

Communication and Alert

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Our Study: Approach and Methods

- The purpose is to understand how we can improve communication about evacuation of people with disabilities.
 - Part of a project analyzing four stages of evacuation: communication/alert, transportation, shelter, and return to community
- We reviewed scholarly literature and other publicly available material, such as reports, media articles, policies.
- We surveyed 29 people with disabilities and some caregivers and 8 emergency managers to understand key considerations from both perspectives.
- Feedback from Advisory Board Members at Roundtable in June.

Social Science of Risk literature (selected findings)

- Many factors influence risk perception for individuals:
 - The behaviour of others
 - Personal experience with risks
 - Trust in institutions and authorities, and various information sources
 - Socio-demographic factors (e.g., age, race, gender, income, primary language, ability)
- There are several organizations, sectors, and orders of government, and media outlets, involved in the development and distribution of risk messages and alerts in addition to many distribution methods (e.g., radio, TV, web, social media), which further complicates the space.
- Mental Models (Morgan et al. 2001) approaches are risk communication methods that work to align different ways of thinking of risks between experts and the public.

Selected Findings From Our Study: Survey Results

- Top issues of concern relating to accessibility and evacuation voiced by people with disabilities and some caregivers:
 - Transportation options
 - Access to equipment and supplies
 - Reliance on someone to intervene – especially for people without personal support networks,
 - Shelter (i.e., knowledge of where to relocate), how to get there, and how to access medical treatment if needed

Selected Findings From Our Study: Survey Results (Continued)

- People with disability noted radio and television as preferred sources of communication, followed by phone alerts and websites, with door-to-door least preferred.
- Examples of emergency alerts and forms of communication:
 - Provincial and municipal emergency management offices
 - Emergency responders and dispatch
 - Municipal alert systems (hfxALERT)
 - Environmental and weather monitoring agencies
 - National Alerting system (*Alert Ready*)

Selected Findings From Our Study: Survey Results (Continued)

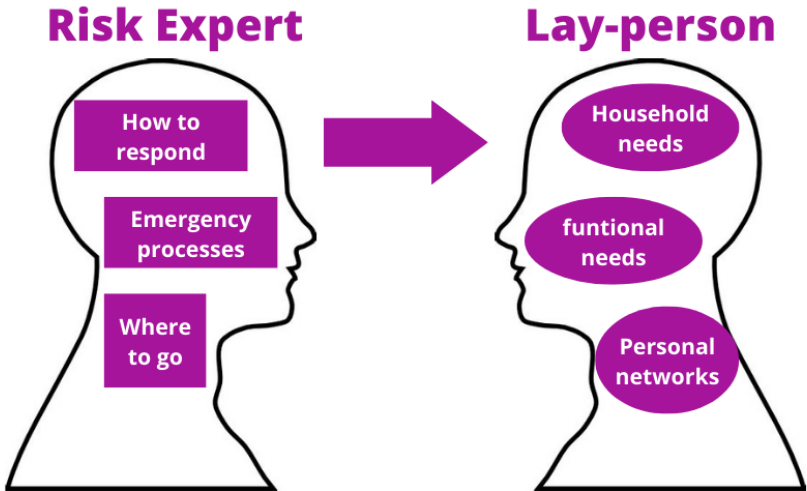
- Responses from emergency managers show different perceptions about accessibility of evacuation processes
 - lack of consensus about accessibility within emergency management community
 - jurisdictional and organizational differences
 - Variation in strategy and implementation

How do we improve the system?

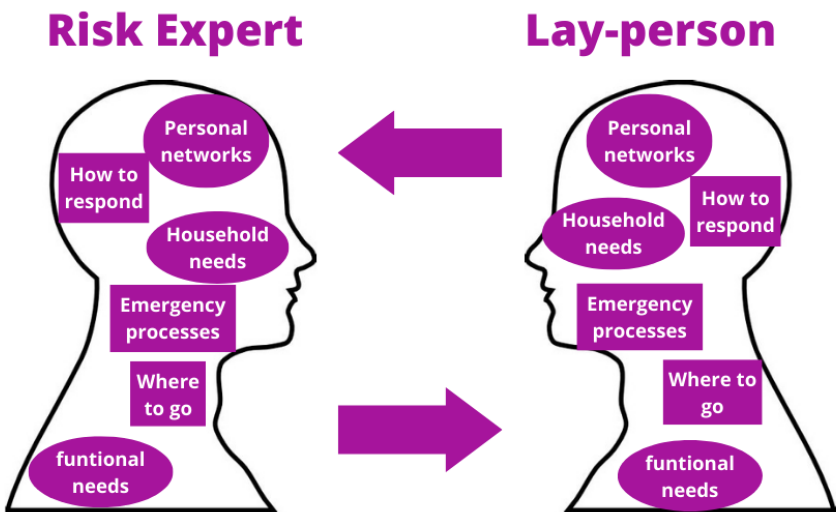
- **Gather information:** Information is gathered and processed in a psychological, social, and institutional context. Information-sharing and how the data is managed over time are important considerations;
 - Example of databases and registries (e.g., vulnerable person registries)
- **Set standards:** Much of the focus in emergency response and accessible communication concerns standards; can be too bureaucratized and may not account for diverse functional needs and socio-demographic identities (and intersections thereof).
- **Change behaviour:** There can be gaps between standards and implementation. Behaviour change requires appropriate training and deliberate implementation. Culture change is key.

How do we improve the system? (Continued)

- Improving integration of people with disabilities in emergency planning in advance of disasters



- When working with people with disabilities, their lived experience should be treated akin to expert knowledge



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- Bruce Campbell York University

For more information

[See the MacEachen Institute website for this research protect](#)

[Briefing Note](#) for this project available

Next phase of our research is return to community

[Additional resources and research](#)