

Flood Risk Communications – an emergency management perspective

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Risk Communication

- For Risk Communication (any kind of risk) to work successfully a government must:
 - Communicate the risk clearly and simply
 - NHS P-Surge examples
 - Give actionable items for the citizen to accomplish
 - Move your car to higher ground
 - Deliver the communications in a multi-layered and COORDINATED approach
 - We want and encourage citizens to get risk information from multiple sources – there is no silver bullet.

The four key players in risk communications

- Federal
 - National Oceanographic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Weather Service (NWS), National Aerospace Administration (NASA), United States Geologic Survey (USGS), United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- State
 - Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Virginia State Police (VSP), Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOTF)
- Local
 - Local governments, Regional Partners
- Non-governmental (profit and non-profit)
 - Weather Channel, Silver Jackets, Wetlands Watch, WeatherBug, Crazy Internet Weather Dudes, Crazy Uncle Jimmy

Flood Risk Uniqueness

- In Hampton Roads, typically (this means not always) we have some lead time for flood events.
 - Tidal events (Nor'easter, Hurricanes and Tsunami)
- However, we can experience “flash” flooding.
 - Typically this is when a heavy rain event interfaces with a high tide and outfalls cannot release rain run off.
- Our floodplain system and river system is extremely complex and changes constantly.
- Riverine systems can be easier to forecast with some specificity

Federal Risk Communications Products

- Public facing
 - Websites
 - WEA – that weird sound your phone makes (only Tornado Warning, Hurricane Warning, Presidential Warning)
 - NOAA Weather Radio – it is supposed to be annoying and wake you up in the middle of the night
 - SAME programming
- Government facing
 - iNWS
 - WEA

Commonwealth Risk Communications

- Public facing
 - ReadyVA app
 - Various websites
- Government facing
 - SWAN alerts
 - iFlows
 - WEA system from VEOC

Local Flood Risk Communications

- Typically done manually
- Usually not geographically specific (but many have that capability)
- Many different partners and departments involved
 - Chesapeake example – PIO, IT, Fire, Police, City Manager, OEM
- FEAR!!!
- Websites, reverse 911 systems, social media, radio (WFOS), TV (Channel 48), variable message boards, etc...
- No matter what – everyone trusts the local weather man!!
 - Denise Miletì and Jay Baker

Non-Governmental

- For profit – messages are typically driven by science but sometimes by money and fear
 - TV
 - Apps
 - Websites
- Non-profits – messages are typically science driven but sometimes can have a tone towards advocacy.
 - Wetlands Watch (advocacy but engaged with Government)
 - Silver Jackets (government group with advocacy focus)
 - Others (mainly advocacy and anti-government)
- Crazy Internet Weather Dudes (no explanation needed)

Closing

- Remember the three keys to success?
 - Simple message
 - Action
 - Coordination
- There is no real place for a citizen to go that shows live (real time) flooding.
- Flood risk communications for preparedness actions