Communication challenges in complex events

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Source: New South Wales (NSW) SES.
Non-linear relationship between hazard warning & instruction; individual comprehension & behavioural intention; and action

Multi-channel messaging critical in the face of phone & power outages

Inter-agency operability - multiple fronts

Preparedness is difficult to facilitate ‘in the moment’
  o People struggle to prioritise in preparatory phase
  o Decision making under pressure often flawed

‘Shelter in place’ Bathurst likely to require ++ multi-agency post-event support

How best communicate/support a mass gathering?
  o Communication with organisers

Contradictory cue’s add additional layer of challenge [media; social media; environment]

Vulnerable sub-populations warrant careful attention
  o Mobilising social support agencies
- Most peer reviewed literature focuses on health hazards during mass gatherings [outdoor music festivals, religious events etc]

- Cochrane systematic review [Novaks et al 2019] indicates that the evidence is strongest on the importance of localised, contextualised risk information & acknowledges the need for research on strategies and tactics to improve participation and engagement of the public

- Following National Review of Warnings and Information for Australia, ‘total warning concept’ and emphasis on people-centred communication [Anderson-Berry et al 2018]

- Must understand ‘embodied uncertainty’ ie: response capacity influenced by social identity, lived experienced & is highly individualised [Sword-Daniels et al 2016]

- BHNCRC research has demonstrated that revision of formal emergency messaging can alter comprehension and behavioural intention [Tippett et al 2014-2020]
KEY PRINCIPLES

- Plain English and easy to understand/logical layout – avoid all technical/operational language
- Group related information together
- Personalise risk and potential impacts
- Clear geo-location information
- Must be issued by credible, respected, trusted source
- Clear information about hazard type, severity, likelihood, timing, possible impacts, location, timeframe & reliable source for additional information.
- Clear instruction re: action requested