Creating Safety Nets Through Community Connections

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New York Times, Nov. 7, 2013. New York City has violated the rights of about 900,000 of its residents with disabilities by failing to accommodate for their needs during emergencies, a federal judge ruled on Thursday. The ruling arose from a lawsuit filed in 2011 after Tropical Storm Irene, but came into sharper focus after Hurricane Sandy, when many New Yorkers with disabilities were stranded for days.
Environmental Justice, Emergency Risks and Demographic Trends

• Many urbanized areas becoming more densely populated, especially in coastal areas more susceptible to climate change and sea level rise; > risk of natural and man-made hazards

• Greater concentrations of elderly, poor, disabled and limited English proficiency (LEP)- esp. in higher-risk areas- with fewer resources to prepare

• Rural areas also “aging”- elderly & poor isolated?

• Emergency plans- outreach and response- often overlook these realities
• **Communication is the critical infrastructure most likely to fail in emergencies.**

• Before the emergency, communication planning is difficult to fund, staff, and equip.

• Afterwards, communication planning is at the top of every “do it differently next time” list.

• Resilience requires “whole community” communications.
Starting Points

- Public communication planning for emergencies is (usually) geared to mainstream.
- Poverty is the baseline for vulnerability.
- FEMA emphasizes whole community plans – inclusive and realistic.
- Transportation managers need to help lead.
Toolkit Supports FEMA “Whole Community” Initiative

• FEMA Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101, Version 2 emphasizes whole community preparedness, to include those with access and functional needs, children, and with service animals or pets.

• Step 1 in CPG 101: “Form a Collaborative Planning Team” – TCRP Report 150 shows how to do that, step by step, with tools and templates to help.
Project Purpose: “How to”

Vulnerable Populations

- CBOs (community-based organization)
- FBOs (faith-based organization)
- NPOs (nonprofit organization)

Collectively referred to as CBOs throughout

Transportation

- Environmental Justice Initiatives
- TCRP 150
- Evacuation, Security Coordination, All Phases Emergency Planning

Emergency Management

- Public Communications (customary conduit)
- Public Health (emerging partner)

TCRP A-33: Communication with Vulnerable Populations: A Transportation & Emergency Management Toolkit
Toolkit’s Foundation is Communication That Fosters “Pervasive Preparedness”

Pervasive Preparedness means, ideally, that most of the people have most of the information they need to be ready for most of what can happen most of the time.
People live in self-defined villages with others they perceive to be like them in meaningful ways. Credibility and trust start here.
Process & Tools Can Build a Network

• Many plans for comprehensive preparedness have been designed to connect authorities, agencies and (sometimes) providers.

• An operational safety network gets closer to pervasive preparedness because it connects authorities, agencies and providers with people in their terms (their villages) with trusted messengers.
Historic Transportation Agency Involvement with Emergency Management

FR – Fire & Rescue
T – Transportation
EM – Emergency Management
A. Learning About & Connecting with Additional Government Agency Partners

- FR – Fire & Rescue
- T – Transportation
- EM – Emergency Management
- LE – Law Enforcement
- PW – Public Works
- PH – Public Health
- PI – Public Information
- PS – Public Schools
B. Connecting with CBOs & Other Local Partners

Vulnerable Populations

FR – Fire & Rescue
T – Transportation
EM – Emergency Management
LE – Law Enforcement
PW – Public Works
PH – Public Health
PI – Public Information
PS – Public Schools
CBO – Community-Based Org
“Marginalized” doesn’t mean that people – even especially vulnerable ones -- aren’t connected. To reach most of the people most of the time requires agencies to expand their margins and make connections.
Who/ what are vulnerable populations?

The Emergency Management National Response Framework says “special needs” populations may have additional needs before, during and after an incident in functional areas, such as:

- Maintaining independence
- Communication
- Transportation
- Supervision
- Medical care

They are often constrained by:

- Poverty
- Physical or mental disability
- Health issues
- Low English proficiency
- Transportation disadvantage
- Age

and especially by combinations of these.
Poverty is the baseline for vulnerability.
What the Toolkit is (and isn’t)

The toolkit does not focus on activities or specific messages for emergency planning, response & recovery.

