

Improving risk communication by understanding the factors that influence the decision to prepare for bushfire

T. Prior and Prof. D. Paton

School of Psychology, University of Tasmania

Dr. A. Cottrell

School of Tropical Environmental Science and Geography

James Cook University, QLD



What is risk communication?

Risk communication is a targeted exchange of information aimed at increasing an individual's ability to cope with the effects of some form of threatening event.

Risk communicators target those people most likely to suffer as a result of the threat. By providing this information, risk communicators attempt to encourage people to prepare in order to minimise the effects of the event, or speed up their recovery after the event. However, each individual makes the decision to prepare based on a huge number of factors.

Methodology

- Survey data collected from 482 residents living in peri-urban locations around Hobart
- Stepwise multiple regression analyses used to identify predictors of preparedness
- Semi-structured interviews conducted with 20 householders provided qualitative data to compliment the regression analyses

Why do we need to understand how people make decisions?

For risk communication information to be effective in encouraging preparation it must focus on those factors that most influence the decision to prepare.

Knowing the factors that most influence the decision to prepare will help to develop risk communication information that is both meaningful (that is easily interpreted) and understandable (that it can be easily acted upon).

Some important factors that influence the decision to prepare

Increase preparedness

intention to prepare

0.302

"I have everything ready to go. All the towels are out, all my clothing is assembled, all the ladders, the sprinkler system is ready to go... and that's how I live most of the year". **Rosemary**

positive outcome expectancy

0.149

"...it makes you shit-scared, but at the same time if you're prepared I believe you can minimise the risk of harm to yourself and to your property". **Cameron**

sense of community

0.147

"...if it wasn't for them I don't think we would have been nearly as proactive, like we probably wouldn't have done anything about it...". **Robyn**

$R^2 = 0.4$



n=482

Decrease preparedness

the cost, time, knowledge to prepare

-0.251

"I'm always complaining that I don't have the time for these things, but I guess you should have time for important stuff like that". **Matt**

having the right resources to prepare

-0.119

"... good, practical how-to information about preparing I suppose. Maybe instances where you hear those stories of houses that were successfully defended, like what happened, what preparation had been done...". **Sonia**

negative outcome expectancy

-0.116

"...we've got two 30 metre trees, and to be honest, if they caught fire, you know and they started throwing stuff everywhere I don't think I'd want to stay and try and defend it". **Ian**