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Disaster relief routing: Integrating research and practice

Luis E. de la Torre*, Irina S. Dolinskaya**, Karen R. Smilowitz

Department of Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60201, USA

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ABSTRACT

Disaster relief presents many unique logistics challenges, with problems including damaged transportation infrastructure, limited communication, and coordination of multiple agents. Central to disaster relief logistics is the distribution of life-saving commodities to beneficiaries. Operations research models have potential to help relief agencies save lives and money, maintain standards of humanitarianism and fairness and maximize the use of limited resources amid post-disaster chaos. Through interviews with aid organizations, reviews of their publications, and a literature review of operations research models in transportation of relief goods, this paper provides an analysis of the use of such models from the perspective of both practitioners and academics. With the complexity of disaster relief distribution and the relatively small number of journal articles written on it, this is an area with potential for helping relief organizations and for tremendous growth in operations research.

1. Introduction

Just days after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the United Nations (UN) called the earthquake the worst it had encountered [1]. Six months later, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said the same about devastating floods in Pakistan, and called for half a billion dollars of support just for short-term relief [2]. In addition to these catastrophes, the past decade has seen many other large disasters including the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, in 2005 Hurricane Katrina, the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, in 2008 Cyclone Nargis and the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. The destruction from disasters can leave populations without shelter, food and water, and in need of urgent medical care. In these situations, it can be necessary to supplement local capacity with regional or international aid. For example, within the first 30 days of the 2001 Gujarat, India earthquake, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) arranged delivery of hundreds of thousands of blankets, tents and plastic sheets. Additionally, over 300 other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies provided assistance [3]. The Gujarat earthquake is just one of many large disasters that have required international assistance, and is far from the largest. A contains a table of the top five (by number of lives lost) earthquakes, cyclones, and floods from 1980 to 2009. Tables are derived from data at EM-DAT, a global database of disaster information [4].

Disaster relief requires efforts on many fronts: providing rescue, health and medical assistance, water, food, shelter and long term recovery efforts. Much of successful and rapid relief relies on the logistical operations of supply delivery. In 2005, the United Nations established the Logistics Cluster as one of nine inter-agency coordination efforts in humanitarian assistance, recognizing the key importance of logistics in aid operations. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), a regional division of the World Health Organization (WHO), states in its publication *Humanitarian Supply Management and Logistics in the Health Sector* ([5]) that "countries and organizations must see [humanitarian supply logistics] as a cornerstone of emergency planning and preparedness efforts."

In this paper we focus on reviewing the problems related to routing of vehicles within disaster-affected regions to deliver goods and services to distribution points and beneficiaries.

We analyze the representation of these problems in current operations research models for disaster relief, and identify outstanding related research questions. Mathematical models related to emergencies have a long history. In 1955, Valinsky [6] published one of the earliest papers in emergency assistance, on locating fire fighting resources. Work related to non-daily emergencies started in the 1980s, in assessing the risk of rare events such as large natural disasters (Sampson and Smith [7]) and simulations of traffic patterns to improve the flow of emergency evacuation (Sheffi et al. [8]). Disaster relief transportation also saw its start in the 1980s with a routing model developed by Knott in 1987 [9]. In order to better understand the ways in which operations research

* Corresponding author. 2145 Sheridan Road, Tech C210, Evanston, IL 60201, USA. Tel.: +1 847 491 2374; fax: +1 847 491 8005.
** Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: ledelatorre@u.northwestern.edu (L.E. de la Torre), dolira@northwestern.edu (I.S. Dolinskaya), ksmilowitz@northwestern.edu (K.R. Smilowitz).

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models are helping and can continue to help relief organizations, we have conducted a series of interviews with representatives from organizations involved in disaster relief. These include small and large NGOs, local, state and federal governmental relief organizations and commercial partners of relief organizations. In addition, we discuss findings from publications of relief organizations on logistical procedures for disaster relief. We have also conducted a comprehensive literature review of operations research models in disaster relief transportation and distribution. We review findings from these studies and discuss areas where models can continue to expand and capture characteristics of relief distribution. Our literature review focuses on papers specifically in relief transportation and their modeling characteristics. Other surveys in humanitarian logistics have been published previously. [10] gives an overview of academic literature in disaster operations management, discussing work in disaster operations not limited to routing. Kovács and Spens [11] provides a survey of both academic and practitioner literature in disaster operations. From their in-depth survey of practitioner literature, the authors find many challenges in disaster operations similar to what we found from our interviews: destabilized infrastructure; uncertainty in demand, supply, and the time and effort needed to distribute goods; a need for academic work that considers dynamics; and fundamental differences in goals and objectives between commercial and non-profit logistics. Simpson and Hancock [12] also provides a broad recent survey of work in all areas of emergency response, including disaster relief along with other categories such as daily fire and medical emergencies, evacuation, and search and rescue operations.

1.1. Information collection methodology

To collect papers on operations research models for this review, we searched journal search engines such as ISI Web of Science, the INFORMS journal database, Transportation Research Board publication database, Science Direct, Springer Journal Database and various individual journals' search engines. These were queried using the keywords "disaster", "emergency", "catastrophe", "humanitarian", and other forms of the words such as "disastrous". The search engines' filters were used to narrow results to operations research models for disaster relief. Within these results, papers were kept that specifically address the transportation and routing of goods. Finally, the reference sections of these papers were searched to find additional relevant papers. Many of the papers selected model additional characteristics, including asset pre-positioning, facility location, infrastructure repair following a disaster, or evacuation and rescue and evacuation, but all include transportation of goods as a significant component.

