

Hawai'i Disaster Preparedness Statewide Survey Results

Introduction

Market research, using a statewide telephone survey of more than 1,000 residents is supporting this pilot campaign and the overall project. It measured respondent knowledge and awareness about disaster issues, plans and preparedness. The goal of the research is to help determine the messages and methods of communication that will best increase disaster preparedness.

Methodology

- Ward Research Inc. conducted a statewide phone survey on disaster preparedness in December 2011, polling 1,087 residents, including 418 on O'ahu and about 200 each on Maui, the Big Island and Kaua'i. The data assessed residents' level of understanding about preparing for large-scale emergencies.
- Variables such as age, ethnicity and income were weighted to more accurately reflect the 2010 Census. The survey has a margin of error of +/-2.9%.

Disaster Perceptions and Experiences

- Hurricanes are the most common disaster Hawai'i residents have experienced (62%), followed by tsunamis and earthquakes (31% each). Eighty-nine percent of residents say they have experienced a large-scale disaster in their lifetime.
- Loss of property is the top concern when it comes to disasters (24%). Only 2% say they are not concerned at all.
- Residents are most confident about the government handling natural disasters like flooding and fires and least confident about the handling public health disasters.

Disaster Preparedness

- TV is the most common source of disaster preparedness information. More than half of Hawai'i residents currently use radio and TV for disaster updates and information on where to go and what to do (64% and 61% respectively).
- Those who are between the ages of 18-34, and lower income residents (<\$35,000 household income per year) are less likely to have received preparedness information via traditional media like TV and radio.
- Work/school workshops and the Internet are likely to be effective avenues for 18-34-yr-olds regarding disaster preparedness.
- Most residents (91%) say they are likely to prepare for disasters based on guidelines, but they expect government and community organizations to help them prepare. Only 25% of Hawai'i residents say they are "very prepared" for disasters now and 54% say they are "somewhat prepared." Lack of urgency appears to be a common reason for not stocking-up.

- Preparedness generally improves with age — and experience. For example, Kaua‘i residents rate higher in preparedness than folks on O‘ahu and the Big Island. Still, 3 out of 10 residents say they do not have food/water to last 7 days.
- Lack of urgency is a common reason for not taking action. People say they “didn’t think of it,” or “plan to stock up when the need arises.”
- In relation to stocking up on canned goods, 6% say they do not have the money; 13% do not have storage space.

Conclusions

People want to be prepared and tend to be less prepared than they think. Many believe that the government is largely responsible for preparing people for disasters. Those who have heard or seen simple, instructive messages are more likely to be prepared. Two population groups should be targeted specifically: those under 35 years of age and those with lower incomes because mainstream media is not as effective with younger adults or economically disadvantaged populations.

The intended outcome of the campaign is to increase public awareness of what it means to be fully prepared for disasters, and to foster greater individual responsibility for emergency preparedness.