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National Science Foundation
Award #1635593



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Mitigation Messaging and Planning Research From the Mitigation Matters Award Program

Tuesday, August 10, 2021

1:00 to 2:00 p.m. Eastern



JungKyu Rhys Lim,
University of Maryland



Sayma Khajehei,
University of Utah



Maria Watson,
Texas A&M University

In this webinar, researchers share research that examines the persuasive impact of risk communication messages and federal recovery funds on mitigation behavior, along with work highlighting gaps in planning efforts for public housing residents.

Speaker bios: <https://hazards.colorado.edu/training/webinars/mitigation-messaging-and-planning-research-from-the-mitigation-matters-award-program>



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MM 6 Menu

[Abstract](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Method](#)
[Results](#)
[Discussion](#)
[References](#)



Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning for Public Housing in Salt Lake County, Utah

[Sayma Khajehei](#)
 University of Utah

[Divya Chandrasekhar](#)
 University of Utah

Publication Date: 2021

Abstract

Public housing residents and subsidized housing renters face severe challenges in post-disaster housing, but cities with little experience of disasters may have limited knowledge of how to help them. While research on post-disaster recovery policy has grown, we still lack critical understanding of pre-disaster planning for public housing recovery, which can make recovery challenging for socioeconomically vulnerable groups. Using Salt Lake County, UT, as a case study, this research examines pre-disaster policies focused on providing post-disaster housing for public housing residents. Salt Lake County faces a 57% probability of experiencing a 6.75 magnitude earthquake in the next 50 years. We used archival research techniques and semi-structured key informant interviews with local emergency management, city planning, and housing officials. Using qualitative analyses, we examined post-disaster housing plans, planning motivation, challenges, opportunities, and coordination between various entities. Findings suggest that pre-planning for public housing recovery is challenged by the lack of pre-disaster assessments, poor coordination and information-sharing, lack of dedicated funding resources, poor leadership, and issues of trust. Opportunities for pre-planning include building on existing small-scale emergency plans, using existing funds more creatively, creating joint plans for post-disaster public housing recovery, public education on the importance of pre-planning for post-disaster recovery, and reviewing existing response and recovery protocols.



AWARD RECIPIENTS

SAYMA KHAJEHEI

University of Utah

DIVYA CHANDRASEKHAR

University of Utah

AWARD AMOUNT:

\$2,500

FEMA defines mitigation as the effort to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters. Effective mitigation requires that we all understand local risks and invest in long-term planning to reduce risks and enhance community well-being.

PRE-DISASTER RECOVERY PLANNING FOR PUBLIC HOUSING IN SALT LAKE COUNTY, UTAH

SUMMARY

Pre-disaster mitigation and response plans can improve the efficacy and efficiency of post-disaster recovery in communities at risk from natural hazards. But without direct experience of a disaster, such communities may not have the required knowledge or motivation to prepare such plans. This cycle of being unprepared, yet not experienced enough to prepare, can severely undermine the recovery of communities when disasters inevitably strike. The stakes are even higher for socially vulnerable community members, such public housing residents, who may not have enough private resources to compensate for inadequate government preparedness and response.

This research examines the challenges and opportunities of pre-disaster planning for public housing recovery using the case study of Salt Lake County, Utah, which could experience a high-magnitude earthquake in the next 50 years but has not experienced one in recent history. Methods for this study included analyzing seven public housing plans, eight hazard mitigation plans, two disaster preparedness plans, and four disaster response plans adopted by Salt Lake County and its 16 constituent cities as the archival research. Ten semi-structured, open-ended key informant interviews were then conducted with public officials. Study findings show that in pre-disaster planning for public housing recovery is challenged by organizational and funding capacity, leadership, and lack trust. It can, however, be promoted through the creative use of financing, public education, joint action plans, and using smaller-scale disasters to catalyze



Public housing residents in Salt Lake County could be without permanent homes after a large-scale disaster, such as an earthquake. Image Credit: Housing Authority of Salt Lake City.

change. This study calls for action in at-risk communities to conduct pre-disaster planning for post-disaster public housing recovery.

KEY FINDINGS

Pre-planning for public housing recovery is challenged by the lack of pre-disaster assessments, poor coordination and information-sharing, lack of dedicated funding resources, poor leadership, and issues of trust.

Opportunities for pre-disaster planning for public housing recovery include expanding existing small-scale emergency plans,

using existing funds more creatively, developing joint plans for post-disaster public housing recovery, community education on the importance of pre-disaster planning for recovery, and reviewing existing response and recovery protocols.

Even minor post-disaster response and recovery experiences can provide significant opportunities for institutional learning and raising awareness and motivation to do pre-disaster housing recovery planning. At-risk communities would be wise to carefully consider their actions in these moments and use these opportunities to improve their preparedness for the "big one."

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Communities can promote pre-disaster planning for public housing recovery by developing joint plans with other city organizations, involving diverse communities in planning processes, allocating funds for public housing planning, educating the public about mitigation savings, and taking advantage of opportunities to conduct a review of existing response and recovery protocols. Disasters can sometimes be leveraged as a motivator for at-risk communities to conduct such pre-disaster planning.

Actions to raise awareness of the importance of public housing recovery to the community will aid in the investment of community resources in pre-disaster planning and improve recovery outcomes for public housing recovery residents in the aftermath.

STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders who may find this work interesting includes federal, state, and local disaster management agencies, preparedness and city planners, state and local housing departments, community leaders and advocates for housing resiliency.



Salt Lake City and County are located along the Wasatch Fault which could experience a large-magnitude earthquake in the next 50 years. Image Credit: Earthquake Engineering Research Institute, 2015.

Full report: Khajehei, S. & Chandrasekhar, D. (2021). Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning for Public Housing in Salt Lake County, Utah. Natural Hazards Center Mitigation Matters Grant Report Series, 6. Boulder, CO: Natural Hazards Center, University of Colorado Boulder. Available at: <https://hazards.colorado.edu/mitigation-mattersreport/the-art-of-getting-by>

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JungKyu Rhys Lim, University of Maryland
Risk Communication to Motivate Disaster Risk Mitigation



Sayma Khajehei, University of Utah
Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning for Public Housing in Salt Lake County, Utah



Maria Watson, Texas A&M University
The Effect of Federal Recovery Funds on Mitigation Behavior



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Menu

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Webinars
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Investing in infrastructure, such as this waterway built to prevent flooding, is one of the many ways we can mitigate disaster impacts. Source: Shutterstock Images.

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Recordings of past webinars are listed below. For upcoming topics and speakers, [visit the series main page](#).

Mitigation Champions: Making the Case for Risk Reduction and Equitable Disaster Recovery

Tuesday, June 8, 2021 | 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. Eastern

Speakers:

Tom Hughes, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency

David Prevatt, University of Florida

Shannon Van Zandt, Texas A&M University

Annie Vest, Meshek & Associates, LLC

Mapping Risk: The National Risk Index for Natural Hazards

Tuesday, May 11, 2021 | 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. Eastern

Making Mitigation Work Webinar Series

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