CPL Program on Crisis Leadership

The Center for Public Leadership Program on Crisis Leadership (PCL) focuses on risk reduction, emergency preparedness, crisis response, and disaster recovery leadership challenges.

Founded and led by Arnold M. Howitt and Herman B. “Dutch” Leonard, PCL seeks to improve society’s capacity to deal with crises like major natural disasters, epidemics of infectious disease and other public health emergencies; infrastructure, technology, and systems failures; terrorism and civil disorder; and chronic crises arising from climate change.

The program conducts research, develops case studies for teaching, leads executive education programs, and works with governments and nongovernmental organizations to improve emergency response strategies.

Research
The Program on Crisis Leadership includes research in the United States and other countries. Recent projects include studies of leaders’ decision-making strategies and crisis communication during COVID-19, effective inter-organizational coordination in disasters, and natural disaster response in Nepal and Japan.

Executive Education
PCL has established intensive executive education programs for senior U.S. and international officials and organization leaders, including first-response officers, humanitarians, higher education administrators, and U.S. National Guard generals and colonels.

“Emergency response leaders face the difficult challenge of making their organizations ‘ambidextrous’—ready for effective, disciplined action in the routine emergencies that constitute by far the largest portion of their work, but also capable of rapid adaptation to the novel conditions of crises that their standard practices cannot handle.”

Arnold Howitt
PCL Co-Director

Curriculum Development
The program has developed more than 50 teaching and research case studies on emergency planning, crisis response, disaster recovery, and public health preparedness and response. Recent case studies include the January 6 Attack on the U.S. Capitol, the Colonial Pipeline Ransom Cyber Attack, the Texas Freeze of 2021, and the Notre Dame Cathedral Fire.