To learn about current practices and challenges in disaster relief transportation and distribution, we interviewed representatives from governmental organizations, NGOs, and commercial partners of organizations. We interviewed 32 representatives from 21 organizations over the phone or in person with follow-up questions by email. Interviewees were not all asked the same set of questions. All interviews began with similar initial questions and progressed based on the responses and expertise of the interviewee. From these interviews, we share responses that have an impact on modeling disaster relief transportation and distribution problems. To protect the confidentiality of interviewees, we use the conventions similar to those of Holguín-Veras et al.'s [13] review of logistics issues during Hurricane Katrina. Government agencies are referred to only as "state" or "federal" depending on their jurisdiction. Those from non-profit organizations not under the jurisdiction of a government are identified as volunteer organizations. Some of the organizations interviewed work primarily in countries other than the US, which we describe as international organizations. Those from commercial partners are referred to as "commercial partners". We interviewed three commercial partners, eight international volunteer organizations, four volunteer organizations working primarily in the US; three volunteer organizations that work in both the US and internationally; one US federal government organization and one US state government organization.

In addition to interviews, we include findings from the general media, trade publications and other publications in disaster relief and humanitarian logistics.

In the next sections, we review these papers concurrently with our findings from interviews and relief organization publications. We categorize papers by problem characteristics and discuss these characteristics with related findings. Tables 2 and 3 provide a summary of transportation-related modeling characteristics in the papers reviewed. Table 2 defines the terms used in Table 3.

2. Relief transportation in practice and operations research models

2.1. Allocation policies

A critical and challenging component of relief distribution is the allocation of goods to beneficiaries. In many situations, beneficiary needs exceed the available supply of goods and relief organizations must allocate limited goods. Published humanitarian guidelines do

Table 1
Top five disasters by number of lives lost from 1980–2009 (plus 2010 Haiti earthquake) and number of disasters 1980–2009 (source: [4]).

Type	No. of disasters, 1980–2009	Year	Country	Lives lost	No. of people affected	Damage (Millions $)
Earthquake	756	2010	Haiti	222,570	3,700,000	8000
		2004	Indonesia	165,708	532,898	4451.6
		2008	China P Rep	87,476	45,976,596	85,000
		2005	Pakistan	73,338	5,128,000	5200
		1990	Iran Islam Rep	40,000	710,000	8000
Cyclone	2516	1991	Bangladesh	138,866	15,438,849	1780
		2008	Myanmar	138,366	2,420,000	4000
		1985	Bangladesh	15,000	1,810,000	50
		1998	Honduras	14,600	2,112,000	3793.6
		1999	India	9843	12,628,312	2500
Flood	3120	1999	Venezuela	30,000	483,635	3160
		1980	China P Rep	6200	67,000	160
		1998	China P Rep	3656	238,973,000	30,000
		1996	China P Rep	2775	154,634,000	12600
		2004	Haiti	2665	31,283	

Table 2
Terms used in Table 3 to categorize relief routing papers.

- Objective function
- - Minimize cost: the objective minimizes costs, which may be travel, inventory costs, or a combination.
- - Minimize unsatisfied demand: the objective minimizes unsatisfied demand at beneficiaries. This may be the sum of unsatisfied demands over time, or minimization of the maximum unsatisfied demand.
- - Minimize latest arrival: the objective minimizes the latest arrival of goods to a group of beneficiaries.
- - Minimize total response time: the objective minimizes the total arrival time to all beneficiaries.
- - Maximize travel reliability: the objective maximizes the reliability of vehicles, such as the probability of vehicles arriving to their intended destinations.
- Goods
- - Stochastic supply: the quantity of goods available for distribution is uncertain.
- - Stochastic demand: the amount of need at final destinations is uncertain.
- - Multicommodity: multiple types of goods are transported, each having different quantities of demand and weight or volume taken up on vehicles.
- Routing
- - Multiple depot: vehicles routes begin and end at one of many designed depots.
- - Single depot: vehicle routes begin and end at a single depot.
- - No depot: vehicles do not have specific routes beginning and ending at depots.
- - Heterogeneous vehicles: vehicles can differ in transportation capacity, speed, fuel consumption, or roads and beneficiaries that are accessible to them.
- - Stochastic travel time: vehicle travel time can be uncertain.
- Test data
- - Data from real disasters: paper uses test cases with data from past disasters or using disaster scenario simulations.

not provide standard procedures for allocation when demand exceeds supply. The Sphere Handbook is a collaborative effort between hundreds of NGOs to establish standards in humanitarian practice. It provides detailed minimum humanitarian standards to be met in relief, such as ensuring each person has 2100 daily calories of food [14]. The Sphere Handbook also states that agencies should provide aid impartially and according to need, but makes no mention of specific procedures when sufficient calories cannot be provided to all people in need. Florida and South Carolina, two U.S. states especially vulnerable to hurricanes, have detailed emergency management handbooks that describe quantities of goods to be distributed. However, they do not address how to allocate goods when these quantities cannot be met [15,16].

