

# RISK: Health, Safety & Environment (1990-2002)

---

Volume 12  
Number 3 Issue number 3/4, Fall 2001

Article 14

---

September 2001

## Review of: Eckard Kämper, Decision Making Under Risk in Organisations: The Case of German Waste Management

Jeremy S. Cleverly

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/risk>



Part of the [Environmental Policy Commons](#), and the [Environmental Sciences Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

Jeremy S. Cleverly, *Review of: Eckard Kämper, Decision Making Under Risk in Organisations: The Case of German Waste Management*, 12 RISK 341 (2001).

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the University of New Hampshire – Franklin Pierce School of Law at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in RISK: Health, Safety & Environment (1990-2002) by an authorized editor of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact [ellen.phillips@law.unh.edu](mailto:ellen.phillips@law.unh.edu).

Eckard Kämper, *Decision Making Under Risk in Organisations: The Case of German Waste Management* (Ashgate Publishing Co. 2000). Preface, Acknowledgements, Bibliography. ISBN 0-7546-1434-4 [183 pp. \$69.95. Hardbound, 131 Main Street, Burlington, VT 05401-5600].

Kämper characterizes uncertainty absorption and reduction of risk using two case studies chronicling the evolution of decision making under risk within the arena of German local waste management. The book begins by addressing the sociological theories of decision making and the application of social, legal, and political influences present throughout its two case studies. The book then concludes with a detailed summary.

Kämper chose local German waste management to highlight decision making in organizations under risk because of the unique aspects it brings to decisions made at the local level. It is not possible for local officials to avoid risk simply by making no decision, as that option does not exist within the realm of waste management. Decisions made in German waste management contain high amounts of risk and uncertainty.

From the low risk simple waste collection and disposal environment of the 1960s to the politically and legally risk-laden, environmentally conscious atmosphere of the 1990s, local politicians in German administrations have been forced to bear an ever-increasing amount of risk in their decision making processes.

The increased risk in decision making associated with uncertainty and ambiguity reached a high point in the early 1990s with the release of the Technical Instruction for Household Waste of 1993. The Technical Instruction prescribed the acceptable quality of waste to be added to all German landfills. The strict restraints imposed upon the quality of waste essentially defined incineration as the only acceptable method of waste treatment. The Technical Instruction created ambiguity because it was not an actual legal act, but an instruction for the implementation of The Waste Act, which allowed for possible exceptions to its instructions for the benefit of the public welfare.

Risk was created for those individuals charged with the implementation of the Technical Instruction at the local level by calling for household waste to be incinerated. This method of handling waste was largely unpopular and highly contested by the public. The Technical Instruction brought ambiguity into the decision making equation by allowing for the possibility of avoiding the call to incinerate waste prior to disposal, if such an action could be justified as being for the benefit of the public welfare.

Against this backdrop of decision making under risk brought on by ambiguity and uncertainty, Kämper analyzes two separate cases of the local administrations' attempts to minimize the risk associated with implementing the Technical Instruction at the local level. Readers should be most interested in Kämper's case analysis involving the two separate approaches to uncertainty absorption taken by the two German towns' local administrative organizations in an effort to reduce the level of risk in their decision making process.

The first case study is an analysis of risk reduction chronicling the implementation of the Technical Instruction by four surrounding towns which teamed together and acted as one organizational body. One administrative body allowed for increased local participation in the decision making process. The decision to join together and allow for public participation was an attempt to achieve results that would ease the financial burden of fulfilling the requirements of the Technical Instruction and insure the implementation would be acceptable to the general public. This approach resulted in lowered risk due to an ascertainable amount of uncertainty absorption through the increased public participation in the decision making process and by a greater number of individuals contributing to the final decision.

The second case study of interest to readers analyzes the approach of risk reduction by adapting existing relationships and routines allowing those organization structures already in place and functioning to absorb uncertainty to continue to do so in the implementation of the Technical Instruction.

Jeremy S. Cleverly †

---

† Mr. Cleverly is a candidate for a J.D. at Franklin Pierce Law Center. He received his B.A. in Political Science from Stephen F. Austin State University.