



Portland Bureau of Emergency Management (PBEM) Emergency Preparedness Report – June 2017 Overview

Introduction

Portland is at risk from a range of natural and human-caused hazards, including a massive earthquake. Simple steps taken before a disaster occurs can save lives, protect property, and reduce human suffering. That's been PBEM's message for years. Who's listening? We worked with DHM Research on a survey to understand the readiness of Portland's residents and neighborhoods for a disaster, explore barriers to greater preparedness, and consider motivators to encourage resilience.

What we did

We conducted a telephone survey, online survey, and two focus groups from November 2016 to February 2017. To ensure an accurate sampling of Portland's residents, the surveys and focus groups considered age, ethnicity, and location.

What we learned

- Portlanders are largely aware that a disaster could happen.
 - 74% believe a natural disaster is somewhat or very likely to occur in Portland in the next ten years. However, this awareness may not be enough to drive them to prepare.
 - About half of Portlanders (52%) have made an emergency kit for their household, similar to survey numbers from other parts of the country.
- Portlanders expect to rely on themselves, people in their households, and family or friends first in an emergency situation.
 - Many Portlanders are very confident they can count on household members (66%) or family and friends (58%).
 - Half of Portlanders are confident (50%) they can count on national relief agencies – such as FEMA – in the first three days of a major disaster.
- Although Portlanders are open to the idea of working with their neighbors to be better prepared, there is not a shared understanding of what neighborhood preparedness looks like or what steps need to be taken.
 - Less than one in three Portlanders are uncertain whether their neighborhood is prepared (27%).

- Only 15% of Portlanders have talked to their neighbors about what to do in an emergency.
- Portlanders believe knowing their neighbors is a first step in neighborhood preparedness. Those who are more connected to their neighbors also feel more prepared for emergencies.
- People are unsure about how to start emergency preparedness conversations with their neighbors.
 - Many view these conversations as awkward and worry it might be too much like trying to sell their neighbor something.
 - Regardless of the method, preferences reflect the desire for a simple approach that provides manageable pieces.
- Government officials and other public safety responders are trusted messengers when it comes to emergency preparedness.
- Overall patterns from the research suggest specific vulnerabilities exist related to age, household income, and household composition.
 - Adults over the age of 65 are more likely to live alone and are less likely to feel confident in receiving help from other household members.
 - Residents from lower income households feel less prepared for an emergency.

What we're going to do with the research

PBEM received an increase in the City of Portland's 2017-18 budget to strengthen our community resilience efforts, including funding for two new staff positions to do community outreach and volunteer coordination. The survey results provide effective, research-backed strategies to:

- Direct the work of our community outreach team to increase the size and diversity of our volunteer programs.
- Improve how we recruit and train new Neighborhood Emergency Team (NET) volunteers.
- Shape the messaging used in emergency preparedness media campaigns, including one planned for this fall.
- Revise language in the guidance publications we distribute to the public.
- Write a new curriculum for the current neighborhood-engagement program "Map Your Neighborhood."
- Seek additional partners – including City bureaus and community groups – to strengthen our resilience-building efforts.

We intend to make the most of this research and seek opportunities to update it in the future.

Where to learn more

The complete report and survey results are available at <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/pbem/73802>.