



RESEARCH

based in practice. focused on evidence.

Northwest Preparedness & Emergency Response Research Center

In an emergency, communication can become a matter of life or death. That's why the Northwest Center for Public Health Practice (NWCPHP) houses the Northwest Preparedness & Emergency Response Research Center (NWPERRC). NWCPHP was awarded a grant from the CDC to create NWPERRC, which will provide extensive, useful information grounded in practical application based on three projects. The NWPERRC brings together academia, local, and state public health agencies, public and private agencies and organizations, health care providers, public and private-sector partners, and tribal and community organizations to develop systematic, practical strategies.

Project 1 examines effective emergency communications with non-English-speaking populations, looking specifically at 9-1-1 callers.

An emergency call to 9-1-1 is stressful. Now imagine explaining your emergency to an operator who speaks another language.

This study aims to identify language barriers to using phone-based emergency communication and response systems, focusing on vulnerable Limited English Proficiency (LEP) communities.

This research starts with focus groups and a telephone survey. Then, reports from 9-1-1 calls will be analyzed to see if response is slower where there is a language difficulty. For calls where operators identified a language barrier, the taped calls will be listened to. LEP callers will be called and asked whether they understood the information received from the operator.

Project 2 determines effective emergency communication methods between public health and health care providers.

Health care professionals play an important role in public health's emergency preparedness and response infrastructure.

This study will evaluate current and novel communication (fax, e-mail, text messaging) between public health and health care providers to determine the effectiveness of various message delivery systems. Researchers will also compare the effectiveness of communication methods in diverse community types, such as urban and rural.

The results can be used to improve emergency preparedness and response systems by improving communications between public health and health care providers.

Project 3 determines effectiveness of using text-messaging to reach diverse vulnerable populations during and after an emergency.

This project is being led by researchers at Public Health – Seattle & King County.

Text messaging is an intriguing emergency communication channel. Texting is popular with certain populations and text messaging works on a packet-switching network, so texting often works when regular phone transmission lines get jammed. Research has also shown text messages to be persuasive.

The primary aim is to learn about the texting needs of our audiences to ensure texting programs developed and implemented are as effective as possible.

A second aim is to understand the logistical, fiscal, legal, and technical implications for a health department.