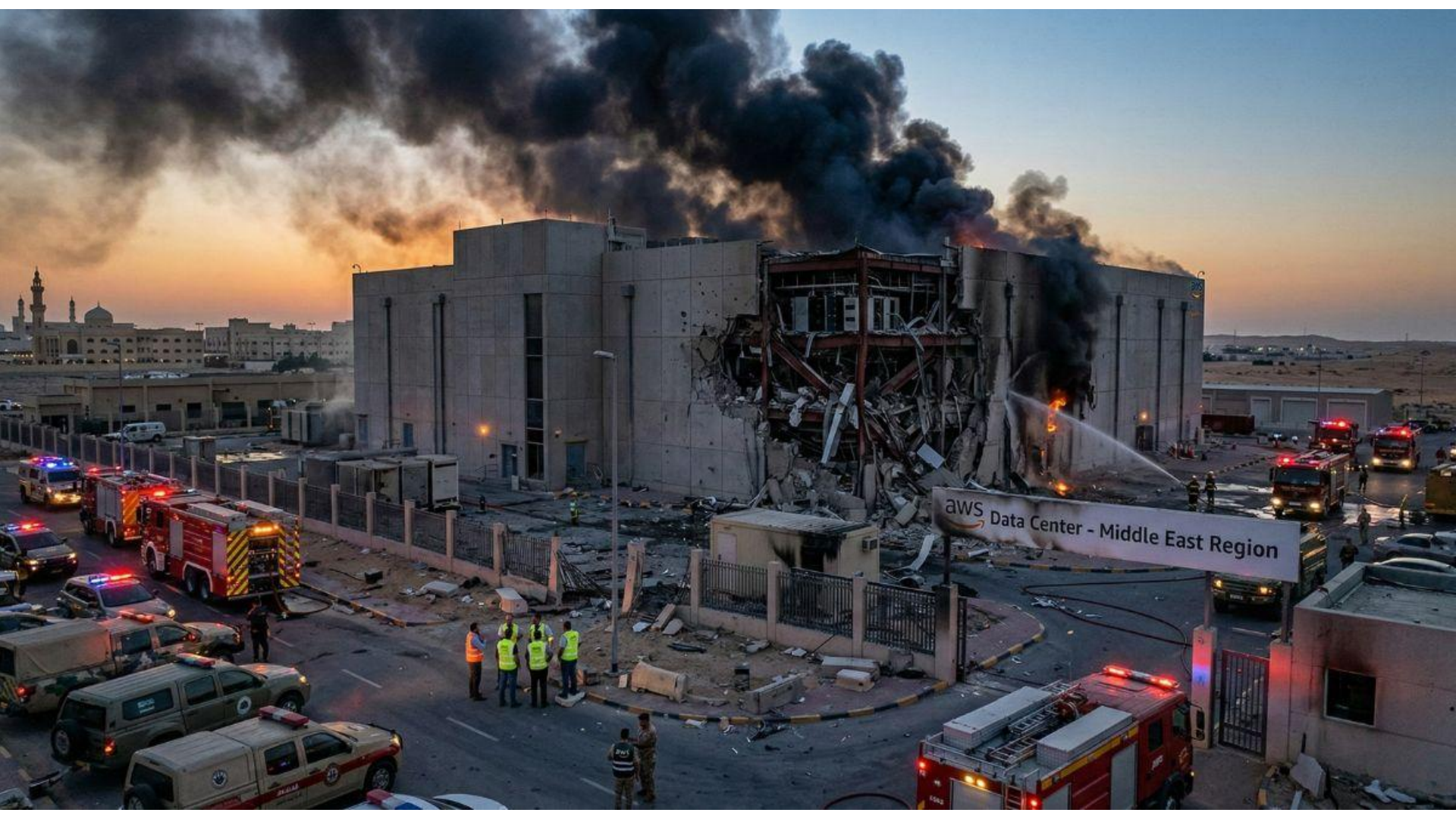


# 3 Lies We Tell Ourselves About Disaster Recovery

... and what to do about them



COGNITE



aws Data Center - Middle East Region

# What we'll talk about today...

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- All DR plans that exist in the world are bullshit
  - (Yes, your DR plans, specifically, are bullshit)
- There are three very important lies we tell ourselves about DR that are worth examining
- There are practical things we can do in response to these lies, to mitigate their harm and do better by the people we work with



