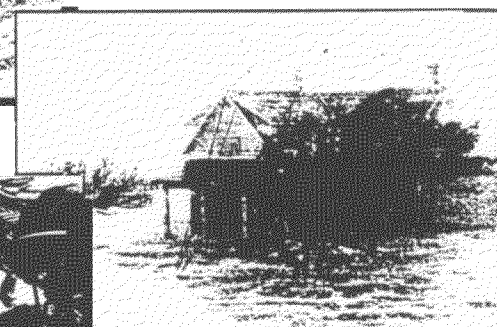
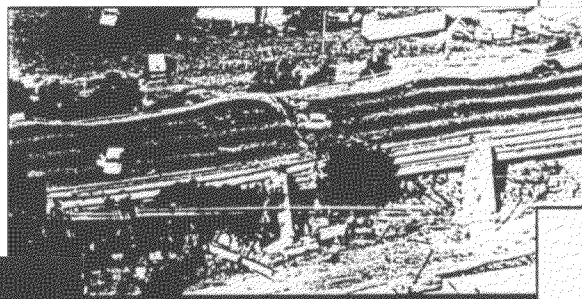
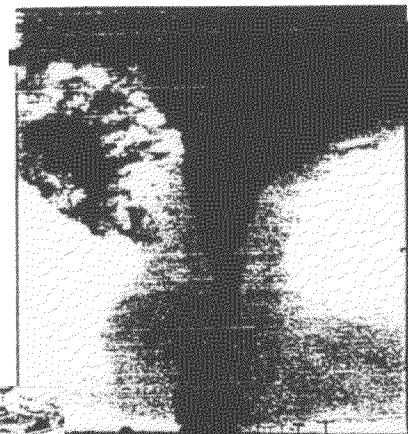


Disaster Operations

Not Business As Usual

BY
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Photos courtesy of the Department of Transportation, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration and the California Highway Patrol

At 5:03 p.m. on October 17, 1989, law enforcement personnel throughout Northern California's Bay Area were taking crime reports, investigating traffic accidents, issuing citations, patrolling the streets, and suppressing criminal activity. By 5:05 p.m., all the rules had changed. A major earthquake shook the area, causing death, destruction, and chaos.

All too often, when disasters occur, law enforcement officials

simply comment, "It's business as usual, just more of it." Unfortunately, experience has shown that this is not the case. In fact, given any disaster situation, law enforcement agencies must alter their priorities, operations, and schedules to meet emergency demands.

This article reviews several issues related to the manner in which law enforcement agencies operate after a disaster occurs. It considers

what police have learned from past disasters so that they can prepare better for these crisis situations and provide a complete emergency response. Then, the article covers critical law enforcement priorities after a disaster occurs. These include maintaining police operations, informing the public, dispatching personnel and equipment, and light rescue and evacuation operations. Finally, it provides information on how managers can