

## PSYCHOLOGY

# Study Disaster Effects

**Government making tentative plans to study psychological and sociological upheavals caused by major disasters. Aim is to gain knowledge for control of panic.**

► THE GOVERNMENT has tentative plans to establish Disaster Study Teams in 19 major American cities to study the psychological and sociological upheavals caused by major disasters. The knowledge gained would be applied to the control of panic in A-bomb attacks. This would be the first such study.

Right now, the plans are being discussed by several government agencies, including the Defense Department, the Federal Civil Defense Administration and the National Research Council. The project is being pushed because it has been recognized that panic will be one of the major problems in the event this country is A-bombed.

Purposes of the plan, subject to change after further discussion, are given as follows:

To study the psychological reactions and behavior of individuals and local populations in disaster, for the purpose of developing methods for the prevention of panic, and for minimizing emotional and psychological failures.

To study the sociological upheavals caused by major disasters, in order to devise means to keep the essentials of community government, utilities and service in operation.

In addition, the project would be designed to find out what resources, both inside and outside the community, are available to cope with mass panic and consequent breakdown of communities.

Although the plan is still tentative, doctors from all over the nation have been selected and are being considered as heads of local disaster study teams. In the event of major disasters in their neighborhoods—floods, factory explosions and large fires—they would be expected to make studies of psychological reactions on the part of the people, government officials and relief agency personnel.

The 19 cities tentatively chosen as sites for disaster study teams are: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Richmond, Saint Louis, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Seattle.

Suggested areas of psychological investigation include mass population behavior of those involved in a disaster, the individual behavior of victims, the behavior of untrained bystanders, of trained rescue workers and of the local public which has not been involved in the disaster.

In the sociological area, it is suggested

that the participation and effectiveness of local government officials, the police and fire departments and utility, communications and transportation organizations be studied.

In addition the setups for rescue operations, medical aid and supply of needed equipment and materials would be investigated.

Science News Letter, April 7, 1951

## GENERAL SCIENCE

## Autos Counted by Robot That Sorts Out Speeds

► A NEW vehicle-speed counter has been developed by two University of California at Los Angeles scientists which makes the task of checking highway traffic flow an easy one for the operator. He can relax while the machine does most of the work.

The new vehicle-speed counter can (1) tab the passing of a large number of cars, (2) segregate them according to speeds, and (3) record the speed of any given vehicle within an accuracy of plus or minus one thousandth of a second.

Daniel L. Gerlough and F. D. Schreider of the University's Institute of Transportation and Traffic Engineering are the inventors of the device.

The highly rugged instrument, which can be handled by one technician, is about the size of a lady's vanity case and weighs only 33 pounds. A separate power unit is about the size of an automobile battery and weighs 34 pounds.

On the face of the instrument are ten counters which can be set to record various speed ranges: 0-15 m.p.h., 15-20 m.p.h., 20-25 m.p.h., etc.

Two detector strips are placed across the highway, three feet apart. When an automobile runs across the strips, the machine automatically computes the difference in time between activation of the strips, translating this time difference into miles per hour.

Science News Letter, April 7, 1951

## MINERALOGY

## New Mineral, Pale Mauve, Found in Cut Gem Stones

► THE WORLD'S first discovery of a new mineral from cut gem stones is reported in London. It is pale mauve, containing magnesium, beryllium and aluminum, and quite hard. It is believed to have come from Ceylon. Only two specimens of this gem mineral have been found, both of them as cut stones.

Science News Letter, April 7, 1951



**SPEED COUNTER**—The new UCLA-developed vehicle speed counter can be operated by one technician. Power unit, battery-sized and weighing 34 pounds, is on the ground.