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Turning the Tide on After-Action Reviews: Engaging the Public as a Best Practice

The addition of public engagement to the After-Action Review (AAR) process should be adopted as a best practice in emergency management (EM). Without meaningful public engagement, the AAR process fails to capture the strengths and weaknesses of how individuals respond to hazard events. AARs allow emergency planners, responders, and government officials to assess the strengths, limitations, and capacities of one or more positions and organizations throughout hazard response. Engaging the public in the AAR process may provide insight into existing community relationships, neighbourhood programs, priorities and values, and other opportunities which can help communities to collectively prepare for, respond to, and recover from hazard events alongside official EM counterparts. Emergency planners and governments may use this information to create policies and plans which leverage community strengths and resources to enhance public safety, while also promoting increased risk-sharing between government and citizens during emergencies.

Climate change trends predict an increase in heavy precipitation events, flooding, drought, wildfire, extreme heat, and other hazards across North America in upcoming decades. As hazards occur more frequently, all levels of government may be challenged in providing adequate post-disaster assistance for recovery. As a result, it is reasonable to anticipate a shift

toward risk-sharing between government and citizens to promote individual self-sufficiency and preparedness for hazards. As this transition occurs, it will be critical to include public engagement in AARs to understand the nuances and expectations of the individual and community role in EM. An initial analysis of open-source data shows that it is not a standard best practice to include the public in AARs. This poster will provide an overview of the benefits and key considerations of adopting public engagement as a best practice for AARs, supported by research and case studies.

Presentation Theme: Best practices for After-Action Reviews in response to climate change.

Collaborators, Advisor(s) and Department(s) that assisted with this research: N/A.