Improving the role of hazard communications in increasing residents’ preparedness for bushfires and floods

Research advisory forum/ 2018

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Project timeline

March 2014

1. Defining preparedness
July 2014 – June 2015

2. The effectiveness of traditional information sources
July 2015 – December 2015

3. The effectiveness of community led planning
January 2016 – June 2016

Potential barriers and enablers
a) The role of worry
b) The role of household composition

4. What about community culture?
July 2017 – January 2018

Project Synthesis/Utilization

Contract signed
March 2014 – June 2014
1. Defining Preparedness
2. The effectiveness of information
Percentage of preparatory actions completed

- Preparing for bushfire defence
- Preparing property for bushfires
- Emergency kit for bushfires
- Planning for bushfires
- Emergency kit for floods
- Planning for floods

Did not use any sources
- Used at least one source

Perceived social support and ability to respond/recover

- Social support for response to fires
- Social support for recovery from fires
- Social support for response to floods
- Social support for recovery from floods
- Perceived ability to respond to fires
- Perceived ability to recover from fires
- Perceived ability to respond to floods
- Perceived ability to recover from floods

People (%) engaging with information source

3. The effectiveness of a community led planning approach
Lessons learned about survey methodology

Survey length needs to match interest/perceived importance.

Minimize seemingly irrelevant questions unless you’re willing to pay people for their time.

For personal questions (e.g. income):
- clearly state that one can choose to skip the question.

Timing of media attention.

Use CRC media team instead of University team.

Training of door-knocking volunteers.

Create clear and motivating elevator-pitch about survey purpose.

On worry and household composition
Unconstructive Worry Constructive

- Broad focus
- Comparison
- Sustains anxiety
- Tied to procrastination

Reduced preparedness for bushfires.


- Process focused
- Problem solving
- Motivator
- Reduces anxiety

Increased preparedness for bushfires.
Household composition

Reduced property preparedness for fires at start of season, and reduced planning throughout season.

Less motivated, and report more difficulties with preparing, and greater lack of time.

4. What about community culture?
Social norms > Attitudes

*If other residents are doing more to prepare, so will I.*

If other residents are doing more to prepare, I can count on more social support during response and recovery.

*Other residents want me to prepare, so I will.*

The local council and fire agency want me to be prepared. Somehow this is tied to me feeling more able to respond to fires, even though I don’t actually carry out more preparatory actions...

Social norms > Attitudes

If other residents are doing more to prepare, so will I.

If other residents are doing more to prepare,
I can count on more social support during response and recovery.

Other residents want me to prepare, so I will.

The local council and fire agency want me to be prepared.
This is tied to me feeling more able to respond to and recover from floods.
And to be fair, it motivates me to prepare a bit better too.

Project reflections

Research focused reflections:
• Community interventions and sample size issues
• Large disparity in approaches and priorities across agencies.

Utilization focused reflections:
• Information helps those who access it, but not many actively do.
• Social norms may play an important role, but we need to consider who’s presenting the norm and in what way.
• Stressing under-preparedness by fellow residents may be counterproductive.
Thank you