A common trend we found in making allocation decisions is to prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable populations. In Sudan and Niger, Mèdecines Sans Frontières (MSF, or Doctors Without Borders) and the UN, respectively, restricted food aid to the most malnourished children and their families [17,18]. Two international volunteer organizations interviewed described making allocation decisions to beneficiaries by closely monitoring locations, targeting the people with the highest needs and ensuring they receive enough to satisfy Sphere standards. All policies described to us during interviews were egalitarian, requiring that an equal amount of need for all targeted populations are met.

In relief routing models, we find several types of egalitarian policies that maximize equality of a measure such as delivery quantity or speed. We also find examples of utilitarian policies that maximize the amount of demand satisfied without requiring equality in distribution of goods, or access to them in covering models. Hodgson et al. [19], Doerner et al. [20], Campbell et al. [21], Huang et al. [22], Nolz et al. [23], Van Hentenryck et al. [24], Mete and Zabinsky [25] measure equity and efficacy of aid distribution by minimizing the time to deliver goods to beneficiaries. Campbell et al. [21] studies the properties of vehicle routing problems that minimize the average or, alternatively, the latest arrival time of goods to beneficiaries. The authors find that these objectives result in faster delivery at a higher total transportation cost than with traditional cost minimizing objectives. Huang et al. [22] extends these ideas by weighting arrival times by the amount of goods delivered. Mete and Zabinsky [25] minimizes total costs of operating delivery warehouses along with minimizing total travel time of delivery. In all of these papers, all demand must be satisfied. In Nolz et al. [23] and Van Hentenryck et al. [24], latest arrival times are minimized along with minimizing the total amount of unsatisfied demand. This combines a utilitarian measure of delivery quantity with an egalitarian measure of delivery speed.

Objectives that are egalitarian in delivery quantity are found in a number of papers. Jozefowiez et al. [26], Tzeng et al. [27], Lin et al. [28] take the opposite approach to Nolz et al. [23] and Van Hentenryck et al. [24], minimizing the maximum unsatisfied demand over all beneficiaries while minimizing total travel time. These papers use an egalitarian measure for delivery quantity and a utilitarian measure for delivery speed. Balcik et al. [29] also minimizes the maximum unsatisfied demand over all beneficiaries. In all papers mentioned so far except for Campbell et al. [21], cost minimization is included as an additional objective in multi-objective models.

Özdamar et al. [30], Doerner et al. [20], Yi and Kumar [31], Yi and Özdamar [32], Shen et al. [33,34] minimize total unsatisfied demand without considering equality of delivery. Similarly, Clark and Culkin [35] and De Angelis et al. [36] minimize total unsatisfied demand but include constraints that all beneficiaries receive a minimum amount of goods. This may not lead to equitable solutions but can be used to enforce minimum standards such as those in the Sphere Handbook. Finally, Haghani and Oh [37], Oh and Haghani [38], Hachicha et al. [39], Barbarosoğlu et al. [40], Barbarosoğlu and Arda [41] minimize total cost of deliveries while satisfying all demands with no egalitarian or utilitarian component.

The above papers comprise a range of allocation policies. For each model type, there are realistic scenarios where a particular model is appropriate. Focusing on maximizing total or average speed of delivery while delivering the maximum quantity of goods possible is important in rapid and early response. With a large and urgent need, time may be better spent distributing supplies than evaluating needs. Equality in delivery is more suited to longer-term recovery and development aid where speed is less of a factor and political or social issues make equity in delivery important. While minimizing the cost of satisfying a specified level of demand is not explicitly egalitarian or utilitarian, the value of demand to be satisfied can reflect these goals. For example, the relief plans of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), described in *IS-26 Guide to Points of Distribution* ([42]), specify quantities to distribute to beneficiaries. These plans also include guides for establishing contracts with suppliers to ensure these needs can be met. With these specifications and certain supply availability, a cost-minimization model for relief distribution would be appropriate.

2.2. Needs assessment

Accurate needs assessment is crucial for achieving accurate models and maximizing the benefit of distributing relief goods. Needs assessment is much more challenging in the earlier phases of

Table 3
Summary of characteristics in disaster relief distribution models.

	Min cost	Min unsatisfied demand	Min latest arrival time	Min total response time	Max travel reliability	Stochastic supply	Stochastic demand	Multicommodity	Multiple depot	Single depot	No depot	Heterogeneous vehicles	Stochastic travel time	Data from real disasters
Knott 1987 [9]		x								x		x		
Knott 1988 [53]								x		x		x		
Oh and Haghani 1996, 1997 [37,38]	x			x				x			x	x		
Hodgson et al., 1998 [19]	x									x				x
Barbarosoğlu et al., 2002 [40]	x			x				x	x			x		x
Özdamar et al., 2004[30]		x						x			x	x		x
Barbarosoğlu and Arda 2004 [41]	x					x	x	x		x		x		x
Viswanath and Peeta 2006 [47]				x							x			x
Clark and Culkin 2007 [35]	x	x						x			x	x		x
De Angelis et al., 2007 [36]		x									x	x		x
Doerner et al., 2007 [20]	x	x								x				x
Jozefowiez et al., 2007 [26]	x									x				x
Tzeng et al., 2007 [27]	x	x		x				x	x			x		x
Yi and Kumar 2007 [31]		x						x	x			x		
Yi and Özdamar 2007 [32]		x						x	x			x		x
Balcik et al., 2008 [29]	x	x						x		x		x		
Campbell et al., 2008[21]	x		x	x						x				
Hsueh et al., 2008 [54]			x	x						x				
Ukkusuri and Yushimito 2008 [55]					x					x				
Zhu et al., 2008 [48]	x						x	x	x			x		x
Shen et al., 2009 [33,34]		x		x			x			x		x	x	
Vitoriano et al., 2009 [49]					x				x			x		x
Huang et al., 2010 [22]	x		x	x						x				
Nolz et al., 2010 [23]			x	x						x				x
Mete and Zabinsky 2010 [25]	x	x					x	x		x		x	x	x
Rawls and Turnquist 2010 [50]	x	x				x	x	x			x		x	x
Salmerón and Apte 2010 [51]		x									x	x	x	x
Van Hentenryck et al., 2010 [24]	x	x		x		x	x		x				x	x
Lin et al., 2011 [28]		x		x						x		x		x

