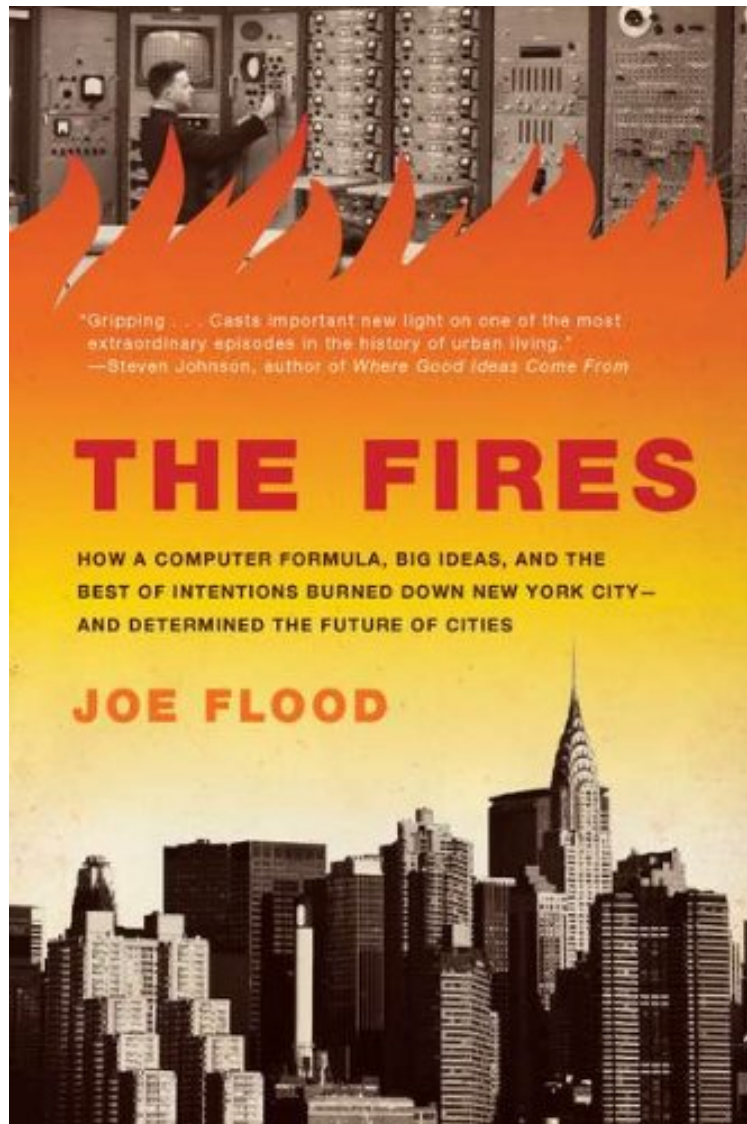


[Mobile ebook] The Fires: How a Computer Formula, Big Ideas, and the Best of Intentions Burned Down New York City-and Determined the Future of Cities

The Fires: How a Computer Formula, Big Ideas, and the Best of Intentions Burned Down New York City-and Determined the Future of Cities

Joe Flood

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Joe Flood : The Fires: How a Computer Formula, Big Ideas, and the Best of Intentions Burned Down New York City-and Determined the Future of Cities before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Fires: How a Computer Formula, Big Ideas, and the Best of Intentions Burned

