



Community at Risk: Biodefense and the Collective Search for Security (High Reliability and Crisis Management)

Thomas Beamish

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In 2001, following the events of September 11 and the Anthrax attacks, the United States government began an aggressive campaign to secure the nation against biological catastrophe. Its agenda included building National Biocontainment Laboratories (NBLs), secure facilities intended for research on biodefense applications, at participating universities around the country. In *Community at Risk*, Thomas D. Beamish examines the civic response to local universities' plans to develop NBLs in three communities: Roxbury, MA; Davis, CA; and Galveston, TX. At a time when the country's anxiety over its security had peaked, reactions to the biolabs ranged from vocal public opposition to acceptance and embrace. He argues that these divergent responses can be accounted for by the civic conventions, relations, and virtues specific to each locale. Together, these elements clustered, providing a foundation for public dialogue. In contrast to conventional micro- and macro-level accounts of how risk is perceived and managed, Beamish's analysis of each case reveals the pivotal role played by meso-level contexts and political dynamics. *Community at Risk* provides a new framework for understanding risk disputes and their prevalence in American civic life.

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