a disaster. As described earlier, some of the larger volunteer organizations we interviewed have dedicated staff that make periodic trips to affected locations to conduct assessment. Existing relief routing models can be adapted to model needs assessment rather than aid distribution. Demand at a location can represent the need to visit a location and assess need instead of demand for goods.

Needs assessment methods vary between organizations and change as the disaster situation evolves. When possible, organizations can use sources of information such as maps from the UN, World Food Programme (WFP) and WHO. Examples of available maps can be found at the website of the UN Geographic Information Working Group, which compiles maps from many organizations [43]. In addition, some volunteer organizations do not do needs assessment and instead focus on fulfilling needs identified by partner groups. One example is Mennonite Central Committee, an organization that works internationally and relies on partner organizations for needs assessment, as described in a case study by McLachlin et al. [44].

In our interviews, a number of volunteer organizations emphasized the amount of effort that goes into ensuring fair distribution. Monitoring a population to understand its needs and developing relationships with local leaders to ensure orderly and fair distribution takes significant resources. The organizations that described these challenges each have over thousands of staff members operating in many countries. For all but the largest organizations, needs assessment and incorporating complex allocation decisions may be impossible. Policies can be more sophisticated with wider availability of technology such as the UPS Trackpad used for tracking use and receipt of goods [45]. Another technology is Ushahidi [46], a website where the public can submit information through text message and email. Systems like these can help organizations perform needs assessment without sacrificing crucial resources. There are potential research questions when multiple data sources are available and provide conflicting information including the basic question of whether the effort to combine multiple and possibly conflicting sources is worth the effort.

An important issue to understand is the type and quantity of data collected by relief organizations. All organizations interviewed collect data for accountability to current donors and to show the impact of efforts for further fundraising. Data needed for accountability may not be at the same level of detail needed to test current models. Current relief distribution may not require the data necessary for model-based operations, and spending limited resources on data collection can impede the real goal of distributing goods. Understanding the advantage of using detailed models over methods requiring less intensive data collection is important with limited resources.

Data collection from past relief efforts can be extremely useful for researchers to test, validate, and compare models. Much of the current literature uses either historical data or data from disaster damage scenario modeling software (Hodgson et al. [19], Hachicha et al. [39], Barbarosoğlu et al. [40], Özdamar et al. [30], Barbarosoğlu and Arda [41], Viswanath and Peeta [47], Clark and Culkin [35], Doerner et al. [20], De Angelis et al. [36], Jozefowiez et al. [26], Tzeng et al. [27], Yi and Özdamar [32], Zhu et al. [48], Vitoriano et al. [49], Nolz et al. [23], Mete and Zabinsky [25], Rawls and Turnquist [50], Salmerón and Apte [51], Van Hentenryck et al. [24], Lin et al. [28]). Lin et al. [28] uses FEMA's HAZUS infrastructure damage modeling software to generate damage scenarios; this software can be used for modeling damage in the U.S. Some commonality exists in data sets. Hodgson et al. [19], Doerner et al. [20] and Jozefowiez et al. [26] use data from the road network of the Suhum District of Ghana to test their models.

2.3. Uncertainty in demand and supply

Uncertainty is prevalent in the supply of relief goods. Every organization interviewed identified at least one level of the supply chain where supply delays and losses were a problem and many identified supply delays as a major impediment to goods distribution. A federal government interviewee emphasized the importance of properly prioritizing goods. In their experience, rapid delivery of goods was not delayed by lack of resources, but by using resources to deliver the wrong types of goods. Multiple volunteer organizations and commercial partners identified goods being held in customs as another significant problem. In a presentation on her medical work in Haiti following the 2010 Earthquake, Dr. Stacey Raviv of North Shore Hospital in Evanston, IL described significant time and efficiency lost because of disorganized warehouses [52]; this problem was also described by volunteer organizations interviewed. Several other volunteer organizations described the difficulty of finding transportation into a country for donated goods. A volunteer organization which stores and delivers the goods of partner organizations often had its partner organizations fail to deliver their goods in time for distribution. The overwhelming response of supply issues during our interviews highlights the potential for incorporating supply uncertainty into relief models.

Many models in the relief routing literature incorporate uncertainty in demand and supply. Several papers use two-stage stochastic programming to model the uncertainty of the damage caused by disasters and its effect on supply or demand. In Barbarosoğlu and Arda [41], the first stage decision is to move goods between existing supply depots to preposition them. In the second stage, realization of the uncertain demand and supply are revealed and goods are transported to final beneficiaries. In Zhu et al. [48], Mete and Zabinsky [25], and Salmerón and Apte [51], demand, not supply, of goods is uncertain. In these papers, the first stage decisions made before a disaster are to open and stock warehouses with goods. In the second stage demand is fixed and goods must be routed from warehouses to final destinations. In Shen et al. [33], the first stage is also pre-disaster and demand is uncertain. In this paper, the first stage decisions create routes for vehicles and the second stage allows adjustments in delivery quantities to each beneficiary after demands are revealed. In Rawls and Turnquist [50] and Van Hentenryck et al. [24] the pre-disaster first stage decisions are to locate and stock warehouses, which can be damaged during the disaster. In the second stage, demand and remaining supply is fixed, and the decision variables construct routes.

