



BUILDING NEW MIGRANTS' SAFETY AND DISASTER RESILIENCE IN NEW ZEALAND

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BACKGROUND

Brings together findings from two projects:

- *Understanding factors that build resilience in NZ*, funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment.
- *Communicating fire messages to new migrants*, New Zealand Fire Service Report 135

BACKGROUND

Interest in resilience heightened by the Canterbury earthquakes. It is multi-faceted and our understanding is evolving as the experiences and responses of people in different disaster situations are documented.

Resilience involves: bouncing back; adapting; overcoming impacts; maintaining livelihoods; harnessing learning, innovation and creativity; having confidence in the utility of action (Paton *et al*,2013), and potentially growing.

APPLYING RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Fire services and others (e.g., CD) interested in using research to improve social and environmental outcomes of adverse events.
- Research focus is new migrants with little or no English language skills and unfamiliarity with NZ culture and fire safety practices.
- As the cultural diversity of urban and rural NZ increases, fire (and other emergency) services need to adapt their safety messages and communication channels and approaches.

SETTING THE SCENE - CANTERBURY

- Devastating earthquakes in Sept 2010 and Feb, June & Dec 2011
- Slow recovery - extended period of aftershocks, extent of damage to CBDs, infrastructure, housing and community amenities; slow demolition & rebuilding process; and insurance disputes
- Prolonged recovery potentially affects resilience

SETTING THE SCENE – NEW MIGRANTS IN NZ

- Diversity of culture, experience, skill, age, gender, language, understanding and knowledge of NZ life styles, etc.
- Come as permanent migrants, refugees, international students, workers on temporary permits, etc.
- Differ in their settlement process - longer and more fraught for some. On average takes at least 2 years.

NEW MIGRANTS' FIRE RISK

Mostly attributed to language/cultural differences, unfamiliarity with how things are done in NZ and exacerbated by domestic arrangements, housing condition, isolation, etc

- Appliances, heating, housing materials
- Fire prevention practices and safety culture

Fire safety not a priority – they are housing, employment and fitting in with their migrant community, local neighbourhood, wider society.

WHAT AFFECTS RESILIENCE?

- Spatial factors – the physical environment, nature of hazard, its physical impact
- Socio-economic, psychological and cultural factors – social connectedness, age, income, education, ethnicity, language skills, self-efficacy and preparedness, coping style
- Political factors – how widespread and equitable any 'bounce back' and potential growth will be

IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

- Main contributor (Pomeroy, 2011; Thornley *et al*, 2103)
- Resilience evolves through individual, community, environmental & institutional interrelationships (Hayward, 2013)
- Enables individual/community/institutional resource mobilisation, which enhances coping, adaptive, recovery and learning capacities (Paton *et al*, 2013; Becker *et al*, 2013)
- Canterbury people see it as core to resilience

COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

- Build credibility and trust with new migrants to be effective messengers
- Collaborate with other emergency services and organisations working with migrant communities – aid access, mobilise resources, better needs assessment, etc
- Work with migrant communities to align safety messages with migrants' priorities

BEST PRACTICE Continued

- Target messages to needs and stage of settlement of new migrants
- Use communication approaches that enhance relationship building
- Apply in tandem with strategies to increase cultural awareness and competencies of emergency services and organisational cultural diversity

DISCUSSION

- Cantabrians' resilience tested
- Acknowledged inadequacy of earthquake related support
- Attributed to poorly developed engagement/communication processes
- Social interaction and connectedness integral to resilience and engagement/communication best practice

DISCUSSION- RESILIENCE

- Social connectedness basis of mutual care and support and resource mobilisation
- Enhancing community resilience inseparable from building social connectedness and mutual trust
- Institutional collaboration – better needs assessment, mobilise resources, etc.

DISCUSSION – ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

- Social connectedness also integral to communication/engagement good practice - develop good community relationships (build trust and credibility) and overcome suspicion/discomfort
- Interagency collaboration – better access to communities, understanding of capabilities, reduce confusion, etc
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DISCUSSION

Fire safety and resilience to adverse events achieved through development of community engagement and communication processes and collaborative working relationships among relevant government and non-government organisations.

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