



"There are just a few of us, but we are all important"

Responses to a Disaster Preparedness Survey in Interior Alaska River Villages

Broader Impacts Review Criterion

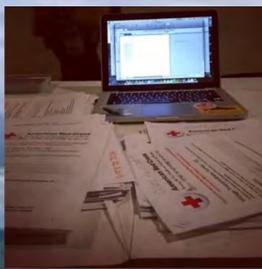
Advance discovery and understanding while promoting teaching, training, and learning: This project involved mentorship undergraduate students, post-graduate students, and community members in the development and distribution of a qualitative survey instrument.

Broaden participation of under-represented groups: This project involved the participation of Alaska Native community leaders in the research process through Tanana Chiefs Conference, a Alaska Native non-profit institution.

Enhance infrastructure for research and education: This project brought together the American Red Cross, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Tanana Chiefs Conference and BP in funding, collaboration, and production of the survey instrument and final educational flyer and will lead to future collaborative projects around disaster preparedness.

Broaden dissemination to enhance scientific and technological understanding: This project will produce an educational flyer directed at Alaska Native communities in Interior Alaska and will be produced in a culturally appropriate format, as well as in local Alaska Native languages.

Benefits to society: This project will help reduce the vulnerability of Interior Alaska communities to environmental hazards and create further discussion about disaster preparedness.



Introduction:

- This survey project explores individual perspectives about disaster preparedness in interior Alaska communities.
Every few years spring ice-jam flooding destroys a community in the Yukon River Basin
There is currently no comprehensive disaster preparedness information for families living in rural interior Alaska.
This survey will ultimately be used to create a new outreach flyer for Interior Alaska, addressing locally specific hazards and vulnerabilities

Objectives:

- To explore local perspectives about disaster preparedness in interior Alaska communities
To increase the capacity of people in Interior Alaska to prepared for a disaster by producing a redesigned "Be Red Cross Ready" flyer
To explore best practices for using qualitative survey instruments in Interior Alaska communities

Methods:

Guiding Research Questions:

- 1. How prepared are people in Interior Alaska for a disaster?
Do they have the recommended preparedness kit items?
Are they familiar with local hazards?
Do they know where to go for help or information?
Do they have a disaster plan?
How many people have CPR, first aid, or disaster preparedness training
2. How is disaster preparedness different in Interior Alaska from the rest of the country?
What else would they put in a disaster kit?
What advice do they have for their community
What do relief organizations (such as the Red Cross) need to know about their community in a disaster?

(Surveys questions were based on the "Be Red Cross Ready: Get a Kit, Make a Plan, Be Informed" flyer)

Survey 1

- 21 question survey
15 survey kits containing 20 surveys delivered to interior villages and administered by locally stationed Village Public Safety Officer or volunteer fire department
Mailed back when completed and entered into Excel

Survey 2

- 17 question survey
More than 200 surveys administered by Red Cross staff and volunteers at the TCC Annual Convention over four days
Collected during the Convention and entered into Excel

Both Surveys

- All respondents received a free small flashlight in return for a completed survey
All respondents were entered into a raffle for a preparedness kit or hand-crank NOAA weather radio
A separate raffle was held for each village and for the Convention

Results:

Survey 1: 44 surveys from 5 villages—Surveys 2: 79 surveys from 30 villages

How prepared are people in Interior Alaska for a disaster?

Get a Kit Responses:

- 75% reported having a flashlight
65% reported having personal hygiene products
62% had a cell phone and charger
62% had a manual can opener
62% had a multi-tool
61% did not have copies of important documents
67% did not have emergency cash
61% did not have emergency contact information

Make a Plan Responses:

- 31% reported needing a place to stay in an evacuation
>50% of people go to their City Office or Village Council for an emergency plan
>60% would meet their family members at a public building, such as the community center or high school

Be Informed Responses:

- >60% had experienced a disaster or knew someone who had
>50% of people believed their community had a written response plan
68% had CPR or First Aid training
64% wanted CPR training
33% had disaster preparedness training
61% wanted disaster preparedness training

Overall

- More than 50% of people had 50% of the items in the preparedness kit
Respondents would go a central public building to find family or to find their community emergency plan
More than 50% of people had CPR and/or First Aid training, and more than 60% wanted more CPR, First Aid, and/or Disaster Preparedness training

Results:

How is disaster preparedness different in Alaska from the rest of the country?

What else would you include in a preparedness kit?

- 21% recommended including outdoor, hunting, and fishing gear in their preparedness kits:
Fishing poles, lighters & matches, tents, rope, guns & ammo, dry moose meat, maps, satellite phone
Cold-weather clothing heavily emphasized
Warm coats, snow pants, extra gloves, socks, and hats (especially for children)

What advice do you have for your community in a disaster?

"Have a plan - good communication channels. Have a lists (like the ones on this survey) and post have meetings and reminders have a garbage disposal plan w/ flood so things don't get too contaminated"

"Stay together, help each other to hunt and keep shelter"

"Consider preparing a disaster kit and be ready for everything. I never thought about it until my house fire in 2007. I still have a lot to learn."

What advice do you have for your community in a disaster?

"Be prepared for anything, anytime, especially on cold dark winter nights"

"I usually get the community together for a preparedness situation - where to evacuate and who goes first - make sure our evacuation site is set up for the community, usually the school"

"Treat each other with respect"

"need to get the information out in multiple ways: radio / internet - we do not have cable so TV does not effect us"

"Get training on the human factors. Have a group of responders that their only focus is on the personal welfare of those affected. Tell people to hard truth up front DO NOT sugar coat it! We are good at responding but bad at taking care of the affected people's emotional wellbeing"

Discussion:

- 1. Disaster kits should have serious survival gear similar to what might be found in hunting gear or fish camp supplies
2. Responders should have cultural awareness training if they are not from Alaska (for instance, if they are from Mississippi)
3. Social networks, local radio and community low power TV channels are more important for communication than social media, internet, and smart phones
4. Village leaders and emergency managers in other agencies and organizations should be more familiar with each other and develop strong relationships