Down New York City-and Determined the Future of Cities:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Often inaccurate take on why NYC burned in the 70s By Ben Rothfeld I'm halfway through this book, but its biases are REALLY making it hard to take seriously. The premise is that well-meaning but fundamentally flawed city policies led to substandard building conditions and--more importantly--poorly-deployed FDNY units that in turn increased the number of fires in poor neighborhoods and also crippled the effectiveness of FDNY response. Fair enough. However, the author attributes the mismanagement to a liberal conspiracy of Mayor John Lindsay (indeed, a liberal Republican) and...the RAND Corporation? You remember them. They were the wild-eyed Communists who wrote The Pentagon Papers. From there, author Joe Flood makes assumptions and/or writes outright falsehoods that make his analysis hard to take without a Yankee Stadium-sized pile of salt. For instance:- In Flood's book, Tammany Hall seems to have remained a major force in NYC politics through the 1960s. I'm sure this would have come as a surprise to the last Tammany leader, Carmine deSapio.- He attributes Manhattan's decline as a port to a decision by the Regional Plan Association to move port facilities to Elizabeth, N.J. He makes no mention of the containerization of shipping that required functioning ports to have hundreds of acres of space to stack boxes.- He claims slum clearance drove manufacturing out of the city and only mentions in passing the lower wages found in the South and offshore. He also neglects to mention a little thing called Brooklyn, where industries such as Domino Sugar carried on well into the 60s.- He refers to beer as being distilled. OK, this is an error of diction and suggests a sloppy editor, but I take beer VERY seriously.- Last, but not least as I'm only halfway through the book, he refers to the conservative whipping boy "culture of dependency." To his credit, he quotes the term. To his debit, he does not provide immediate source for the quote. In short, there may be some valid points in this book. I'm anxious to get to the parts explaining how FDNY resources were squandered. However, his persistent and uncritical use of Fox News/National Review rhetoric does not give me much hope. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The pressures of continuing a business contract forced the Rand personnel to make bad assumptions to get their analysis complete By Char (Ohio) Interesting read on the influence of the fledgling data analysis industry on management of the largest city in the U.S. and in particular the deliver of services by the fire department during an economic downturn. The pressures of continuing a business contract forced the Rand personnel to make bad assumptions to get their analysis completed in the time desired and to get the result their ally in the fire department desired. That resulted in bad management decisions which affected the operations of the department, the decline of jobs in the city and then residents moving out of the city which resulted in less resources for the city. A vicious, perpetuating cycle ensues. The desires of the Chief to succeed in difficult economic times forces his hand in trying unique ways to deliver service and the union trying to keep firefighters working the traditional schedule results in additional conflict. The citizens loose as they wouldn't work together. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Highly recommended - but don't expect simple answers By D. Garnett Doug Garnett I recommend this as a "must read" for three groups.....if you are interested in government and reality, it offers no easy answers but looks at very tough realities. Especially, the idea that technocrats should be brought into government and turned loose....if you are at all involved in big data, this is a clarion call warning about the huge errors that come from trusting the simplifications that always come from data analysis....if you are in business, this offers a reality check on some of the most common approaches taught as "best practices" in business school without cautions on their limitations. Especially...data based continual improvement programs like Six Sigma. The author offers no easy answers. And he carefully sidesteps ideology. Sadly, this may mean this book will never get the wide readership it deserves. But that's also what makes it such an important book.

New York City, 1968. The RAND Corporation had presented an alluring proposal to a city on the brink of economic collapse: Using RAND's computer models, which had been successfully implemented in high-level military operations, the city could save millions of dollars by establishing more efficient public services. The RAND boys were the best and brightest, and bore all the sheen of modern American success. New York City, on the other hand, seemed old-fashioned, insular, and corrupt-and the new mayor was eager for outside help, especially something as innovative and infallible as "computer modeling." A deal was struck: RAND would begin its first major civilian effort with the FDNY. Over the next decade-a time New York City firefighters would refer to as "The War Years"-a series of fires swept through the South Bronx, the Lower East Side, Harlem, and Brooklyn, gutting whole neighborhoods, killing more than two thousand people and displacing hundreds of thousands. Conventional wisdom would blame arson, but these fires were the result of something altogether different: the intentional withdrawal of fire protection from the city's poorest neighborhoods-all based on RAND's computer modeling systems. Despite the disastrous consequences, New York City in the 1970s set the template for how a modern city functions-both literally, as RAND sold its computer models to cities across the country, and systematically, as a new wave of technocratic decision-making took hold, which persists to this day. In *The Fires*, Joe Flood provides an X-ray of these inner workings, using the dramatic story of a pair of mayors, an ambitious fire commissioner, and an even more ambitious think tank to illuminate the patterns and formulas that are now inextricably woven into the very fabric of contemporary urban life. *The Fires* is a

must read for anyone curious about how a modern city works.

.com Best Books of the Month, May 2010: As Howard Cosell announced to a national television audience in 1977, the Bronx was indeed burning, as it did throughout the decade, displacing hundreds of thousands of residents and turning acres of city blocks into ghost towns. But why? The usual suspect was arson, by greedy slumlords encouraged by wrong-headed welfare schemes, but in his first book, *The Fires*, Joe Flood tells a different story. Tracing the history of the New York fire department, and especially the career of one of its most dynamic and dominant leaders, Chief John O'Hagan, he argues convincingly that the borough burned because the firefighters left, pulled away by department planners who claimed their computer efficiency formulas could do more by spending less. Writing a Best and the Brightest for the urban crisis, Flood takes you on a harrowing ladder-level tour of city firefighting, while performing the more difficult feat of making intellectual and bureaucratic history just as fascinating and dramatic. --Tom Nissley
Author QA with Joe Flood Joe Flood is a journalist who has spent years researching the facts and implications of the epidemic of fires that swept through New York City in the 1970s.