Queensland Fire & Emergency Services

Review of Cyclone and storm tide sheltering arrangements (CSTSA)

Recommendation 5

Review of local governments' emergency warning capability (LGEWC)

Recommendation 9

Fact Sheet

Background

In 2015 the office of the Inspector General Emergency Management undertook two reviews of the Cyclone and Storm Tide Sheltering Arrangements and the Local Governments' Emergency Warning Capability.

The purpose of the **Cyclone and Storm Tide Sheltering Arrangements** (CSTSA) review was to examine cyclone and storm tide sheltering arrangements across Queensland. The review examined eleven local governments to consider whether arrangements match local risk and vulnerable people can find out about them. The review focused on three areas: risk, sheltering arrangements, and community engagement. A number of the reviews findings pointed to opportunities to improve engagement of vulnerable people and inform the community.

The **Review of Local Governments' Emergency Warning Capability** (LGEWC) assessed the capability of local government in Queensland to issue contextualised, fit-for-purpose, consistent and accurate warnings through all phases of events. The review analysed information collected against each outcome and indicator within the Warnings component of the Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland (the Standard). The review compared what was expected to be found against the actual observations.

Within each review a number of recommendations have been made with a common issue of engagement and messaging being observed. QFES was allocated as the recommendation/s lead and is required to action the recommendation/s.

Review recommendations;

Review of Cyclone and storm tide sheltering arrangements (CSTSA) #5
A state-wide engagement strategy is coordinated to ensure community messaging is consistent across all levels of Queensland's disaster management arrangements.

Review of local governments' emergency warning capability (LGEWC) #9
Formal research is commissioned or meta-analysis is undertaken to provide better understanding of the effectiveness of warnings and other relevant message testing. The outcomes are disseminated to all disaster management entities and learnings used to inform practice

QFES recommendation approach

As an alternative to commissioning a standalone research project, a number of formal reports which have alignment with the IGEM recommendations intent have been assessed. These reports have been considered suitable to reference in QFES communication with the states' disaster management entities, and demonstrate QFES achieving the review recommendations'. The reports noted below

provide substantial advice on public warnings and message structure which will promote comprehension and action by members of the public.

- Enhancing bushfire community warning messages for Queensland Fire and Emergency Services.
- Emergency Warning Message Comprehension: Community Focus Groups, Tippett et al 2016
- Enhancing the effectiveness of SEQwater's Dam Release Messaging, Mehta et al 2016
- IGEM Review of the Effectiveness of Disaster Management Arrangements arising from Tropical Cyclone Debbie. Report-quantitative research with community members (MCR) 2017 section 4 pg 37-53, 87-101, 139-153, 191-205. Section 6 suggested improvements pg 63, 113, 165, 217
- National Review of Warnings and Information, final report. EMV 2014.

Findings

A number of good practices have been identified in the various reports. These have been generalised and noted below;

- Warning messages use the full name of the agency/entity (rather than relying on the agency's acronym) the first time it is mentioned in each message.
- Warning messages do not require community members to understand the name of the warning
- Warning messages lead with a call to action to residents of a specific suburb or location.
- In Warning messages, places the call to action in the first sentence of the warning.
- Warning messages present specific information about a events nature (i.e., type, severity, likelihood, and possible consequences), location, time to impact, and instructions on how to respond.
- Warning messages should contain very limited operational language or technical jargon.
- Except for the opening sentence of the message, consider personalising the protective action required by using the terms "you" and "your".
- Consider adding subheadings such as "What you should do" and "Stay up to date" to make information searching easier.
- Consider providing specific points of contact for more information (e.g., phone numbers, exact website addresses)
- Consider revising instructions to make them as clear, consistent, and specific as possible in order to ensure maximum comprehension and compliance.
- Consider restating instructions that are still valid at each level of escalation.
- Consider explaining to community members why the organisation proposes a protective action in order to heighten compliance.
- Consider designing the messages so that those who have a plan will know when to enact it, but immediately follow this information with instructions for those who do not have a plan to enact.
- Group information as much as possible to aid meaning.
- Consider removing technical information about the viability of preparedness activities from warning messages.
- Consider adding an update time to the end of each message to allow residents to stop information seeking to engage in protective action, and know when to return for updated information.

- Consider adding an explicit instruction about monitoring the changing conditions to the message.
- Consider not specifically stating the number of responders or resources in the area.

The IGEM Review of the Effectiveness of Disaster Management Arrangements arising from Tropical Cyclone Debbie. Report-quantitative research with community members (MCR) provides significant data on the sources of information that the public utilised prior to and after the Tropical Cyclone Debbie events. The report identifies the effectiveness the methods of the warnings public received, and insights into the factors that resulted in the messaging being understood or not. The report also provides suggestions for improvements across a number of areas including information needs.

Information within this report will assist in disaster managers understanding the methods that the public utilise to receive warning messages, and the effectiveness of those methods. This may influence their approach for community messaging in future events.

Actions

QFES regional Emergency Management staff are requested to;

- Where necessary, engage with and support LDMG's/LG's to review and adjust emergency related messaging in line with the best practices and recommendations noted within the referenced reports.

Outcomes

The distribution of the advice contained in the noted reports, and actions taken to adjust warning messages that are provided to the community will ensure people receive them and understand them correctly in line with the intent of the IGEM recommendations. This action will assist in establishing community messaging is consistent across all levels of Queensland's disaster management arrangements and provide for a safer Queensland.