Public Safety Education Plan for Vulnerable, At-risk and Multicultural Populations

---

Public Safety Education Advisory
(PSEA)

British Columbia
May 2008

Table of Contents

	TOPIC	PAGE
1.	**INTRODUCTION……**	**1**
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Overview of Public Safety Education Advisory Group	2
1.3	Purpose of Public Safety Education Plan for Vulnerable, At-Risk and Multicultural Population Groups	3
1.4	Related Documents	3
2.	**SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS……**	**5**
2.1	Subject	5
2.2	Audience and Demographics	6
2.3	Mission and Key Objectives	9
3.	**PLANNING……**	**10**
3.1	Messages	10
3.2	Challenges and Opportunities from Key Objectives	11
	3.2.1 Objective: Identify potential key partnerships/stakeholders that serve identified vulnerable, at-risk and multicultural communities	11
	3.2.2 Objective: Research and analyze current public safety education/personal emergency preparedness materials	13
	3.2.3 Objective: Create, adapt or modify existing educational and awareness tools and information	13
	3.2.4 Objective: Make educational and awareness tools more accessible	14
	3.2.5 Objective: Increase networking opportunities for public safety educators	15
3.3	Strategies	16
4.	**IMPLEMENTATION……**	**20**
4.1	Tools	20
4.2	Resources	23
5.	**EVALUATION……**	**24**
5.1	Measurement	24
5.2	Conclusion	24
6.	**REFERENCES……**	**25**
7.	**APPENDICES……**	**27**
7.1	Public Safety Education Advisory Group	27
7.2	Public Safety Education Resource and Information Sharing Resource Matrix	28

Emergency Management BC	
Provincial Emergency Program	Catherine Piazza
Office of the Fire Commissioner	Paula Webber
BC Ministry of Health	Emily Nixon
BC Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance	Chris Curtis
Vancouver Coastal Health Authority	Kirsten Jasper
North Shore Schools Emergency Planning	Bernadette Woit
St John Ambulance	Karen White
Fraser Health Authority	Deirdre McLachlan
E Comm 911	Angela Wilson
B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities	Karen Martin
Canadian Red Cross	Karen Miller
City of New Westminster	Joahanna Sulzenbacher
Coquitlam's HEROS Program	Maureen Cassia
Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy	Mary MacDougall
Lions Bay Emergency Social Services	Sally Pollock
North Shore Emergency Management	Paulette Mossop
Provincial Health Services Authority	Susanne Mackinnon
Salvation Army	John McEwan
Justice Institute of British Columbia	Jeff Cornell

Meeting record and report compiled by Betsy Terpsma for the Public Safety Educational Advisory (PSEA) group

Funding provided under Phase One of a Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) grant through the Provincial Emergency Program, Emergency Management BC.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Imagine a person at home alone when disaster strikes. The power is out. Will they know how to get information? Will they know what to do? Now imagine they are confined to a wheelchair and live in a high rise building. Will they have a plan and resources to survive on their own and to keep safe for at least 72 hours or three days? Will they have a support network in place?

Everyone needs to have a plan to keep themselves safe during an emergency. The Provincial Emergency Program, as part of Emergency Management BC, obtained a Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) grant to support agencies in completing a public safety education plan for vulnerable, at-risk and multicultural populations.

British Columbia (B.C.) is a diverse, multicultural society. The common determinants of vulnerability and "at-risk" highlight the social, economic and physical characteristics of individuals and groups that may suffer greater risk than the general populations in a large scale emergency event. Vulnerable populations may include persons with visible and hidden disabilities, those with multicultural backgrounds and persons in segmented age groups.

The first year planning phase for the JEPP grant involved working with a key stakeholder group designated as the Public Safety Education Advisory (PSEA) to develop the public safety education plan. Participating agencies in the stakeholder group included: B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities, Canadian Red Cross, City of New Westminster, Coquitlam's HEROS program, E Comm 911, Fraser Health Authority, Greater Vancouver Shelter Strategy, Justice Institute of B.C., Ministry of Health, North Shore Schools Emergency Planning, Office of the Fire Commissioner, Salvation Army, St. John Ambulance and Vancouver Coastal Health Authority.[1]

The planning focus outlined in the JEPP grant was to identify, educate and protect the public health and safety of vulnerable, at-risk and multicultural populations before, during and after an event. The aim was to identify key audiences and develop consistent, comprehensive and actionable information about risk potential and personal emergency preparedness and response. This education plan is developed and targeted for agencies already working on emergency preparedness public education for vulnerable, at-risk and multicultural population groups in B.C. and for agencies and organizations who may partner in the future.

The initiative is timely, as agencies work to better understand vulnerability within their communities and stakeholder groups, and plan to reach out to vulnerable, at-risk and multicultural populations.

Part of the interest in working with vulnerable and at-risk communities arises out of large scale disasters around the world such as 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina.[2] Similarly in Canada, weather

[1] See appendix for complete listing of agencies.

