The Hawaii Nuclear Alert: How did people respond?

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In 2017 nuclear tensions were high.

Chance of war between North Korea and the US:
- 15 to 50%

Monthly public drills were being conducted.
### GUIDANCE SUMMARY for COORDINATED PUBLIC MESSAGING

**Nuclear Detonation**

**Revised: 27 JUN 2017.4**

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<tr>
<td>Sirens sound Attack-Warning signal</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="GET INSIDE" /></td>
<td>1. If you are indoors, stay indoors well away from windows. 2. If you are outdoors, seek immediate shelter in a building preferably a concrete structure such as a commercial building or parking structure. 3. If you are driving, pull safely to the side of the road and stop. If a shelter is very close, shelter in that structure. If not, remain in your vehicle and lay on the floor.</td>
<td>• Surviving the immediate effects of a nuclear detonation (blast, shock, thermal radiation, initial nuclear radiation) requires sheltering in resistant structures • You may have only minutes to take protective action – take immediate action without delay • There are no designated blast or fallout shelters in Hawaii</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency Alert System (EAS) advisory</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="STAY INSIDE" /></td>
<td>1. Remain sheltered until you are told it is safe to leave or two weeks (14 days) have passed, whichever comes first. 2. You may be advised that it is safe to leave your shelter for short periods of time to locate food, water and medical care. 3. Electrical, water and other utilities may be severely disrupted or unavailable.</td>
<td>• Following the detonation, sheltering from radioactive fallout for up to 14 days is critically important • Public may need to briefly leave their shelters to locate essential supplies and equipment • Emergency Management will assess residual radiation levels and advise when sheltering can be discontinued</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system advisory</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="STAY TUNED" /></td>
<td>1. Listen to local AM-FM radio stations for official information. 2. Cell phone, television, radio and internet services will be severely disrupted or unavailable. 3. Small portable walkie-talkies may give you communication with nearby shelters.</td>
<td>• Local AM-FM broadcast radio is most survivable and may be useful in advising the public post-detonation • Other communication technologies may be damaged by weapons effects such as EMP • FRS and GMRS radios are widely available in the community and may be useful in keeping people in communication with one another</td>
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Emergency Alert
BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL.
Cancellation

NO Missile threat to Hawaii

10:20 AM - 13 Jan 2018 from Honolulu, HI

LOOK AT THIS STUPID LONG GAP BETWEEN "Hey nuclear missile incoming" vs "Sorry we screwed up." @Hawaii_EMA
Risk Frontiers utilized unstructured interviews from media articles.

Media articles were sourced from global online media outlets.

Interviews with 207 individuals were analysed.
Most respondents received the alert via the official text message (n=89)

A minority were informed by someone else for example a family member (n=17)

Most interpreted the alert in the context of existing nuclear tensions
People were in varying locations when the alert came through including:

- In a hotel (n=39)
- Awake at home (n=38)
- At home in bed (n=11)
- At work (n=10)
- In a car (n=10)
- At the beach (n=7)
Some chose to validate the warning and did so via:

- Social media (n=26)
- Making contact with others (n=16)
- Watching TV (n=11)
- Calling authorities (n=3)
Most people described their emotions as:

- fearful (n=51)
- concerned (n=23)
- panicked (n=21)
- upset (n=13)
- calm (n=13)
Most frequent responses were:

- Attempted to seek shelter in a building were they were located (n=43)
- Called or text others to alert them (n=23)
- Called or text others to express their emotions (n=22)
- Packed emergency items (n=17)
- Gathered family members (n=16)
- Attempted to leave their building to seek shelter somewhere else (n=15)
- Left an open space to seek shelter (n=12)
How did people react?

- Those that sheltered reported to shelter in their home (n=34), most commonly in the bathroom (n=18)
- Others sheltered in their hotel (n=19)
- Some didn’t know where to shelter (n=18)
How did people react?

People most often saw others:
- Attempting to seek shelter (n=50)
- Crying (n=26)
- Running (n=25)
- Calling or messaging others (n=13)
How did people react?

Those that did not respond thought:

- there was nothing that could be done (n=7)
- the warning was a false alarm as sirens did not sound (n=4)
- the missile would be shot down or would miss (n=2)
- warning was a joke or a hoax (n=2)
People most often discovered the alert was false through:

- Social media (n=21)
- Via text message from authorities (n=12)

People described their emotions after the alert as:

- Relieved (n=23)
- Concerned (n=7)
- Upset (n=7)
Context in which warnings are delivered is important.

The message was effective in achieving action.

Community education is a challenge.