

Publication

Bracing for “The Big One”

For the August 2024 issue of *Public Management*, Sarah Sieloff and Daniele Spirandelli, Ph.D., wrote about public works departments’ role as “critical first responders” after earthquakes and other natural disasters.

“Their skills, equipment, and knowledge of the systems that make daily life possible are essential for earthquake preparedness and response,” wrote Sarah, an urban planner, and Daniele, a resilience specialist, in ‘Bracing for ‘The Big One.’” “But this can seem like a tall order amid the dual challenge of keeping aging infrastructure running while preparing for disaster response and recovery with limited time, funding, and training.”

Given those challenges, Sarah and Daniele draw on interviews with public works and emergency managers from West Coast jurisdictions to offer lessons learned from past disaster responses and planning for “the big one.” They conclude that keys to effective response include understanding the interdependence of city systems, building and maintaining strong communication between public works and first responders, and recognizing the human toll that disaster response can have on individuals involved.

Read “Bracing for ‘The Big One’” to learn more.