[2] Bush GW. Chapter Five: Lessons Learned. The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina. Lessons Learned. Whitehouse Findings. 2005. See www.whitehouse.gov/reports/katrina-lessons-learned/chapter5.html accessed February 1, 2008.

related events such as forest fires and flooding in B.C., the Red River flood in Manitoba and Hurricane Juan on the east coast has emphasized the need to prepare and educate all citizens for disasters.[3] In B.C., preparing for the 2007 freshet brought diverse agencies together to focus on the need to provide outreach to vulnerable populations.[4]

The federal government has also taken an active role in promoting public safety and looking to strengthen our collective understanding of the importance of working with seniors, disability groups, First Nations and others to prepare for emergencies.[5]

Provincially, the B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities is currently leading the Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities Committee and working with the National Inter-Agency Group for Emergency Planning and At-Risk Persons.[6] Recent emergency planning conferences have included sessions for Emergency Managers on Vulnerable Populations.[7]

Emergency programs in many municipalities including Coquitlam, Langley, New Westminster, Vancouver and Victoria have been reaching out to vulnerable and at-risk communities with new training, programs and plans. The Red Cross delivers a multilingual personal disaster preparedness workshop called **SmartStart,** to community groups, caregivers, ESL classes or groups who want to learn together.[8]

1.2 Overview

Working with the Public Safety Education Advisory (PSEA) group is important to the development of the public safety education plan for vulnerable, at-risk and multicultural population groups. The approach has been to better understand the scope of vulnerable populations for outreach and to look at existing emergency public safety education materials and resources. In developing the plan, attention has been given to discussing weaknesses and barriers along with potential strengths and opportunities in B.C.

The PSEA has been meeting on a monthly basis since October 2007. Networking and collaboration are viewed as critical to moving the public safety education plan forward. The one year planning phase will be followed by an implementation phase. The intent of the next phase is for public safety educators to reach out to established partners and new groups and agencies

[3] Nova Scotia. Are you ready? Nova Scotia's Guide to Disaster Preparedness: Tips for Persons with Disabilities. January 2007.

[4] MacKinnon, Susanne. Advanced Planning Unit Southwest Region. Draft 2007 Freshet Vulnerable Populations Review. June 2007.

[5] Public Health Agency of Canada. Seniors during emergencies and disasters: vulnerable, yet resilient. See www.canadian-health-network.ca accessed March 3, 2008.

[6] Martin, Karen. Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. BC Coalition of People with Disabilities.

[7] Pollock, Sally. Session A1 November 21 "Emergency Preparedness and Vulnerable Populations," 2007 Emergency Preparedness Conference. See www.jiB.C..ca/epconference/2007_conference/program.htm.

[8] Canadian Red Cross. SmartStart: Personal Disaster Preparedness. See www.redcross.ca for additional information on this multilingual program available in 17 languages plus an ESL format.

in B.C. who may not have traditionally been involved in emergency preparedness education, using the plan as a basis for understanding and engagement.

Public safety education is ongoing, long-term and strategic. It is the foundation to build on during an emergency or disaster. It includes public awareness, education and outreach activities put in place before a disaster strikes. When people feel informed and empowered, stress and suffering is avoided, damage is minimized and those impacted can come through the recovery period as quickly as possible.

The focus of the education plan and outreach is on prevention and preparedness. While all phases of an emergency need to be recognized and discussed, the assumption is that public safety education will be more effective if done in advance of the emergency or disaster. "Effective public education is critical to protecting public safety and to maintaining stability during an event."[9]

1.3 Purpose of Education Plan

A definition of education states that it encompasses teaching and learning specific skills, and something less tangible, but more profound: the imparting of knowledge, positive judgment and well-developed wisdom.

The public safety education plan considers research, audiences, key message development and strategies for emergency educators and agencies that will address learning and outreach to vulnerable, at-risk and multicultural population groups.

1.4 Related Documents

A **Public Safety Education and Information Sharing Resource Matrix** was developed by the group to provide a snapshot of the variety of materials currently available to educators in B.C., and form a base of research to assist with identifying gaps or inconsistencies in available information. The matrix is attached as an appendix to the plan.

[9] B.C. Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. 2007 JEPP Training and Education Application.

The PSEA group also supports the principle that proven existing materials should be referenced and adapted for outreach to vulnerable, at-risk and multicultural population groups. A recent example is Public Safety Canada's use of **Ontario's Emergency Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities/Special Needs.**[10]

The references at the end of this document provide further context and information for the education plan.

[10] Emergency Management Ontario and Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. Emergency Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities/Special Needs, Queens Printer Ontario 2007. See www.ontario.ca/emo.

2. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

2.1 Subject

Why provide public safety education and promote personal emergency preparedness?
Sixty-one percent of Canadians believe it is important to prepare a family emergency plan and an emergency kit. However, *only one-third of Canadians have taken this action*. Forty-two percent believe that any disaster that happens is likely to be over in a short time, and 43% do not think that their area will be affected soon. Together, these findings clearly point to the need for continuing collaborative outreach and education about public safety emergency preparedness.[11]

Defining vulnerability
Who are vulnerable or "at-risk" citizens? In reviewing literature in North America since 9/11, gulf coast hurricanes, the eastern ice storms and power outages, more information has been published regarding individuals who may be less equipped to deal with an emergency situation. Everyone is vulnerable in an emergency or disaster, but some segments of the population are likely to be more vulnerable than others.

Functional needs
The PSEA adopted the functional needs approach to look at vulnerability. The functional needs framework comes out of the work of Kailes and Enders in the U.S. with their study **Moving Beyond 'Special Needs': A Function Based Framework for Emergency Management and Planning**.[12]

The framework includes people with disabilities along with people who do not identify as having a disability, but have limitations in any of the following key functional areas:

1. Communication needs: limited ability to speak, see and hear, limited ability to speak, read or understand English, limitations in learning and understanding;
2. Medical needs: assistance with bathing or feeding, managing medications, on Dialysis or oxygen, operating power-dependent equipment to sustain life;
3. Independence needs: maintaining functional independence with medical equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, or scooters;
4. Supervision needs: persons with dementia or Alzheimer's, prisoners and unaccompanied children;
5. Transportation needs: persons who cannot drive due to disabilities, age, addictions, legal restrictions, socio-economic factors.

The functional needs approach points to a diverse group of individuals potentially in need of additional assistance before and during emergencies:

- people with disabilities,

[11] Research undertaken by Public Safety Canada in 2007.