It lays out a process for building the **collaborative partnerships** necessary to communicate “X” messages & implement “Y” activities.

“Plans aren’t worth the paper they are written on. The relationships you build while making those plans are golden.” - Houston veteran of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
Seems Impossible or at least hugely expensive- how can this be done?

It’s all about collaboration-
Working with existing agencies- local and state government agencies, community-based (CBOs), faith-based (FBOs) and non-government or non-profit organizations (NPOs), who are already in the field working with a host of vulnerable populations.

For the most part, they don’t know about transportation and emergency management, and transportation and emergency managers don’t know about them.

The Toolkit takes you step by step through the process of finding your way into existing networks or setting up your own communication network with other organizations that will help you reach vulnerable populations.
Four Steps and the Tools to Do Them

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Chapter 1: Gather Information
  - Tools
  - Additional Information
- Chapter 2: Build or Add to a Network
  - Tools
  - Additional Information
- Chapter 3: Communicate Through the Network
  - Tools
  - Additional Information
- Chapter 4: Sustain the Network
  - Tools
  - Additional Information
- Conclusion, Glossary
Executive Summary – Legal Framework on Page 1

It’s the Law

• The Americans with Disabilities Act
• The Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act as amended
• Executive Order 13347
• SAFTEA-LU
• Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5

And presents the process as achievable
Chapter 1: Gather Information

1. Get started
   – Transportation & Emergency Management begin to talk - is there a champion? is leadership buy-in needed?

2. Collect population information - define, locate vulnerable pops.

3. Assess hazards & community vulnerability

4. Assess agency resources - current plans? committees? staff?

5. Identify existing networks - e.g. United We Ride, community service links

6. Keep a contact list
Chapter 1 Tools

- Securing leadership buy-in (memo template, tips for handling resistance)
- Tip sheet on identifying vulnerable populations (research & factfinding, community engagement)
- Working with metropolitan planning organizations
- Rural planning organizations
- Potential network partners (list)
- Network contact database (template)
Pointers: Getting off to a good start

• Do some initial homework on who is in your community
• Are you the champion? Can you find one?
• Is your leadership leading the way or in the way- if the latter, get them on board- gradually if necessary

• Look at your transportation and emergency plans– are vulnerable populations specifically included?
• Look for existing networks- who knows who, why do they meet, when do they meet?
• Keep the names!
Chapter 2: Build or Add to a Network

1. Begin outreach to key personnel
2. Plan 1<sup>st</sup> meeting
3. Manage meeting logistics
4. Conduct the meeting
5. Update contact list
6. Plan next steps
7. Transition to an organized network
8. Set parameters
9. Choose a name for the network
10. Document the work
Chapter 2 Tools

- Network fact sheet
- Sample invitation
- Meeting accommodation form
- Planning accessible meetings
- Accessible meeting facility checklist
- Meeting agenda template

- Making meetings work tip sheet (intros, discussion ?s, etc.)
- Sample presentation slides
- Sign-in form (template)
- Follow-up memo template
- Goals and objectives template
Pointers: Building the Network

• Make your meetings meaningful, inclusive, and accessible to all

• As you transition to a more formal, organized network, it may help to:
  – Establish / adopt the purpose for the network
  – Communicate the network’s benefits
  – Create an organizational framework
  – Develop a plan for working together (who does what, how often do we meet, by phone, etc.)
  – Define network goals & objectives
  – Establish requirements for participating in the network
Chapter 3: Communicate Through the Network

1. Define communication procedures
2. Establish communication roles & responsibilities
3. Assess communication resources (questions to help identify and evaluate resources including registries)
4. Reassess hazards & community vulnerability
5. Plan for communicating about transportation
6. Test the network
7. Communicate through the network
8. Document the work
Chapter 3 Tools

- Network member roles and responsibilities
- Network member planning checklist
- Communication channels by sector
- Registries fact sheet (pros and cons on different types)
- Communication with vulnerable populations tip sheet (appropriate & diverse channels, keeping messages simple, adapting messages, etc.)
- How to conduct a network test
- Alert template
Pointers: Using the Network

- Ask questions to establish procedures
  - What does it mean to activate the network?
  - Who can activate it?
  - When will it activate?
  - How will network members be notified?
  - How can network partners communicate back “up the line”?

