

# The Bookshelf

Book Review Editor: Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., P.E., AIA

*I prefer to begin the year on an upbeat subject, but it seems as though the times call for a more serious subject.*

**Securing Utility and Energy Infrastructures**, by Larry Ness, Wiley, 2006, \$80, hardcover, 340 pages.

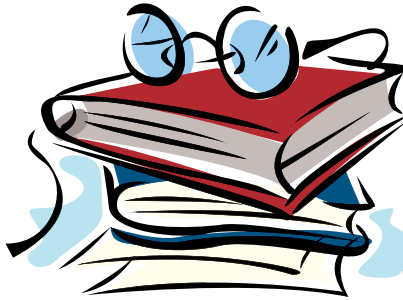
In 2003, the Northeast and part of the Midwest of the United States experienced a major blackout. California experienced several summers with rolling brownouts. The flooding of New Orleans in 2005 shut down more than just electricity to the city as drinking water became non-potable and other infrastructure components were damaged. Disasters in recent memory have been costly, disruptive to the nation, and in some cases deadly.

Utility infrastructures are large and dispersed while campuses are often concentrated in a single location. So why would this book have anything to do with higher education facility officers? There are many reasons.

First, many campuses are small cities and regardless of their size, provide a wide variety of utilities for the campus community. Some of the larger institutions provide electricity, steam and/or chilled water, water treatment, or fire protection services to the campus and local community. Second, we serve a diverse population from residents to workers. Third,

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most of our campuses are connected to the utility systems that are the primary subject of the book and obviously affected by the reliability of those systems. Lastly, in the information-based community of higher education, we are highly dependent on the reliable delivery of electric and communication services; a disruption to these infrastructures would be detrimental to our campuses.

Most of us were not partying on December 31, 1999; we were on campus to making sure nothing went wrong with campus systems as the year 2000 rolled in. Good planning ensured that virtually no computer-based systems crashed. We have the same issues today; planning for a possible disaster, being aware of the potential threats and weaknesses, identifying ways to prevent a disaster through planning and coordination, and identifying ways to recover from a disaster in the event it cannot be prevented.

Ness presents some compelling and frightening information about the vulnerability of various utility infrastructures. There are many scenarios for terrorist attacks ranging from strategic disruption of distribution networks, nodes, and linkages, to destruction of generation points or poisoning of water systems. There are several, although limited, recommendations for colleges and schools. It would have been nice to see some discussion about business continuity in the face of other threats such as pandemic flu, storms, and the like. These crises are more likely and have just as serious implications for the safety of a college or university that depends on reliable utility services.

Though the book is expensive, if there is a significant infrastructure on your campus that you manage, if you have a large student body, or if you prefer to be prepared rather than surprised, this is a good book. 🏠

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