[12] Kailes, Isaacson J and Enders, Alexandra. Moving Beyond "Special Needs": A Function Based Framework for Emergency Management and Planning. 2006. J of Disability Policy Studies, special issue: Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response for People with Disabilities: Research, Policy and Practice (in press).

- the elderly or very young,
- people from diverse cultures,
- people with English as a second language, or
- people who are socially isolated or living on fixed incomes without a means of transportation.

Functional needs approach and education plan
With a functional needs approach, one community or one agency is not expected to "do it all." A collaborative approach to public safety education, emergency preparedness and outreach is required to meet the diverse needs of individuals.

Focusing on the functions that contribute to vulnerability, or individual needs, rather than solely on the description of the individual or group at risk, helps in defining audiences and the tools required to reach out to various communities in the education plan.[13]

2.2 Audience and Demographics

In addition to an increase in the intensity and scale of recent disasters around the world, the 2006 census highlights several demographic trends for B.C. with a potential to impact the public safety education plan.[14]

An aging population
The census shows B.C. has an aging population. The median age has increased in B.C. from 35.9 years of age in 1996 to 40.8 years of age in 2006.

Subtopic	Census year		
	2006	2001	1996
Population			
Total population count	4,113,487	3,907,738	3,724,500
Age and sex			
% of the population aged 0 to 14 years	16.5	18.1	19.7
% of the population aged 15 to 64 years	68.9	68.3	67.5
% of the population aged 65 years and over	14.6	13.6	12.8
Median age	40.8	38.4	35.9

[13] Discussion as captured in the Public Safety Advisory Meeting notes, November 16, 2007.

[14] Statistics Canada. 2006 Census of Canada. See www12.statcan.ca/english/census/index.cfm.

While the 2006 population in B.C. over age 65 is 14.6%, it is projected by 2031 that 24% of the population will be over age 65.[15] Life expectancy for men and women in B.C. is also increasing.

Aging and disability
Statistics on the disability community in Canada show that one in five persons may have a disability. As the population ages and lives longer, the chance of having a disability increases. Disability affects people of all ages, but after age 65 about one in three Canadians have developed a disability, and that likelihood continues to increase as we grow older.[16]

Increase in cultural diversity
The percentage of landed immigrants in B.C. has also increased from 24.5% in 1996 to 27.5% in 2006.

Subtopic	Census year		
	2006	2001	1996
Immigration and citizenship			
% immigrants	27.5	26.1	24.5
% recent immigrants (arrived in last 5 years)	4.4	4.9	5.9
% Canadian citizens	92.3	92.2	91.4

Cultural diversity is often measured by mother language, or the first language learned at home in childhood. Fewer persons in B.C. now have English as a mother language. In 1996, 75.5% had English as a mother tongue; in 2006 only 70.6% had English as a mother tongue. The percentage of the population who speak a none-official language (either than English or French at home) has risen from 12.1% in 1996 to15.7% in 2006.

Subtopic	Census year		
	2006	2001	1996
Language			
% of population whose mother tongue is English only	70.6	73.0	75.5
% of population whose mother tongue is	1.3	1.4	1.4

[15] Ministry of Health. A Profile of Seniors in British Columbia. British Columbia 2004. See www.health.gov.B.C..ca/library/publications/year/2004/profile_of_seniors.pdf.

[16] Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Government of Canada. Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2005. See www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/odi/documents/advancingInclusion05/toc.shtml accessed February 4, 2008.

Subtopic	Census year		
	2006	2001	1996
French only			
% of the population whose mother tongue is a non-official language only	26.8	24.3	21.7
% of the population who speak English and/or French most often at home	84.3	86.0	87.9
% of the population who only speak a non-official language most often at home	15.7	14.0	12.1

Within language diversity, there are over 150 nations represented in B.C. by immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006. Countries who contributed high percentages of immigrants in this time period include China, India, Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and the United States.[17] B.C. has a higher portion of Asian mother tongue languages (in particular Cantonese, Mandarin and Punjabi), than any other province in Canada with over 15 percent of the population identifying as having an Asian mother tongue.[18]

New immigrants may be isolated from receiving public safety education because of language or cultural barriers. The administrator of the **SmartStart** emergency preparedness education program for the Red Cross, says that one of the challenges in reaching out to new immigrants is that what they may have learned in their native country about emergency preparedness may be different than what is accepted practice in B.C.[19]

The census shows that the Aboriginal or First Nation population in B.C. is also growing. In 2001 170,025 individuals identified themselves as Aboriginal compared to 196,075 in 2006.[20] This was an increase of 15.3% to represent a total of 5.3% of the B.C. population.

[17] Vancouver Sun Thursday, December 6, 2008 B3

[18] Ministry of Health. A Profile of Seniors in British Columbia. British Columbia 2004. http://www.health.gov.B.C..ca/library/publications/year/2004/profile_of_seniors.pdf

[19] Leung, Kenny. SmartStart presentation to Public Safety Education Advisory group, January 14, 2008.

[20] Aboriginal identity refers to those persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit, and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian, as defined by the *Indian Act* of Canada, and/or those who reported they were members of an Indian band or First Nation. Statistics Canada. 2006 Census of Canada. See www.statcan.ca.

While these identified groups above are growing in B.C., it is important to note they are a heterogeneous population. All groups vary by age and gender, where they live, ethnicity, income, martial status and educational background. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that an exhaustive study of vulnerability and risk needs to include all these factors, while this plan will focus only on selected trends.

An aging population, a projected increase in disabilities and continued immigration leading to cultural diversity – all are trends that will impact the public safety education plan. Communities and organizations must do additional research into the individuals and clients they serve to ensure the method, context, structure, language for public safety educational programs meet their population's needs.

