Making Waves in Equitable Coastal Resilience:
A National Workshop on Social Equity and Coastal Resilience
November 2022

Emergency Management for Equitable Coastal Resilience

Summary: The discipline and practice of emergency management provide opportunities to promote equity in resilience. This may be accomplished by (1) expanding and deepening emergency management's responsibilities to more explicitly incorporate mid-to-long-term recovery, and (2) advancing workforce diversity. Further, the prioritization of planning investments may promote more equitable recovery pathways for communities. Tracking of resilience investments and associated benefits across communities may provide opportunities to assess the equity of investments. Advancing resilience literacy and risk assessment among the citizenry may promote equity in resilience.

Issues and Recommendations for Practice
① Limited resilience and process literacy
Communities vary in their understanding of climate-related impacts. Information about potential hazards and associated risks are not widely disseminated. The processes associated with scoping for mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery investments are poorly understood. Opportunities for community participation are not widely broadcast.
Recommendation: Increase literacy by developing and disseminating information for a range of audiences
- Develop literature and messaging for communicating potential hazards and associated risks.
- Communicate with communities in familiar language using print, media, and virtual channels.
- Use community leaders and organizations to channel reliable information.
- Demystify processes associated with project decision making for residents.
- Encourage community participation in the project decision-making process.
- Actively engage communities in early scoping activities.

② Lack of workforce diversity
There is a lack of diversity in emergency management. Diversity within the workforce may increase awareness of the hurdles faced by vulnerable communities. There is a lack of familiarity with non-English languages among the emergency management workforce. The education and training within the emergency management discipline does not emphasize communication skills, including language proficiencies. There is a need to be intentional about recruiting diverse emergency management professionals from under-represented groups and from non-traditional fields.
Recommendation: Advance diversity in the emergency management workforce by recruiting and training staff
- Recruit emergency management personnel from under-represented groups and a variety of disciplines/fields.

- Provide additional training and schooling opportunities to existing emergency management personnel to either retool or expand existing proficiencies within the emergency management function.
- Emphasize non-English language proficiency and provide support for language training.

③ **Funding accessibility and a focus on equity**

Communities often seek external grant funding to support programs, projects, and practices. Funding may not be equitable across communities. Some communities may not be aware of grant opportunities or have resources to pursue and manage grants. Agencies need to understand the priorities as identified by the communities themselves, design grant opportunities to address the equity needs articulated by the communities, and design the grant process to be more accessible to under-resourced communities.

Recommendation: Increase availability and accessibility of equity-focused funding and track impacts of funding

- Report the distribution of grant dollars and benefits across communities.
- Funding agencies develop a set of principles or best practices for listening to communities, including channels that identify stakeholders, and craft RFPs that address community needs.
- Reduce application and administrative burden for grants and funding programs.

④ **Limited emergency management role in long-term recovery and need for a whole-of-community approach**

Emergency management tends to focus on short term response and recovery, and less on longer-term recovery where inequities and disparities often increase. Emergency management is limited in resources, staff, and expertise to facilitate the case management that is necessary to connect vulnerable populations to mid-to-long-term recovery resources. Channels between vulnerable communities and policy makers, agency heads, and planners may not fully utilize faith-based nonprofits and community organizations that serve vulnerable populations.

Recommendation: Expand emergency management responsibility and whole-of-community partners

- Incorporate within emergency management support for recovery organizations engaging in recovery.
- Train emergency managers in a whole-of-community and systems thinking approaches.
- Identify and engage faith-based, nonprofit, and community organizations as partners.

Research Questions

① **Workforce**
- What are challenges for increasing diversity in the emergency management workforce?
- How do we incorporate equity in training for emergency managers?

② **Literacy**
- How do we assess resilience literacy across a community?
- How does resilience literacy vary within a community and how does it reflect equity concerns?

③ **Assessing challenges and measuring benefits of emergency management efforts**
- How do hurdles faced by households for mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery reflect equity concerns?
- How do we measure community benefits of emergency management (mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery) activities and determine variation across a community?
- How is equity considered in emergency management activities?

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More information about the workshop:

https://sites.wp.odu.edu/workshop

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