

**RDPO Develops Cutting-Edge Regional Disaster Sanitation Communication Tools**

While the international humanitarian relief sphere has decades of experience, standards, best practices, and tools for managing post-disaster sanitation issues and educating impacted communities on how best to manage human waste, around the U.S. work in this discipline is nascent. This despite some major disasters, especially hurricanes, having rendered portions of water and wastewater systems inoperable for protracted periods in major metropolitan areas, including New Orleans in 2015-2016 post-Katrina and more recently Houston following 2017’s Hurricane Harvey.



Aware of the gap and opportunity back in 2016, Sue Mohnkern, Washington County Public Health, led an RDPO Steering Committee-commissioned multi-disciplinary and multi-jurisdictional task force to develop guidelines for disaster sanitation following a Cascadia Subduction Zone Earthquake.

*Figure 1: This informational sticker goes on a family's alternate toilet for '#2' refuse. There is also a sticker for the bucket intended for pee. The tools promote common practice in post-disaster human waste hygiene.*

In 2017, the technical content was then passed to the RDPO’s multi-jurisdictional Regional Disaster Preparedness Messaging (RDPM) task force, under the initial leadership of Felicia Heaton, formerly of Portland Bureau of Emergency Management, and then to Sue’s colleague, Cynthia Valdivia, a bi-lingual outreach and multi-cultural public educator.

With a small UASI grant, the RDPO hired Portland-based consulting firm, Barney and Worth, Inc., to work with the RDPM in transforming the disaster sanitation guidelines into a catchy and engaging pre- and post- event education campaign and tools, including informational and instructional stickers for “pee and poo buckets”, other printable materials, and social media content. The deliverables of this completed project were presented to an approving Steering Committee on November 6, 2017 and can be downloaded from the RDPO website, with the URL: [www.EmergencyToilet.org](http://www.EmergencyToilet.org).

The RDPM’s next steps include having the tools translated/transcultured to serve non-English-speaking populations in the region and reproducing bucket stickers to distribute to the public via local partners’ public education/outreach programs. Since the work is considered ground-breaking in the U.S., the task force and consultant are looking to give presentations at national water and public health conferences in 2018.

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