2.3 Mission and Key Objectives

The Public Safety Education Advisory (PSEA) developed the following planning guidelines:

Mission Statement:

The Public Safety Education Advisory (PSEA) will facilitate vulnerable population groups in gaining access to appropriate public safety education materials. [21]

Objectives:

- Identify potential key partnerships/stakeholders that serve identified vulnerable, at-risk and multicultural communities.
- Research and analyze current public safety education/personal emergency preparedness materials.
- Create, adapt or modify existing educational and awareness tools and information.
- Make educational and awareness tools more accessible to identified communities/partners.
- Increase networking opportunities for public safety educators.

For each of the objectives, challenges and opportunities for B.C. will be discussed. As this is an education plan, rather than a step-by-step guide, general strategies and approaches will be identified. Communication tools are listed as part of the implementation of the plan.

[21] Vulnerable populations include people with visible and hidden disabilities, people from different ethic backgrounds and people of all ages. Those with functional needs in hearing, seeing, breathing, walking and mobility, language and communication may have greater challenges in accessing available emergency preparedness, response and recovery education materials. Emergency or disaster situations may create specific vulnerabilities for individuals or groups outside of these identified populations. As captured in the Public Safety Advisory Meeting notes, December 12, 2007.

3. PLANNING

3.1 Messages

Public safety messaging should be simple; include a "call to action;" and focus on the positive. Effective public safety education is ongoing - not a single act. Campaigns need to state the problem and then say how to solve it - over and over again.[22]

When working with vulnerable, at-risk and multicultural populations it is important to engage the audience in message development as well as in testing and distributing the message.

A U.S. report focusing on the disability community recommends forming or folding into an existing structure, for example, a council of emergency managers/educators and disability groups to evaluate personal preparedness material for ease-of-use, feasibility, necessity, as well as accessibility format and methods of dissemination. "Emergency managers need to learn how different … communities communicate (language, style, culture) in order to provide better preparedness materials."[23]

The high level message for the education plan is "be prepared", with a focus on three areas:

1. **Personal Preparedness/Personal Responsibility**
   Every person must have a personal or family emergency plan. To ensure the safety and well-being of you and your family, you should prepare now to take care of your basic needs for at least the first 72 hours following a disaster.

Customize awareness and preparedness messages and materials for specific groups of people. Tailor to audience and personalize the message - Nova Scotia's **Guide to Disaster Preparedness** provides tips for persons with disabilities and is an example of a document prepared to reach out to a specific group.[24]

2. **Organizational Preparedness/Community Responsibility**
   Provincial legislation ensures that local governments and regional districts have municipal or regional emergency plans. To ensure safety and continuity of your organization during an emergency or disaster you must have an operational plan for your staff and your facility.

During the advance planning for freshet 2007, groups like the Vancouver Health Authority and Fraser Health took a lead role in ensuring that they had plans in place to safeguard their

[22] Mileti, Denis S. Public Hazards Communication and Education: the State of the Art. University of Colorado at Boulder.

[23] International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM). Special Needs Committee. Briefing Memo dated July 16, 2007 to Daniel M. Gade, Associate Director for Domestic Policy, Washington DC. See www.iaem.com/committees/SpecialNeeds/documents/IAEM_SN_BriefingMemo071607.pdf accessed January 30, 2008.

[24] Nova Scotia. Are you ready? Nova Scotia's Guide to Disaster Preparedness: Tips for Persons with Disabilities. January 2007.

facilities, staff and clients. They provided key messages to help their clients better prepare for the possibility and impacts of flooding. Organizations that serve vulnerable populations groups will need to develop and effectively communicate operational plans to their key clients.

3. **Role of Government**
   Local governments support the first responders' agencies at emergency events. If the situation escalates and additional help and resources are required, the provincial government supports local government.

During large-scale events, individuals need to understand that emergency services may not be readily available, as increasing demands are placed on responders. It may take emergency workers some time to get to individuals as they help those in most critical need. This message results in a more cooperative relationship with local authorities and enhances their appreciation of the concerns of people with functional needs.

These high level messages emphasize the linkages and shared responsibility between individuals, organizations and government for public safety education.

3.2 Challenges and Opportunities from Key Objectives

The PSEA group mission and objectives provides direction for the education plan. Discussion included strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in B.C. to delivering public safety education.

3.2.1 Objective: Identify Potential Key Partners/Agencies

Given B.C.'s population diversity, there is potentially a large group of agencies supported by the PSEA planning activities. They range from local government to provincial ministries and agencies to private sector companies, non government agencies and volunteer organizations. Some of the key partners include:

Local governments: lead the initial response to emergencies and disasters in their communities and are responsible for the safety of their residents during emergencies. Key partners are emergency program coordinators, emergency social services and community first responder agencies such as fire, ambulance and police.

Provincial ministries and agencies: includes Emergency Management BC (Provincial Emergency Program, Office of the Fire Commissioner and Coroners Office), Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, Ministry of Children and Family Development, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Forests, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Ministry of Health (and Health Authorities).

Federal government agencies: includes Public Safety Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Environment Canada, the RCMP, Canada Border Services Agency and Correctional Service of Canada. [25] These agencies

[25] For a full listing of agencies access the Public Safety Canada website at www.safecanada.ca/menu_e.asp.

have a wide range of public safety education materials from addressing the risks of weather events; to public health plans and safety education.

Private sector: companies like BC Hydro, Terasen Gas and Telus routinely deliver public safety education. BC Hydro partnered with the federal government and St. John Ambulance in 2007 on a broad public safety education campaign aimed at individuals preparing for winter storms called "**72 Hours, Is Your Family Prepared**. "[26]

There is also a range of private sector companies and businesses including safety equipment manufacturers and suppliers that are interested in supporting public safety education related to their business. PSEA group members provided the interesting example of all new cars being sold in Japan are supplied with first aid/emergency kits.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada, the national industry association, works to ensure Canadians have a better understanding of natural disasters and have "been leading efforts to help lessen the impact of disasters on people's lives."[27]

Non-government agencies: work with vulnerable, at-risk populations such as the broad range of organizations represented by the B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities.

