on terrorism as something to be managed by actions beyond our shores. The rallying cry of the Bush administration and its allies on Capitol Hill has been We must fight terrorists over there so we don't have to fight them here. What this ignores is that terrorists can still come here and, worse yet, are being made here. When it comes to natural disasters, both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue rationalize their passivity by citing deference to governors and mayors and the private sector. With the exception of the nation's capital and military bases, our national infrastructure lies within the jurisdictions of individual states and cities and is largely owned and operated by private entities. And emergency response has traditionally been a local responsibility. The most compelling lesson we should have learned on 9/11 is that our borders are unable to provide an effective barrier against the modern terrorist threat. The al-Qaeda operatives who carried out the attacks on New York and Washington had been residing in the United States. They did not strike us with weapons of mass destruction provided by a rogue state but turned four domestic airliners into their equivalents. The Madrid train attacks in March 2004, the suicide bombings of the London Underground in July 2005, the June 2006 arrests of seventeen radicalized Canadians in Toronto, and the August 2006 arrests of two dozen British citizens intent on bombing U.S.-bound flights from London all highlight the growing reality that advanced democratic societies are not immune to incubating the homegrown terrorist threat. The central lesson to be learned from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita is that major natural disasters are likely to overwhelm states and localities' capacities to respond. Those two storms caused damage to more than 90,000 square miles of land and destroyed 360,000 households. Washington's exhortations to governors and mayors to do more will not alter documented reality. In a report on disaster preparedness released in June 2006, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security found that only one quarter of state emergency operations plans and 10 percent of municipal plans are sufficient to cope with a natural disaster or terrorist attack. The majority of plans cannot be characterized as fully adequate, feasible or acceptable to manage catastrophic events. Denial and a fatalistic sense of resignation seem to be conspiring to immobilize us. Superficially, on an individual level there is an underlying logic to our inertia. Most of us will not be in the wrong place at the wrong time when terrorists attack, the earth rumbles, the tsunami hits, or the hurricane makes landfall. Of course, there will be victims, but odds are that individually we will not be counted among them. On the flip side, if fate does place us directly in the crosshairs of a disaster, anything we may have done in advance to protect ourselves is likely to be overwhelmed by the destructive forces aligned against us. So why worry about forces that lie beyond our control? But this kind of rationalization is silly and irresponsible. Anyone who has ever prepared for a camping trip or gone to sea on a small vessel knows that having plans for coping with emergencies does not rob these activities of their enjoyment. However, not having plans could eat away at your peace of mind and put lives needlessly at risk should misfortune strike. We rightfully condemn as a fool anyone who marches off into the wilderness or leaves shore without the basic survival skills and tools for coping when things go wrong. The fact is that we are living in increasingly complicated and perilous times and we have to stop pretending that disasters are extremely rare and unforeseeable. Even if we personally are usually lucky enough to be outside the primary strike zone, we are unlikely to escape the fallout. The things we depend on are becoming more and more interconnected and interdependent. A disruption of pipelines and refineries on the Gulf Coast means that gasoline quickly becomes in short supply everywhere. The closure of a major seaport such as Los Angeles means a nationwide shortage of the things that retailers and manufacturers and ultimately consumers need to keep operating. And in an age when long daily commutes and frequent air travel are facts of life, there is little hope that the rapid spread of a contagious disease can be contained by a simple quarantine. The danger from man-made attacks is growing despite the more-than-five-year reprieve the United States has enjoyed since 9/11. We have been hedging most of our security bets on open-ended military campaigns to combat terrorism overseas, a gamble that appears to have worsening odds. When we were focused on containing the Soviet Union during the Cold War, relying on the projection of our military power beyond

our shores made sense. However, today, we are seeing that the far-flung radical jihadist threat cannot be encircled by deploying our armed forces to the Middle East and Central Asia. Indeed, those efforts have had the unintended consequence of attracting more recruits, including self-starter groups of first- and second- generation Muslim immigrants in advanced democratic societies such as the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The use of sabotage by insurgents in Iraq has also helped to proliferate the number of individuals who possess the skills and technology to target critical facilities such as refineries, pipelines, water management systems, power generators, and electrical transformers. Whatever the long-term prospects for a more peaceful Middle East and they do not look good for the foreseeable future the global terrorist risk is going to get worse before it gets better. It is simply a matter of time before the United States is attacked again. Compounding the risk is that we are living our lives in ways that increasingly tempt both fate and our enemies. At the micro level, most of us are blithely depleting the reservoir of self-sufficiency that once got us through emergencies. Our just-in-time lifestyles rely on ATM machines to provide us with cash when we need it and twenty-four-hour stores to provide us with food and gas on demand. When the power goes out and these modern conveniences fail, we quickly become incapacitated. Within hours after storms hit, thousands of people end up standing in line for clean water, a hot meal, and basic shelter. Then we are dismayed to find that the public safety and public health sectors that we have been starving of resources during the good times are unable to help us when the times get bad. We have raised our exposure to harm in other ways as well. For one thing, we have been unwilling to invest in the infrastructure that supports our lives. In 2005, the American Society of Civil Engineers assigned grades to fifteen categories of infrastructure based on a review of hundreds of studies and reports and a survey of more than two thousand engineers. Grades were assigned on the basis of condition and capacity, and funding versus need. It was not the kind of report card you would have wanted to bring home to your parents: four Cs, ten Ds, and one incomplete. The narrative reads like a survey that might have been conducted on the eve of the collapse of the Roman Empire. Roads, dams, water purification facilities, the power grid, canal locks, roads, a...