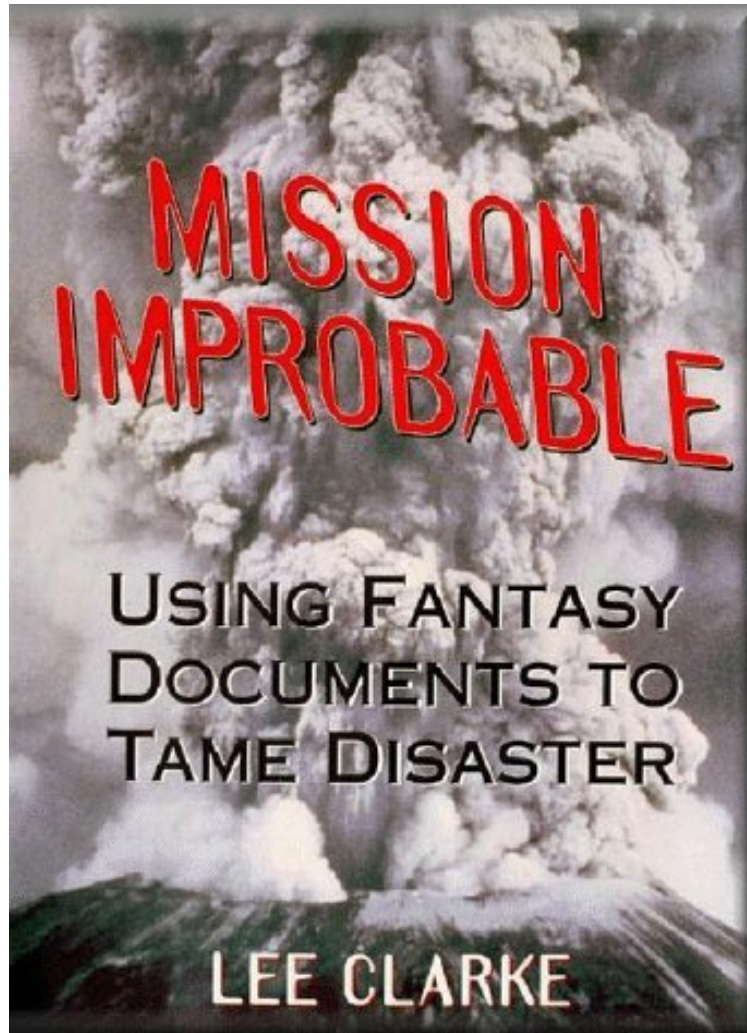


(Download pdf) Mission Improbable: Using Fantasy Documents to Tame Disaster

## Mission Improbable: Using Fantasy Documents to Tame Disaster

Lee Clarke

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**Lee Clarke : Mission Improbable: Using Fantasy Documents to Tame Disaster** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mission Improbable: Using Fantasy Documents to Tame Disaster:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. If you are an Emergency Manager or aspiring to be ...By Honest ReviewerIf you are an Emergency Manager or aspiring to be one, this book should be one of the first you read and become acquainted with. I don't want to spoil anything from the contents, so I'll just say that it's well worth your time to read and allow it to help you set yourself apart.13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Sociological analysis of catastrophic event managementBy Daniel BilarIn this remarkable concise and readable booklet, Dr Clarke has one point which seems rather obvious in retrospect (as do many lucid observations: Organizations, when faced

with controlling uncontrollable events, issue fantasy documents that solve problems that look similar to the problem at hand, but really aren't, upon closer inspection. These documents are rhetorical proclamations and serve the organization as such (staking knowledge domains, justifying expenditures, hidden agendas), communication between organizations (state, local, federal) and societal purposes (reassurance of populace). In Hungarian, this procedure is called constructing a popanz, a strawman argument. You will find no math in this book, no models, but plenty of socio-dynamic analysis. I enjoyed it very much (except maybe for the somewhat non-standard definition of risk and uncertainty). 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By BellaGreat!

How does the government or a business plan for an unimaginable disaster—a meltdown at a nuclear power plant, a gigantic oil spill, or a nuclear attack? Lee Clarke examines actual attempts to "prepare" for these catastrophes and finds that the policies adopted by corporations and government agencies are fundamentally rhetorical: the plans have no chance to succeed, yet they serve both the organizations and the public as symbols of control, order, and stability. These "fantasy documents" attempt to inspire confidence in organizations, but for Clarke they are disturbing persuasions, soothing our perception that we ultimately cannot control our own technological advances. For example, Clarke studies corporations' plans for cleaning up oil spills in Prince William Sound prior to the Exxon Valdez debacle, and he finds that the accepted strategies were not just unrealistic but completely untenable. Although different organizations were required to have a cleanup plan for huge spills in the sound, a really massive spill was unprecedented, and the accepted policy was little more than a patchwork of guesses based on (mostly unsuccessful) cleanups after smaller accidents. While we are increasingly skeptical of big organizations, we still have no choice but to depend on them for protection from large-scale disasters. We expect their specialists to tell the truth, and yet, as Clarke points out, reassuring rhetoric (under the guise of expert prediction) may have no basis in fact or truth because no such basis is attainable. In uncovering the dangers of planning when implementation is a fantasy, Clarke concludes that society would be safer, smarter, and fairer if organizations could admit their limitations.

From the Inside Flap: An airplane is hijacked by terrorists, an explosion is imminent at Three Mile Island, the president has been shot. How do governments and corporations deal with these sorts of catastrophes? In this provocative book, Lee Clarke examines how institutions build contingency plans for the grim but often very real potential massive disaster. He argues that they sometimes create "fantasy documents," rhetorical tools used to convince audiences that experts are in charge and that all is well. Fantasy documents, however, can actually increase risk because they give people a false sense of security. Getting to the core of this ever-topical issue, *Mission Improbable* makes the case that society would be better off—and safer—if managers and experts could admit they can't control the uncontrollable.