The Canadian Red Cross and St. John Ambulance are prominent non-government organizations that provide emergency management expertise and disaster response services and play an important role in public safety education and outreach.

This category also includes agencies that work with multicultural communities in B.C. (SUCCESS and Mosaic), and volunteer organizations that outreach in their communities to individuals such as youth, seniors or the homeless. It also includes organizations that provide community services like Meals on Wheels, medical suppliers, charities, churches and homeless shelters.

Educators and trainers: people working in emergency management. It also includes teachers who deliver public safety education in the school system or in communities.

Media: plays a key role, partially in outreach and education, but largely in response and recovery. In an emergency, people get their information from many sources, including authorities, media and peers. Media are uniquely positioned to reach a large component of the population quickly; ethnic media can assist in getting messages to new immigrants and those not fluent in English.

[26] B.C. Hydro News Release. November 7, 2007 Power Outage kits help British Columbians prepare for storm season. See www.BChydro.com/news/2007/nov/release53989.html accessed March 4, 2008.

[27] Insurance Bureau of Canada. See www.ibc.ca/en/Natural_Disasters/ accessed March 27, 2008.

Challenges
Consistency of messaging is a challenge when so many diverse agencies and players are involved in public safety education. How do agencies coordinate messages? Where to start outreach?

Opportunities

- Build on key contacts of agencies already working in the public education and emergency management field such as Emergency Management BC, the Justice Institute of B.C. and the Red Cross.

- Use what already exists as the standards; i.e. promote the B.C. Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS) and terminology.

- Partner with agencies that are already engaged in the process of providing public safety information to people with functional needs such as health authorities, B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities and First Nations' Emergency Services Society of British Columbia (FNESS).

3.2.2 Objective: Research and analyze current materials

There is an extensive range of public safety education material available, especially in print format. Internet means that individuals and organizations can research documents from around the world.

Challenges
For educators and those working in the emergency management field, it is a challenge keeping up-to-date on the range of public safety information that is available. How does an individual or an organization find the most current and relevant information?

Opportunities

- Establish a B.C. public safety education web site with links to research and education, upcoming events and other useful sites.

- Do further research into potential gaps in information for B.C.

3.2.3 Objective: Create, adapt or modify existing materials/tools

Why reinvent the wheel? There are existing materials and programs that support the needs of communities and agencies in B.C. such as those championed by Emergency Management BC, Public Safety Canada and St. John Ambulance.

Challenges
There is currently no process to promote synergy, collaborate on development and encourage consistency in public safety education materials.

More research is required as to what materials/tools work best for identified audiences, along with best approaches for packaging and delivery. Social marketing research

suggests that providing information in a brochure or fact sheet alone is not enough: the challenge is to remove barriers and provide incentives for people to act.[28]

Opportunities
All levels of government already provide and promote access to public safety and preparedness information. Groups need to work with government to produce and distribute new materials.

- To improve the consistency of messages around hazard and risk in B.C., investigate the feasibility of producing a B.C. version of the U.S. guide **"Talking about Disaster: Guide for Standard Messages**."[29]

- Explore if the PSEA or another existing group are willing to work with disability, cultural, and other groups to review current personal emergency preparedness materials for accuracy, applicability for B.C., and ease-of-use.

- Produce a "best practices guide" with recommendations on the development of public safety education materials in alternate formats, such as multiple languages or simple graphics.

3.2.4 Objective: Make materials/tools more accessible

Make targeted materials and tools for identified audiences (which may include: children and youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, multicultural groups, First Nations, health care and home care providers) more accessible through available distribution networks.

Challenges
This is a very large group of target audiences which may require different means to access information.

Opportunities
Given the demographics in B.C., there is an opportunity to focus on making materials and tools more accessible to the disability community, seniors and multicultural audiences. Working with these groups will also address broader areas in the functional needs framework such as medical needs, supervision and communication.

- **Seniors:** outreach to existing seniors organizations and continue working with the Ministry of Health. Example like, **Personal Preparedness Tip for People with Disabilities**, develop **Personal Preparedness Tips for Seniors**, plus a strategy to do outreach.

[28] McKenzie-Mohr, Doug. Fostering Sustainable Behavior. See www.cbsm.com/ accessed March 4, 2008.

[29] American Red Cross. Talking About Disaster: Guide for Standard Messages. Washington, D.C. March 2007. See www.redcross.org/disaster/disasterguide/ accessed February 11, 2008.

- **Persons with disabilities**: continue to work with the B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities as they move forward developing tools and guides. Also access the resources of the Provincial Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to assist with the promotion of the tools already developed.

- **Cultural groups/immigrants**: contact S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and Mosaic to explore ways to increase public safety and emergency preparedness materials and messages for immigrants and ethnic groups in B.C.

  The Red Cross **SmartStart** program is already well established in working with multicultural groups to deliver emergency preparedness education. Work with the Red Cross to look at ways to promote **SmartStart** and continue translation and program delivery in more languages. Explore options to make the program available outside of Metro Vancouver.

- **First Nations**: contact First Nations Emergency Services Society of British Columbia (FNESS) to see if there are opportunities to make existing public safety materials more accessible through their training and education programs.

- **Health care/home care providers**: in addition to the Ministry of Health, continue networking with health authorities and outreach to Community Living B.C. and home care providers to improve access to educational materials for their clients.

Two other groups should be included to assist in making tools more accessible:

- **Media**: government and disability organizations should work more closely with media to put emergency protocols in place. This could include providing open captioning during emergencies and exploring new technologies that may be coming on line to assist with notifying hearing and vision impaired audiences. Encourage community and agency engagement with their local media.

