

# BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES: CREATING EFFECTIVE MULTI-CHANNEL COMMUNICATION DURING DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY



Vivienne Tippett<sup>1</sup>, Dominique A. Greer<sup>2</sup>, Amisha Mehta<sup>2</sup>, Sharon Christensen<sup>3</sup>, Bill Duncan<sup>3</sup>, Amanda Stickley<sup>3</sup>, Paula Dootson<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Health Faculty, Queensland University of Technology, QLD, <sup>2</sup>QUT Business School, Queensland University of Technology, QLD, <sup>3</sup>Law Faculty, Queensland University of Technology, QLD.

## Testing the elements of optimal emergency warnings: Some insights from 10 focus groups and 77 experiments of 3615 Australians

**Name the location to gain attention:** Location is the first piece of information that community members look for when evaluating the relevance of a message. People in 'Pebble Bay' will attend to this message as it is clear it will affect them.

**Be specific with instructions:** Place instructions early to capture attention and use language that is clear, specific, and consistent with other agencies. Re-state instructions as it is difficult for community members to return to past messages.

**Build self-efficacy:** Provide a map or clear instructions about how to evacuate the affected area to get to family/friends or an evacuation centre. Integrate text to motivate confidence building.

**Include a visual:** While not included here, visuals help to personalise the message and overcome limitations in geographic knowledge. Make it clear where the affected area is quickly and efficiently by using a map.

### END-USER STATEMENT: Laura Keating, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, WA

Knowing exactly what to say in community warnings is an extremely difficult task. How do you speak, simultaneously, to thousands of people who just happen to be in an area under threat - from older people to young people, tourists to long term locals and people from different backgrounds - in one simple warning. The work that the CRC are doing to clarify specifically what warnings should say, and how they should be structured to make them effective as possible, is absolutely essential. The outcomes of this research are helping the emergency services ensure that we can communicate effectively to as many people as possible during emergencies. It is ultimately helping to provide people with the information they need to save their own lives and those of their loved ones.

<EMERGENCY AGENCY NAME>  
PREPARE TO EVACUATE

**Time of issue:** 10:00am  
**Date of issue:** Friday January 15<sup>th</sup>

People in Pebble Bay in the mid-north coastal region should PREPARE TO EVACUATE due to flooding.

You do not need to evacuate at this time but you should prepare to evacuate if the situation changes.

**How to Prepare for Evacuation:**

- Raise belongings by placing them on tables, beds and benches. Put electrical items on top. You may be able to place light items in the roof space.
- Collect together medicines, personal and financial documents, mementos and photos.
- If possible, check to see if your neighbours need help.
- Make arrangements for care of pets or other animals, or take pets with you when you evacuate.
- Collect together spare clothing, medicines, and personal hygiene supplies.
- Find out where to turn off the electricity and gas.
- Continue to listen to your local ABC radio station for updates.

If you are prepared and wish to evacuate early, your safest option may be to visit family or friends who live away from the affected area. Alternatively, you may evacuate to a temporary evacuation centre that has been set up at Castooli Community Centre.

Never drive, ride, swim, or walk through floodwater as it is dangerous and potentially toxic.

**Keep Up to Date:**

Road closures: [www.traffic.gov.au/floodingroadclosures.html](http://www.traffic.gov.au/floodingroadclosures.html) Phone: 1300 100 200  
Weather warnings and river heights: [www.bom.gov.au/currentwarnings/state.html](http://www.bom.gov.au/currentwarnings/state.html) Phone: 1300 659 217  
SES Information: [www.ses.gov.au/floodwarningscurrent.html](http://www.ses.gov.au/floodwarningscurrent.html) Phone: 1300 842 000  
Transport: [www.transport.gov.au/emergencytransport.html](http://www.transport.gov.au/emergencytransport.html) Phone: 13 10 00

**If You Need Assistance:**

For SES assistance, call 1300 842 000.  
For life threatening emergencies, call 000.

**The next update will be provided at 10:15am or as the situation changes.**

**Clearly name the messenger:** People have preferred information sources during events—that are often not the official lead agency.

**Assume preparation begins in response:** Messages should assume no preparation has been done and thus present the community with clear step-by-step instructions.

**Encourage compliance with personalised solutions:** Encourage compliance with instructions by suggesting people visit or harbour with friends and family.

**Reduce information-seeking barriers:** Direct the community to the exact source of information (e.g. an exact webpage rather than homepage) to make information-seeking easier.

**Use time to encourage risk assessment:** The length of time between when the message is issued and when it is next updated signals risk to the community. A small time between updates (e.g. 15 minutes) can signal a high risk event, whereas a long time (e.g. one hour) can signal a low risk event. Include a caveat of 'or as the situation changes', to guide information-seeking behaviour and signal the uncertainty inherent in weather events.

**WANT TO KNOW MORE?**  
For more information on all our results to date, please email Dr Paula Dootson on [paula.dootson@qut.edu.au](mailto:paula.dootson@qut.edu.au).

**LOOKING FOR US?**  
We have two project team members here at AFAC 2016 – Professor Vivienne Tippett and Dr Amisha Mehta – come find us!

