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COMPETITIVE DIVISION – PRACTITIONER

Developing an Emergency Messaging Campaign and Notification System for Practitioners

Nowhere is the adage “disasters start local” more evident than emergency notifications for wildfires and similar immediate evacuation scenarios. Local emergency management officials may only have minutes to start a process that drives a reaction making a difference between citizens surviving an incident and not. When emergency managers implement an effective public messaging campaign, coupled with timely and effective emergency notifications, the process takes advantage of the increased time between the recognition of an incident and the start of the movement of people from an affected area (Mileti & Sorensen – 2015, Mileti - 2018).

The goal of this graduate project thesis was to create an emergency notification plan for a small tourist community using a variety of notification channels based on effective message construction and dissemination. This project also was forward looking, finding new ways to disseminate emergency messages. The Police and Fire Chiefs defined the deliverables during an initial SWOT analysis. Deliverables included a one-page flowchart for use by Incident Commanders in the early moments of an incident to reduce warning delays. In addition to reducing the time to transmit messages, training was provided to construct messages which reduced “protective action initiation delay”, by recipients due to unclear and ambiguous messages (Mileti 2018). The project outcome was a plan for building clear and

concise messages, coupled with effective and timely distribution following a flowchart, thereby reducing confusion amongst recipients, and encouraging the taking of immediate protective action.

Presentation Theme:

Research and practice related to emergency notifications by practitioners in the field during evolving “no notice” immediate evacuation events.

List of Collaborators and Advisors:

Dr. Shirley Feldmann-Jensen – CSU Long Beach, Emergency Services Graduate Program Advisor; Chief Robert Leftwich – Town of Truckee Police Department; Chief William Seline – Truckee Fire Protection District