- **Children and youth**: explore opportunities to increase public safety/emergency preparedness information in schools. Governments should continue to use opportunities like Emergency Preparedness Week to engage schools in personal emergency preparedness, and emphasize the importance of emergency plans and supplies for schools.

  Develop a B.C. Public Schools Teacher's Resource through the B.C. **Safe Schools Program** to provide consistent and well researched personal emergency preparedness and hazard awareness. Showcase the existing school program in B.C.- **North Shore Schools Emergency Preparedness Program.**

3.2.5 Objective: Increase networking opportunities for public safety educators

Increase opportunities for public safety educators in B.C. to network and exchange or share ideas.

Challenges
Like audiences, public safety educators are a diverse group made up of emergency coordinators, first responders, non-government organization representatives, teachers, and government and agency representatives.

Opportunities

- Explore the feasibility of developing ongoing communication tools and library/reference resources such as an internet or intranet web site.
- Continue the PSEA group meetings with the goal of linking with an existing group or finding a sponsor.
- Continue PSEA information sharing via email and bring forward ideas for training, conferences and workshops.

3.3 Strategies

The public safety education plan supports building beneficial relationships and ongoing collaboration to develop public safety education materials that will better prepare individuals and organizations for the possibility of an emergency or disaster. Recommended approaches:

Liaise with community groups/agencies to develop and promote public safety education messages
Community partnerships, collaborative product development and problem solving are crucial to reaching out to non-traditional and hard to reach population sub groups. As noted in one U.S. report, while "some local emergency management agencies are able to identify people in their community with disabilities or other special needs, most generally have limited resources to actually reach them. State and national disability organizations have the resources to communicate, but have limited access to local emergency management protocols concerning the individual."[30]

Similarly a Gulf Coast hurricane report recommends using focus groups to prepare communications materials in advance and ensuring that they are understandable for culturally and educationally diverse populations.[31]

[30] International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM). Special Needs Committee. Briefing Memo dated July 16, 2007 to Daniel M. Gade, Associate Director for Domestic Policy, Washington DC. See www.iaem.com/committees/SpecialNeeds/documents/IAEM_SN_BriefingMemo071607.pdf accessed January 30, 2008.

[31] National Environmental Justice Advisory Council. The 2005 Gulf Coast Hurricanes and Vulnerable populations – Recommendations for future disaster preparedness/response. August 2006.

Disseminate information on public safety several times a year
Continue disseminating public safety information often, using as many communications tools as possible. Government agencies need to take the lead on this initiative, but in a cooperative approach to education. Many agencies can assist in distributing messages to different audiences.

At a minimum, there are opportunities to disseminate public safety information during Emergency Preparedness Week (EP Week), prior to severe weather season or occurrence, (spring freshet, for example), and when a disaster occurs.

Do not rely solely on the internet
A U.S. report looking at vulnerable populations warns against over-reliance on the web.[32] Research for the PSEA shows that there is a large variety of public safety information available on the internet, however not everyone owns, or has access to a computer. The very groups that the education plan is reaching out to, including seniors and new immigrants, make them more likely to have limited internet access.

Face to face communication on public safety and emergency preparedness
Face to face, direct communication is often the most effective means of getting individuals or agencies to take action. Research into barriers, looking at ways to change behavior, shows that messages are more likely to be received and acted upon if they are delivered in person and are accompanied by a personal commitment to take action.[33]

Representatives within organizations need to champion public safety education. People and organizations are more likely to listen and take action if it is someone they know and trust. How powerful to have a person in a wheelchair delivering a personal preparedness seminar to a disability organization or a senior from the Indo-Canadian community presenting to an Indo-Canadian audience?

Expand emergency planning education in schools
Youth who are inspired by a classroom teacher or representative take their learning home and pass it along to family members. Continue to promote emergency preparedness education to schools by offering promotions during EP Week and focus on developing teacher's resource materials through the **B.C. Safe Schools Program**.[34] Explore options to include public safety education and personal preparedness as part of the curriculum and to support earthquake, lockdown and fire drills in B.C. schools.

---

www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/publications/ej/nejac/gulf-coast-recomm-9-27-06.pdf P. 16 accessed February 1, 2008.

[32] National Environmental Justice Advisory Council. The 2005 Gulf Coast Hurricanes and Vulnerable populations – Recommendations for future disaster preparedness/response. August 2006. www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/publications/ej/nejac/gulf-coast-recomm-9-27-06.pdf P. 15 accessed February 1, 2008.

[33] McKenzie-Mohr, Doug. Fostering Sustainable Behaviour. See www.cbsm.com/ accessed March 4, 2008.

[34] The BC Safe Streets and Safe Schools Grant Program provides support to schools and communities for strategies that enhance public safety. See www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/community_programs/crime/safe.htm.

Coordinate hazard, risk and emergency preparedness messages
Coordination of public safety messaging is an issue. Messaging used between agencies and organizations can be conflicting or difficult to understand. The intended audience may be different, for example a technical article for an emergency management audience is not suitable for reprinting in a community newsletter.

Explore the feasibility of producing a B.C. version of the U.S. guide **Talking About Disaster: Guide for Standard Messages**. The content is in the public domain and developed by a number of organizations working with the American Red Cross. A similar guide with tailored messages for hazards and risks relevant to B.C. would be useful.

Accept diversity of approaches/formats to reach different audiences
As the outreach to different agencies and groups widens, messages will need to be delivered in various formats which can lead to positive outcomes.

Promote existing public safety programs and materials
There are numerous examples of existing proven programs and materials that can be promoted and adapted. When doing outreach to new organizations, put together a package of basic public safety information including Emergency Management BC and Public Safety Canada materials. Include **Help/OK** signs, identified by the PSEA as a useful resource that is currently underutilized.

