

# Operations Research/management Science: Case-studies In Decision Making Under Structured Uncertainty

## Operations Research and the Services Industries

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A dispatcher is using a color-graphics computer workstation to design efficient routes for 14 trucks that tomorrow will carry liquid nitrogen to customers in the Northeast.

After consulting a computer printout, an operations engineer has just directed crews at 6 dams in a 12-dam hydroelectric system to increase outflows by 10 percent for the next 3 days.

The chief executive officer of a major forestry products company is using a video-game-like system to understand better how mill operators in the field can increase profitability by improving their log-cutting activities.

A social service volunteer in Atlanta, Georgia is using two card files to assign drivers to vans and vans to routes to deliver "meals on wheels" to elderly and handicapped individuals.

A vice president of a large railroad is scrutinizing a consultant's report that recommends an ambitious \$1.5 billion capital investment program over the next 5 years.

What do all these activities have in common? In each case the individual mentioned is a consumer of a product of operations research. Representing a quantitative knowledge-based service industry, operations research has established a foothold in corporate America, both in the goods-producing and non-goods-producing (service) sectors.

Despite the growing importance of the field, as demonstrated by numerous documented case studies, relatively little is known about it outside its own "inner circles." As illustrated above, the material product of operations

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