# Prosaic Organizational Failure

LEE CLARKE

*Rutgers University*

CHARLES PERROW

*Yale University*

*We use the case of the now-dead Shoreham Nuclear Power Station to pose some questions, and a few answers, about organizational failure. The analysis centers on the symbolism of organizational plans, specifically how organizations use plans to justify increasingly complex systems to themselves and to others. That such plans are based on sparse or nonexistent experience, and that they are often wildly unrealistic, suggests some reasons why high-technology, high-risk systems do not foster organizational learning.*

**Organizations fail often** and they fail in important ways. Police departments become corrupt. Banks invest unwisely. Schools do not educate. Investment houses make bad bets. But large or powerful organizations rarely disappear, though one would think that failure would mean extinction. Only one work deals

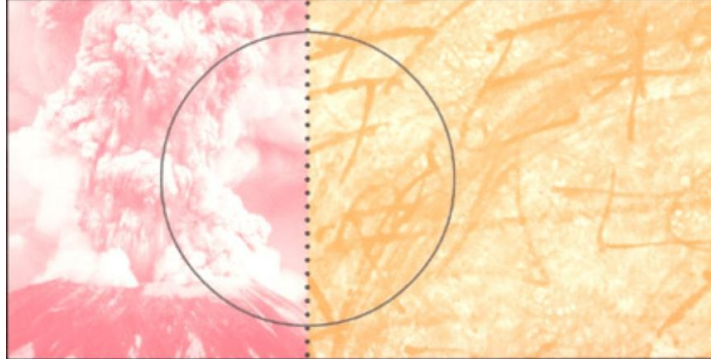


# Exxon Valdez spill - Alyeska's plan vs. reality

|  | 200,000 barrels <b>plan</b> | 240,000 barrels <b>reality</b> |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Initial response with minimal gear via barge | Under 5 hours               | 12 hours                       |
| Major recovery gear arrives for containment  | 9-17 hours                  | 1-2 weeks                      |
| Clean up time                                | 2 months                    | 3 years                        |
| Unrecovered barrels                          | 10,000                      | ~38,400                        |
| Directly recovered                           | 100,000                     | 16,800-34,000                  |
| "Naturally dispersed"                        | 90,000                      | 168,000                        |

A critical look at how governments and corporations plan for accidents and disasters

# MISSION IMPROBABLE



LEE CLARKE

*Using Fantasy Documents to Tame Disaster*

## Now a question

- Do you have disaster recovery plans where you work?

## Now a some questions

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## Now a some questions

- Do you have disaster recovery plans where you work?
- How many of you would bet \$40 that they would work as planned if they needed to facilitate a recovery in real life?
- What about \$400?
- What about \$4000?

# One last question

- Are you certain about the cost of your DR plans being lies?
  - In other words, do you understand the the full impact that your plans have on the world around you?

A blue sign with the word "Lies" in white, serif font. The sign is mounted on a dark blue surface with two horizontal white reflective stripes. Below the sign, the text "...and why we tell them to ourselves" is written in red.

Lies

...and why we tell them to ourselves

# Lie 1: If you test it, it will work when it counts

The reality is that while some parts of your plan might work, it's more likely than not that important parts of it will not when it counts.

## Lie 2: A real-life disaster scenario will be unambiguous

In reality, operators more frequently face ambiguity when confronted with incidents, and small events can cascade into catastrophe.

## Lie 3: The value in DR work is that it works perfectly as planned when we need it

A DR test is more like incident practice. We can derive more value when we accept that it can bolster organizational learning rather than actually work as planned when needed.

Okay, wtf do I do now?

# Lie 1: If you test it, it will work when it counts

- The value of your DR plan might not be that it works
  - You need to pass audits
- You should still manage the plan across the organization
  - Talk to people who manage incidents on the ground - customer support and engineers, to write the plan with the most leeway for responders that you can.
  - Make sure executives understand the nuance here as much as possible
  - The **best case scenario** is that everyone in your organization understands the reality of the DR plan's weaknesses, rather than believing it to be something to follow to the letter in an actual emergency.

## Lie 2: A real-life disaster scenario will be unambiguous

- Interview the folks who would be “pulling the lever”
  - How do they feel about that?
  - Help them practice it to feel better about it.
- Use real, past scenarios to feed into DR practice
  - The more realistic the scenario for execution (gradual realization, for example), the better the practice will be for everyone

## Lie 3: The value in DR work is when it works perfectly as planned when we need it

- You will find out very quickly who the experts in parts of your systems are when you run into trouble
- So will all of the people in your organization participating in the test
- After the test, an action item worth considering is disseminating knowledge about the system that has been involved in resolution to as many folks in your organization as possible.

What do you think?  
(Thanks!)

Questions?

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<https://technewsme.com/aws-middle-east-disrupted-after-objects-struck-datacenter-amid-escalating-iran-war/>

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