Develop new materials to fill gaps
Explore if the PSEA or other existing groups will work with disability groups, multicultural groups and others to evaluate current personal preparedness materials for accuracy, relevance in B.C., ease-of-use and information gaps. Current gaps include: information for seniors, translations of existing information into multiple languages commonly used in B.C. and additional simple graphic materials.

One specific PSEA suggestion is for Emergency Social Services (ESS) and disability organizations to develop a personal *Emergency Communication* binder using simple graphics. Such a binder would have multiple uses for response agencies and would assist individuals with communication challenges.

Research communication barriers for vulnerable, at-risk and multicultural communities
This plan would benefit from more understanding of the communication barriers that exist with vulnerable population groups. For example, people who are living on a fixed income may be unable to purchase emergency supplies. How can educators and organizations remove these barriers and reach out to people?

Here is one innovative example of how organizations can work together to remove barriers. As part of the advertising campaign to prepare families for winter storm season by purchasing safety kits, the Salvation Army agreed to distribute any extra safety kits to low income families in the community.[35]

Promote a functional needs approach to emergency management

[35] McEwan, John. Comments at the Public Safety Education Advisory Meeting, January 14, 2008.

Emergency planners need to continue promoting a functional needs approach to emergency management and open the lines of communication with local groups that work with vulnerable populations (service providers, charity and volunteer organizations). Which organizations are working in their community? How can they establish relationships and share information? Encourage collaboration in events, training and exercises.

Network with public safety educators
Continue the PSEA networking. Consider hosting an internet or intranet site for continued sharing of information and tool kits for agency and organizational use. This could also be a home for the **Resource and Information Sharing Matrix** and links to key reports and research.

Recognize need to communicate operational emergency planning
Various groups need to have a basic understanding of the emergency planning already in place plus the support provided to them by first responder groups, the various levels of government, and agencies before, during and after an emergency.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Tools

Using a combination of tools and communication methods is more effective in reaching varied groups of people. As stated in one of the special needs reports from the U.S.: "The more diverse communities become, the more communication needs are identified and must be addressed with a variety of methods, modalities and tools."[36]

In preparing public safety information, educators and agencies need to provide as many alternative formats as possible. Here is a list of some key tools to assist in outreach:

- **Print**
  Print materials range from simple fact-sheets and signs, to multi-colour brochures and reports.
  - Consider materials in large type for communicating with a wider audience.
  - Consider 16 pt font and black print on a white background for vision impaired audiences.
  - Use simple graphics or cartoons as an alternate to the printed word for children or individuals with learning disabilities or English as a second language.
  - Consider Braille for vision impaired.

- **Multi-lingual**
  - Consider translating materials into other languages. Establish which languages are most useful in your community, organization or agency.
  - Arrange for translators in alternate languages.
  - Find people within your organization that have language resources and can assist with communication.

- **Audio**
  - Consider audiotape, DVD, pre-recorded messages (for radio, internet and telephone information lines).

- **Internet/email**
  - Maintain a web site with print information, and consider alternate formats. A game, or a quiz, posted to the web has the ability to reach out and capture a different audience.
  - Consider blogs and direct email to share information and updates.
  - Internet sites should provide links to key web sites such as: local government authority, Emergency Management BC, Public Safety Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada and Environment Canada.

[36] International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM). Special Needs Committee. Briefing Memo dated July 16, 2007 to Daniel M. Gade, Associate Director for Domestic Policy, Washington DC. See www.iaem.com/committees/SpecialNeeds/documents/IAEM_SN_BriefingMemo071607.pdf accessed January 30, 2008.

- **Alerts**
  - Explore text messaging and other technologies to provide basic safety information and alert people to emergencies for pagers, cell phones and Blackberries.

- **Telephones/information lines**
  - Provide TTY or TTD[37] numbers for information for deaf and hearing impaired audiences where possible
  - Explore a reverse 911 system and alternate phone numbers for information like the 211 information line for government agencies.
  - Heighten awareness of existing key public information lines like B.C. Nurseline.[38]
  - For Metro Vancouver, the Sunshine Coast and Whistler areas continue to emphasize that E-Comm's 9-1-1 line must be kept open for emergency use only.[39]

- **Media**
  - Prepare public safety information in advance for use by media.
  - Prepare public safety stories with a community focus that are of interest to local print media, especially if accompanied by a photo. Television stations look for breaking news accompanied by pictures.
  - Consider creating a story with a new angle or innovative technology that is of special interest.
  - Remember, radio stations are often willing to broadcast public service announcements.

- **Interpreters**
  - Make arrangements for using qualified sign language interpreters to assist in broadcasting public safety information to media or have them available at Reception Centres to assist with face-to-face communication.
  - Obtain a copy of the Translation Guide for Emergency Social Services.[40] The guide contains several basic questions or statements commonly used in the provision of Emergency Social Services which have been translated from English into sixteen other languages.

---

[37] A TTY or TDD is a portable keyboard device that enables a deaf, hard of hearing or speech disabled person to communicate using the telephone network.

[38] BC NurseLine provides 24-hour, confidential health information and advice. See www.bchealthguide.org/nurseline.stm for addition information. Also provides services for the deaf and hard of hearing.

[39] E-Comm's 9-1-1 service provides dispatch for police, fire and ambulance for Metro Vancouver, Sunshine Coast and Whistler. See www.ecomm911.ca/9-1-1/ for additional information.

[40] New Westminster ESS Program, ESS Office and the Emergency Social Services Association Translation Guide for Emergency Social Services. See www.ess.bc.ca/docs/ESS_Translation_Guide.pdf.