The papers discussed above model the uncertainty in physical damage caused by the disaster and the immediate post-disaster response, but there are many other potential sources of uncertainty and dynamic elements to incorporate. Uncertainty in supply can result from delays and losses of relief goods at multiple points in the relief supply chain. Demand can fluctuate unexpectedly due to many sources. These sources include people returning to greater self-sufficiency, beneficiaries moving between different areas to find greater relief, or unexpected challenges, such as disease epidemics resulting from the close quarters of relief shelters. Modeling this type of uncertainty can be extremely challenging. Two-stage stochastic programming models are already computationally difficult to solve and require more data than deterministic models. Computational and data challenges are only compounded by incorporating more uncertainty.

In addressing supply and demand issues in relief routing, there are many ways that current systems in both practice and models can be developed. Needs assessment in the early phases of a disaster requiring trips to beneficiaries can be integrated into models. Continued inter-agency collaboration, information sharing and technological improvement from practitioners can make time consuming trips less necessary. Researchers can continue to push the boundary of modeling uncertainty while practitioners address supply and demand problems and make the situation easier to model.

2.4. Vehicles and routes

In this section, we discuss characteristics of vehicles and transportation networks in the current relief routing literature along with related findings from interviews and relief organizations. Models capture characteristics for a variety of relief organizations, and there are also many characteristics that can provide new areas for models to expand.

In Section 2.4.1 we discuss the how vehicles model supply depots and movement requirements of vehicles. In Section 2.4.2 we highlight some of the literature that models unique types of relief distribution, including air transportation and high-level strategic models of the relief supply chain. In Section 2.4.3 the effect of heterogeneity of delivery goods is reviewed. The last two sections, 2.4.4 and 2.4.5 respectively discuss vehicle fleet heterogeneity and uncertainty related to routes, such as travel time and vehicle reliability.

2.4.1. Modeling of vehicle depots

Traditional vehicle routing models assume that goods are distributed by a set of vehicles on routes beginning and ending at a single depot. Relief routing models can be classified into three groups: those with a single depot (Knott [9,53], Hodgson et al. [19], Barbarosoğlu and Arda [41], Doerner et al. [20], Jozefowiez et al. [26], Balcik et al. [29], Campbell et al. [21], Hsueh et al. [54], Ukkusuri and Yushimito [55], Shen et al. [33,34], Huang et al. [22], Nolz et al. [23], Mete and Zabinsky [25], Lin et al. [28]); those where routes originate and end from multiple depots with all vehicles returning to their original depot (Barbarosoğlu et al. [40], Yi and Kumar [31], Yi and Özdamar [32], Zhu et al. [48], Vitoriano et al. [49], Van Hentenryck et al. [24]); and those that do not have the concept of a depot (Haghani and Oh [37], Oh and Haghani [38], Özdamar et al. [30], Viswanath and Peeta [47], Clark and Culkin [35], De Angelis et al. [36], Rawls and Turnquist [50], Salmerón and Apte [51]). In those without depots, vehicles are not required to return to their starting points. Each of these types of models makes different assumptions about the structure of the relief organizations being modeled. Models with multiple starting and ending points are more applicable to organizations with greater resources than a single depot model. Some models that do not require vehicles to return to their starting points require the ability to communicate routing decisions to vehicles throughout a region. Communication at this level may not be possible, especially in the earliest post-disaster stages.

2.4.2. Specialized and strategic-level models

Many papers present more specialized relief models. Two papers model the unique challenges of delivery by air. Barbarosoğlu et al. [40] models helicopter logistics, considering pilots with specialized skills, sensitivity of fuel efficiency to cargo weight, and refueling requirements. De Angelis et al. [36] models delivery of food by cargo plane, including landing schedules, parking capacity, and refueling schedules. Barbarosoğlu et al. [40], Yi and Kumar [31], Yi and Özdamar [32] consider the evacuation of beneficiaries while simultaneously making deliveries. With a limited number of vehicles, doing both at the same time can have an enormous potential to save costs and lives. Clark and Culkin [35], Tzeng et al. [27], Zhu et al. [48] take approaches with less operational detail than other models. In their models, commodities travel through several levels of nodes, from suppliers to beneficiaries. Nodes at each level have some quantity of supply and transportation capacity, but movement of individual vehicles is not tracked through the supply chain. As a decision variable, these models include the number of vehicles traveling between each node. The supply of vehicles available from each node is a parameter and not a function of the number of vehicles that have traveled between locations. Deliveries to recipients do not give routing information but give the number of vehicles that make deliveries and the quantity of goods delivered. These models require data at more levels of the supply chain than a last-mile distribution model, but require less detailed data at each level. These strategic-level models can be useful for finding bottlenecks in different levels of distribution and understanding the quantities of vehicles and goods needed throughout the supply chain.

