Frontline crisis response is challenging. Emergency responders, soldiers, and humanitarian aid workers all operate at the frontlines of threatening, uncertain crisis situations on a daily basis. Under intense pressure, they need to make a range of difficult decisions: to follow preexisting plans or improvise; to abide by top-down instructions or take discretionary actions; to get emotionally involved or keep a rational distance? These dilemmas define their work but, until now, have not been subjected to systematic investigation. This book conducts in-depth studies of eleven such dilemmas by integrating a wide array of research findings on crisis response operations. The comprehensive overview of crisis response research shows how frontline responders deal with these dilemmas amidst the chaos of crises and forms the basis for the formulation of a theory of frontline crisis response. As such, this book will undoubtedly help to understand, evaluate, and advance crisis response operations.

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Frontline Crisis Response

Operational Dilemmas in Emergency Services, Armed Forces, and Humanitarian Organizations

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Crises are intense situations that tend to absorb all our attention. Our observations are eager but agitated, the situation is rapidly changing and uncertain, and our lives are being uprooted for some period of time. Crises may usher in progress, bring people together, and make us feel alive. But these moments are also incredibly distracting. This is why writing, to me at least, requires the absence of crises in whatever shape or size. Long timespans of dull tranquility and an undisturbed peace of mind work best for me. When other authors talk through their books and articles, I withdraw into quiet solitude to hear their stories, grasp their arguments, and contemplate their claims. Moments of seclusion helped me to write this book as well. But research is never a solitary endeavor or individual achievement. Many people have been instrumental to this book, and the depth of my gratitude is hard to bring within the confines of language. This attempt will have to suffice until I find better words or ways to express myself.

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