- ?s to define roles and responsibilities
  - What will members be asked to do when they receive an alert?
  - What happens outside of work hours?
  - Are the roles of public sector partners different from voluntary and private sector communication roles?
Chapter 4: Sustain the Network

- Engage network members regularly
- Update network contacts
- Look for opportunities to expand the network structure
- Strategically grow the network
- Form agreements

- Equip network members to perform their roles
- Evaluate policy implications
- Establish common terminology
- Evaluate & improve the network
- Document the work
Chapter 4 Tools

- Social media tip sheet
- Contact information update
- Forming agreements tip sheet (MOUs, etc.)
- Network-building checklist
- Post-event evaluation tool
- Performance measures for communicating with vulnerable populations
- Designing & implementing baseline & post-activation surveys tip sheet
Pointers: Sustaining the Network

Keep it going
• Convene periodic meetings with at least 1 face-to-face / year
• Regular conference calls
• Use technology - website, listserv, social networking
• Update contacts at least annually, preferably quarterly

Keep it growing
• Expand structure with committees, advisory panels, subgroups - take on projects, new partners
• Evaluate the list for gaps, ask members to recommend new members, reach out
More Tips on Sustaining the Network

- Equip members to perform their roles
  - Individual preparedness
  - Continuity of operations plans
  - Backup communication devices, power sources
  - Alternate language translation, sign interpretation services

- Evaluate & improve
  - Exercise network regularly
  - Develop performance measures
  - Conduct annual survey
  - Evaluate after an event requiring activation
  - Invite network members to participate in “mainstream” exercises
What the Process + Tools Can Help Agencies Do

- Build a network of trusted individuals representing different population groups
- Seek out connected organizations, as well as untitled leaders
- Use “each one reach one” to achieve critical mass, greater resilience
- Conduct “exercises” of the network in non-emergency situations
- Respect the power of the functional message, the messenger and the media
TCRP 150 Guiding Principle

• “Disability is not about a specific group of people. Disability is about a specific time in the life of each and every one of us. For some, it may be temporary, for others, it may last much longer. As a society, we have mistakenly adopted a mindset that divides us into two groups, “able-bodied” and “disabled”. The fact is that we all will be part of the disabled community for some time in our lives. If we act from the perspective of what we would want when, rather than if, we become disabled, we truly will be able to make great progress for all people.” Alan Fraser, National Fire Protection Association
Summing Up

1. Emergency planning and communications with vulnerable populations is crucial, impacting larger proportions of the population with demographic, climate and other risk changes - and it’s the law!

2. Creating inclusive communications networks (and ultimately response and recovery networks) with existing agencies and CBOs will be a “force multiplier”

3. It can be done, but will take work: Be inclusive – invites, meetings, exercises (look/ ask for who’s missing and keep branching out)

4. Think, act ACCESSIBLE 24/7 (accommodations, messages, transportation- ask what works/ ask many in many formats)- and listen, then listen some more.
COMMUNICATION with VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

A TRANSPORTATION & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT

TCRP Report 150 is available for download now:
www.TRB.org/SecurityPubs

The full document is available in pdf, and all templates and tools are available for download in Word format from this site:

This toolkit provides step by step guidance with supporting tools and templates to build a robust communications network. It shows how to find and then create collaborative partnerships with the agencies and community organizations that are already working with the people you need to reach in an emergency, with tips on making meetings accessible, obtaining leadership buy-in, and much more.

A print copy can be purchased from the TRB online bookstore:
www.trb.org/Finance/Bookstore.aspx

A free print copy can be ordered from:
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TCRP Report 150

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