2.4.3. Commodities and delivery locations

Several other route and vehicle characteristics are modeled in the literature. Commodities in disaster relief can be many different types of goods, such as food, medications, or tents. Most papers we review consider the delivery of multiple commodities, differentiating the transportation costs and demands of different types of goods. Balcik et al. [29] explicitly models the difference between single-use perishable items and multi-use non-perishable items, with demand backlogging allowed for non-perishable items and demand lost for perishable items. Government and volunteer relief organizations interviewed identified single-use perishable and multi-use non-perishable items as two major important categories. One federal government organization identified between seven and ten major relief commodities within those two types. An international volunteer organization noted that the safety of a vehicle differs based on the type of goods being carried. Easily resold goods such as food and water can be bigger targets for robbery than specialized medicine or medical equipment. Safety as a function of type of good carried has not yet been modeled.

One international volunteer organization identified providing safe drinking water as a unique challenge. Water purification tablets need to be delivered frequently and consistently in high volumes and tap stands for distributing water need to be placed where they can be accessible and safe. Nolz et al. [23] formulates the problem of routing and placement of water delivery systems. Rather than being transported directly to beneficiaries, potable water stations have to be delivered to central locations. This is modeled as a multi-vehicle covering tour problem that combines routing with the placement of tanks, constructing tours to place tanks at accessible points. Hodgson et al. [19], Doerner et al. [20] and Jozefowiez et al. [26] also model covering tour problems. Their problem setting is the routing of a mobile health facility that stops at locations and is visited by people in surrounding locations.

The covering tour model is applicable many operational last-mile delivery problems, as goods and services are often delivered to central locations visited by beneficiaries. For example, in the U.S. after a disaster, as described in *IS-26 Guide to Points of Distribution* ([42]), FEMA sets up temporary points of distribution which beneficiaries visit to receive goods. A covering tour problem could be used for initial placement of these temporary points of distribution.

2.4.4. Vehicle fleet types and technology

Some of the most ubiquitous assumptions of routing models are of a vehicle fleet with known capacity, known operating costs, known capabilities such as on which roads a vehicle can travel, and the ability to give these vehicles specific routing instructions. Many volunteer organizations interviewed stressed the difficulty of procuring and managing a fleet, which can affect these assumptions. A volunteer organization stated that even the largest organizations with a long term presence in a country do not generally own their vehicle fleets. This was echoed by others who do not own their own fleets, including a volunteer organization which works in over forty countries. The simplest solution may be to hire a commercial carrier to manage the details of most of the transportation, with the relief organization taking over at final destinations to distribute to beneficiaries. In its publication *Humanitarian Supply Management and Logistics in the Health Sector* ([5]) PAHO recommends contracting fleets and fleet management for transportation of relief goods when possible, but recognizes that fleet management companies may not be available. The document describes that it is much more common to hire multiple independent local drivers and vehicles and manage them internally. This was confirmed in interviews with several international organizations who stated that this management of heterogeneous fleets is a common challenge.

Local drivers are sometimes hired for their knowledge of the region. When drivers know the region but the relief organization does not, there may not be enough information to make detailed routing plans for vehicles. With limited information and limited instructions to drivers, simpler models that do not assign vehicles detailed routing plans are more appropriate.

Another realistic assumption to consider is limited technology available in vehicles, especially when using local hired vehicles. Some of the current papers model the ability for vehicles to wait for further instructions at any stopping point in the transportation network (Özdamar et al. [30], Tzeng et al. [27], Yi and Özdamar [32], Hsueh et al. [54]). This has potential for significant cost savings as opposed to having to return to a depot, and assumes that communication with vehicles is always available. These models can help organizations to assess the value of tracking vehicles and maintaining constant communication before allocating limited funds for the technology to do so.

Many other routing related issues found during interviews and in relief organization documents point to modeling vehicles with restricted capabilities in movement. In *Humanitarian Supply Management and Logistics in the Health Sector* ([5]), PAHO recommends lightening the load of vehicles that have to cross rough terrain. One international volunteer organization described difficulties in making deliveries across rough terrains, and prefers using a combination of small capacity all-terrain vehicles and less flexible larger trucks to adapt to damaged infrastructure. Another international volunteer organization cited limitations in its routing because of both infrastructure damage and danger traveling in areas with conflict. In the OR literature, Knott [53] describes heuristics for relief routing which include rules to reduce vehicle payload by 20% if the road used is rough, and to give preference to different types of trucks on different types of roads.

Nearly every organization interviewed stressed the importance of awareness of cultural and political issues. In particular, these issues can affect the types of commodities that can be delivered and impact how vehicles make deliveries. One commercial shipping contractor stated that in order to maintain trust in some regions, delivery drivers needed to have an existing relationship with beneficiaries. This limits possible routes for each vehicle and makes routes driver-dependent. Limiting the region where each vehicle can travel is modeled in papers that model multi-modal travel (Haghani and Oh [37], Oh and Haghani [38], Özdamar et al. [30], Barbarosoğlu and Arda [41], Zhu et al. [48], Salmerón and Apte [51]), in which different vehicles have different parts of the network they can visit.

