



Intensified information-seeking as a response to a disaster event

Intensified information-seeking is a normal response to a disaster event. It is a coping mechanism in stressful situations (Zhang 2013). During a disaster, people "begin a recursive search for information that can become the basis for new understandings and behavioural norms" (Tierney 2009). For instance, after an earthquake, eyewitnesses rapidly turn to the Internet to find out information about what they felt (Bossu et al. 2014). People's priority during a disaster is to understand the nature of the threat, then they also need recommendations on what they should do for themselves and their family, and then for their pets (Ryan 2012). Information needs during a disaster depend on the onset of the crisis (Ryan 2012). She found that information needs vary between flash floods and slow floods. The type, source and quantity of information needed also vary depending on cultural factors. Wray and Jupka found that in the event of a terrorist attack using plague all citizens had the same needs in terms of provided information (Wray & Jupka 2004). During 2001 UK floods, farmers were also found to have the same informational needs as the rest of the population even though they also have specific needs related to their activity (Hagar 2010). Spence et al. found that women and African Americans aggregated more information than the other groups studied (Spence et al. 2007). Compared to men, women appeared also to need more information about loved-ones safety during a disaster. This has been interpreted as related to the traditional cultural and organizational role of women as responsible for stability of the domestic group and for children (Wiest et al. 1994). This analysis requires more in-depth, geographical and contemporary research. A study comparing Pakistan and the USA showed that in both countries, women are more likely to be responsible for food and water provision, for the care and emotional work within the household, and for the protection of their families in the immediate disaster period (Drolet et al. 2015). The 2005 World Disasters Report pointed out that some informational needs are often neglected. For instance, during a disaster children are often missing information to understand the situation and their parents are too busy or unable to give them an appropriate explanation. It is reported that "an International Federation team, visiting families in Sri Lanka affected by the tsunami, found only few activities to provide information and support to children. Adults are all busy with their own experiences" (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent 2005). In the literature no other socio-cultural differences were found to impact information needs during a disaster. Ryan found that people expected first information about what has happened and what is going to happen, but also about how they should behave and what they should do, and this without mentioning cultural differences in this expectation (Ryan 2012). This lead us to question information needs during the recovery phase.

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Ethnicity](#), [Gender roles](#), [Age-related roles](#)

Disaster Phases: [Response](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [Non-active citizens](#)





Hazards: [Natural hazards](#), [Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations](#), [Man-made intentional hazards](#)

Recommendations:

- [Inform citizens about the risk they may face and about possible actions and measures, they can take to reduce vulnerability and better prepare themselves](#)
- [Use cultural factors to improve the effectiveness of disaster communication](#)

Source

[Deliverable D3.1 "Cultural factors and technologies" \(page 16\)](#)

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