

## **Abstract**

There is a lack of education and training of the different parties involved in the medical management of disasters (Hubloue & Debacker, 2010:129-130). Wang and Chang (2006:60) state that Emergency Medical Service (EMS) professionals lack training in disaster response, and Bradt and Drummond (2007: 364-368) state that there are currently no explicit interagency standards for the education and training or evaluation of health personnel who respond to disasters. The South African Disaster Management Act (South Africa, 2002) encourages a broad-based culture of risk avoidance and the promotion of disaster management education and training throughout South Africa (South Africa, 2002:19).

The study investigated the human resource gap amongst the EMS supervisors and managers with reference to disaster management qualifications and training in the Free State Provincial Government Emergency Medical Service (FS EMS), South Africa. The choice of the topic is guided by literature related to the lack of disaster management education and training, as well as the required knowledge and skills of the FS EMS managers and supervisors to fulfil their core role in disaster response in the Free State Province. The focus on the EMS managers and supervisors are due to the strategic level of decision-making they need to fulfil during the disaster response.

Currently in the Free State EMS, there are no specific training and education requirements that are recommended specifically towards a disaster management qualification. This study determines whether the FS EMS managers and supervisors comply with the South African legislature's requirements pertaining to disaster management education and training. The study also investigates the FS EMS managers and supervisors' disaster management qualifications and training against the requirements and guidelines that pursue national and international norms and standards of best practice.

The focus of this chapter is to give an overview of the topic and indicate its relevance to academic investigation, especially the research problem and research questions of this investigation. The aims, goals, research methods and procedures used in the study will be discussed in detail. The description of the study area and the explanation of terms used in this study are also included.