2.4.5. Uncertainty in routes and vehicle fleets

As discussed in Section 2.3, many papers model uncertainty with two-stage stochastic programming models. In addition to modeling uncertainty in supply and demand of goods, Shen et al. [33], Mete and Zabinsky [25], Rawls and Turnquist [50], Salmerón and Apte [51], Van Hentenryck et al. [24] model uncertainty in travel time. In these papers, travel times are scenario-dependent and revealed in the second stage. In addition to modeling damage to transportation infrastructure, there are many possible sources of uncertainty to incorporate into models that we have learned about through interviews. An assumption of all current relief routing models is certainty of the size and composition of the vehicle fleet. Without this assumption, routing plans, especially multi-period routing plans, can become significantly more difficult to make. During relief efforts following Hurricane Rita, vehicles and drivers expected to distribute relief supplies abandoned New Orleans following reports of violence (Holguín-Veras et al. [13]). Several relief organizations reported problems while collaborating with organizations using volunteer drivers or vehicles. These groups may not be bound by contracts and monetary incentives and thus do not have the same incentives to uphold agreements as commercial carriers. Such a situation can cause uncertainty when determining the size of a fleet. Additionally, multiple volunteer organizations described the unreliability and necessary maintenance of older local rented vehicles as a problem. Reliability is modeled in Vitoriano et al. [49], in which vehicles have a road-dependent probability of breaking down while en route.

Even if vehicle fleets are known with certainty, unexpected events occur while on routes. An international volunteer organization that was interviewed stated that while delivering supplies in Haiti in 2010, accessibility of roads was changing constantly and unpredictably due to the movement of debris and government and military road blocks. They had no maps with updated information and had to discover the best routes by driving and exploring. In addition to uncertain travel times, one volunteer organization identified the time spent stopping at beneficiaries to distribute goods as a bottleneck, even with a dedicated staff at distribution points.

Safety of drivers was also a concern of many organizations. Safety was such a concern for one volunteer organization working in Haiti in early 2010 that it would sometimes not stop for any reason before reaching their destination. Other organizations agreed that safety was important and that robbery while delivering goods was a real concern. One volunteer organization described varying the path and dispatch times of routes to avoid establishing a pattern and making themselves obvious targets. Another volunteer organization obscures vehicles' identities when it is a potential target and prominently displays logos identifying itself when people are sympathetic to its efforts.

Some potential strategies for safety produce additional challenges and sometimes are against a relief organization's rules. In their analysis of aid operations in the Somali region of Ethiopia, Chander and Shear [56] note that WFP frequently used vehicle convoys for safety. Convoying would cause long delays in delivery while waiting for vehicles to group and limit travel speed significantly. Convoys and possibility of interdiction of vehicles are modeled by Vitoriano et al. [49]. In this model, vehicles have a probability of interdiction and at the expense of delivery speed they can form convoys to reduce this probability. Some organizations, including IFRC, will not use armed escorts ([57]), while another volunteer organization will not make deliveries if it believes the situation would warrant an armed escort.

In order to model the characteristics of vehicles and routes, a key issue is to understand the capabilities of relief organizations. For organizations where only simple instructions to independent drivers are possible, simpler models may be appropriate. Others may be able to make more complex decisions, especially those involving randomness or ambiguity. For organizations of many different types, addressing the reliability of vehicles and drivers can improve planning delivery schedules. Some organizations may be able to adjust to uncertainty while vehicles are on routes and improve distribution quantities or safety of drivers.

3. Conclusions

Our interviews encompassed organizations of many different sizes, capabilities, and infrastructure that work in various regions worldwide. These interviews do not cover all of the possible problems of disasters or anticipate all potential issues resulting from future disasters. Most of the papers we review are the result of a collaboration with relief organizations. Researchers are collaborating with many different types of organizations: government and military organizations (Barbarosoğlu et al. [40], Özdamar et al. [30], Tzeng et al. [27], Zhu et al. [48], Salmerón and Apte [51], Van Hentenryck et al. [24]); non-governmental organizations (De Angelis et al. [36], Balcik et al. [29], Vitoriano et al. [49], Salmerón and Apte [51], Nolz et al. [23]); and experts in important related areas such as emergency medicine and seismology (Yi and Kumar [31], Yi and Özdamar [32], Mete and Zabinsky [25]). Many of those that do not describe direct collaboration with organizations discuss using information from relief organizations to construct their models (Knott [9,53], Haghani and Oh [37], Oh and Haghani [38], Clark and Culkin [35], Rawls and Turnquist [50], Lin et al. [28]). As well as improving relief distribution systems in practice, continuing to learn about unexpected challenges in disaster relief can continue to lead to innovative models and algorithms that can be of interest to the operations research community at large. Involvement beyond talking to organizations can be beneficial to give researchers real world experience. Organizations such as Volunteer Match (http://www.volunteermatch.org) list volunteer opportunities, including but not limited to disaster relief.

We have identified several areas where modeling can capture more characteristics of relief distribution. Most of the relief routing literature focuses on pre-positioning and initial distribution of goods and services after a disaster. The early periods following a disaster are crucial for rapid recovery, but we learned about challenges involving more than the initial damage of disasters. We discussed multi-period delivery in interviews, as beneficiaries may need support beyond the capacity of a single delivery. Multi-period routing has not been modeled in the relief routing literature. Along with multi-period routing are characteristics of routing beyond the initial damage. When planning future routes, ambiguity in the availability of vehicles, supplies and changing demand characteristics can be a challenge. These issues have only been incorporated in two-stage stochastic programming models for a single period of routing. Multi-period models incorporating these characteristics can give insight into simple rules of thumb and be useful for practitioners, and help advance research in solving large multistage deterministic and stochastic models.

Risk-averse behavior in routing has not been studied in depth. Relief organizations are cautious in planning their routes because of the physical safety of drivers, variations in routing and distribution times and difficulty reaching remote and rural beneficiaries. International volunteer organizations discussed variations in this risk aversion. Earlier in disasters, or when making initial deliveries to a location organizations are more cautious. By hiring local commercial drivers rather than using employees of the organization, drivers are more familiar with the area and risk-aversion can be avoided at a cost. Exploring the trade-offs of different routing behaviors can help organizations improve delivery quantity while maintaining a high level of safety.

As models continue to be developed, more work can be done demonstrating the value of routing. This can help demonstrate to practitioners that models can help them save more lives. Many of the papers in the literature demonstrate the value of modeling relief routing. Campbell et al. [21] and Huang et al. [22] compare different types of relief objectives. Campbell et al. [21] proves several bounds on arrival times when using minsum and minmax arrival times instead of the total cost of travel. These bounds demonstrate that when using routing models, the choice of objective can have a significant impacts on the speed of delivery. Huang et al. [22] shows similar results when comparing objectives maximizing the average speed of delivery, equitable service times, and minimum cost objectives. This paper also demonstrates that the shape of routes can change significantly depending on the objective. Van Hentenryck et al. [24] implements a greedy method that models what is currently done in practice in the U.S. when delivering relief goods and compares it to its stochastic routing models and algorithms. The paper shows a 50.6%–57.7% decrease in delivery times over the status quo on benchmark problem instances. De Angelis et al. [36] compares its model's results to historical data from delivery of goods in Sudan and shows an increase of 9%–22% in the number of deliveries that could have been made.

The characteristics of different disasters and relief organizations will continue to provide opportunities and challenges for researchers. One of the most emphasized points in our interviews is that every disaster is unique and every relief organization has its own set of practices and policies. Over the course of a post-disaster response, the situation can evolve from chaos with limited information into a more orderly situation more amenable to models. Even the same type of disaster in the same region can present different challenges in two different years. The rain season is a threat to Haiti every year, but after the damage caused by the 2010 earthquake, damage from the rain season presented different challenges than in previous years [58]. In delivering solutions to relief organizations, limitations during a disaster situation such as data availability computing time and computing power can limit the scope and form of a model. These are issues when modeling any setting but can be especially limiting in a relief setting.

Disaster relief routing and distribution models have existed in the operations research literature for only a little over two decades, and there are many years of potential future work. We need to continue to understand the real problems faced by practitioners, especially as their practices evolve. Improved technology such as real-time tracking of goods and beneficiary demand, inventory management and supply chain software tailored for relief organizations, and computerized mapping can provide rich data sources for OR-based decision support systems. Along with technology, organizational and collaborative structures are improving with inter-agency collaboration like the Logistics Cluster and the increased emphasis on logistics in relief efforts. For researchers, work in this area means advancing the ability to model highly chaotic and unpredictable distribution systems regardless of the modeling context. If models are to be flexible enough to address the high uncertainty of disasters, the framework can also be carried over into other areas with similar challenges.

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Appendix. A. Major disasters in the last 30 years

The Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) maintains EM-DAT, a comprehensive database of disasters from 1900 to 2009. They define a disaster as an event in which at least one the following criteria are satisfied ([4]):

- Ten (10) or more people reported killed.
- Hundred (100) or more people reported affected.
- Declaration of a state of emergency.
- Call for international assistance.

They define a person as being affected as "requiring immediate assistance during a period of emergency, i.e., requiring basic survival needs such as food, water, shelter, sanitation and immediate medical assistance", and total number of people affected includes all people injured, left homeless, or affected. The costs and scale of disasters are illustrated in Table 1. Table 1 shows the top five disasters in terms of lives lost from 1980 to 2009, along with the 2010 Haiti earthquake. More recent disasters in 2010, including estimates for the Pakistan 2010 floods are not yet available on EM-DAT. Estimated damage is defined in EM-DAT as follows: [4].

> The economic impact of a disaster usually consists of direct (e.g. damage to infrastructure, crops, housing) and indirect (e.g. loss of revenues, unemployment, market destabilization) consequences on the local economy… For each disaster, the registered figure corresponds to the damage value at the moment of the event, i.e. the figures are shown true to the year of the event.

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Luis E. de la Torre is a Ph.D. Candidate in the department of Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences at Northwestern University. His research interests include applied operations research for humanitarian logistics, especially modeling transportation problems in disaster relief and development.

Irina S. Dolinskaya is an Assistant Professor of Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences. Her research interests include large scale and computationally demanding dynamic programming problems, optimal path finding in evolving systems, and effective planning under limited information. Applications include problems in humanitarian logistics, optimum vessel performance in evolving nonlinear wavefields, and autonomous navigation for amphibious vehicles. Dr. Dolinskaya is also currently working on a number of projects with the Office of Naval Research studying optimum vessel performance in evolving nonlinear wavefields and autonomous navigation for amphibious vehicles.

Karen R. Smilowitz is an Associate Professor of Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences, and holds the Junior William A. Patterson Chair in Transportation. Her research focuses on freight transportation systems and non-profit and humanitarian logistics. Recent projects have analyzed the opportunities and challenges of introducing operational flexibility in distribution systems. Dr. Smilowitz has worked with a range of collaborators from industry and non-profit organizations, including UPS, Coyote Logistics and the Mobile C.A.R.E. Foundation of Chicago.