Simple messages

- Repeat the most essential public safety messages frequently, in a simple format, for persons with cognitive disabilities.
- Support words with simple graphics.

- **Message boards**
  - Explore alternate ways to distribute public safety messages i.e. electronic message boards in public places such as Airports, Skytrains and B.C. highways.

- **Displays**
  - Create a display or poster with a public safety theme.

- **Public service announcements**
  - Explore opportunities for advertising and public service announcements with other agencies that may be willing to distribute public safety information. Don't just rely on media.

- **Newsletters/mailings**
  - Approach organizations and businesses that have newsletters and other means of communicating with their clients. Ask if they could feature a piece on personal preparedness or publicize a new training course or safety kit. For example, in preparing for the 2007 freshet TELUS and Terasen Gas included proactive flood preparedness messages to their customers in mailings.

- **Public and community spokesperson(s)**
  - Find a public safety advocate spokesperson within your organization and work with them to develop simple, proactive messages.
  - If you have representative(s) working in the community and meet face-to-face with individuals, provide them with public safety messages and materials to distribute.

- **Speakers**
  - Use the expertise already available in the community and invite a public safety educator or emergency manager to a meeting or classroom to speak on a public safety topic.

- **Neighbourhood emergency preparedness**
  - Promote a community support network and or buddy system in your community.
  - During an emergency, if electric power supply is affected, door-to-door contact may be an essential means of communication.

- **Amateur radio**
  Amateur radio networks are an important resource to communicate if telephone lines are down or congested with traffic. Amateur radio can transmit voice messages as well as Morse code.
  - Look for ways to promote the use of amateur radio in the vulnerable, at-risk and multicultural populations.

For those interested in further research into tools and communication methods, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network in the U.S. has produced a comprehensive list of recommendations looking at television, telephone, internet, wireless pagers, radio public address systems and other public message displays.[41]

Window of opportunity
As described in one report, the golden rule of public safety and emergency education: "all the sophisticated materials and behavior modification techniques do not have the force of one 'good' disaster to change both what people think, their behavior, and even public policy…." During the window of opportunity that opens following a large scale emergency event, abundant information will increase the chances for changing what people think and how they behave.[42]

However, people are more likely to take action when public educators have worked to make sure the problem is recognized, the solution is known, and the advocates are in place. Do not wait for the window to open; build a sustained education program beforehand.

4.2 Resources

Government funding and staffing resources are required to bring about implementation of the Public Safety Education Plan. Continued support and leadership from Emergency Management BC is mandatory.

Second year funding by JEPP would enable the PSEA group to continue to meet and network. It would allow the agencies to implement the outreach portion of the Public Safety Education Plan and to further develop and promote new education materials and tools.

The PSEA group should actively partner and support the work of Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities Committee who is already working to develop new tools.

[41] Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network. Emergency Preparedness and Emergency Communication Access. Lessons Learned Since 9/11 and Recommendations. December 2004.

[42] Denis S. Mileti. Public Hazards Communication and Education: the State of the Art. University of Colorado at Boulder.

5. EVALUATION

5.1 Measurement

Success of the Public Safety Education Plan will be measured by acquiring appropriate resources to implement and sustain the plan.

Stakeholder buy-in will be measured by the continuation of work with the PSEA group and introduction of new members in key areas.

The PSEA group to establish benchmarks for outreach to vulnerable, at-risk and multicultural groups such as:

- the number of contacts with new agencies;
- the preparation and dissemination of collaboratively developed materials; and
- the successful adaptation or translation of existing materials.

Finally, revisit and revise the education plan on a regular basis as strategies are implemented and new approaches and partners are developed.

5.2 Conclusion

A collaborative approach to public safety education and emergency preparedness awareness and outreach is required to meet the diverse needs of people in B.C. The message is straight-forward for individuals and agencies: *be prepared*. However, there can not be one agency or one action to deliver the education, but rather a continuation of multiple agencies working cooperatively on multiple actions.

In the end, if the public education plan is effective in providing guidance, the person at home alone in a wheelchair when disaster strikes will feel informed and empowered. They will have a plan and be prepared to survive on their own for at least 72 hours or three days. They will know where to go to get information. They will have a personal and community support network in place. In the end they will respond appropriately and recover sooner from disaster.

6. REFERENCES

American Red Cross. Talking About Disaster: Guide for Standard Messages. Washington, D.C., 2007.

Bush GW. Chapter Five: Lessons Learned. The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina. Lessons Learned. Whitehouse Findings. 2005. www.whitehouse.gov/reports/katrina-lessons-learned/chapter5.html accessed February 1, 2008.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network. Emergency Preparedness and Emergency Communication Access. Lessons Learned Since 9/11 and Recommendations. December 2004.

Emergency Management BC. Personal Preparedness Tips for People with Disabilities. February 2006.

Emergency Management Ontario and Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. Emergency Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities/Special Needs, Queens Printer Ontario 2007.

Gibson, Mary Jo, and Hayunga, Michelle. We Can Do Better: Lessons Learned for Protecting Older Persons in Disaster. AARP Public Policy Institute. 2006.

Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Government of Canada. Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2005. See www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/odi/documents/advancingInclusion05/toc.shtml accessed February 4, 2008.

International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM). Special Needs Committee. Briefing Memo dated July 16, 2007 to Daniel M. Gade, Associate Director for Domestic Policy, Washington DC. www.iaem.com/committees/SpecialNeeds/documents/IAEM_SN_BriefingMemo071607.pdf accessed January 30, 2008.

Kailes, Isaacson J and Enders, Alexandra. Moving Beyond “Special Needs”: A Function Based Framework for Emergency Management and Planning. 2006. J of Disability Policy Studies, special issue: Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response for People with Disabilities: Research, Policy and Practice (in press).

Lindsay, John. Vulnerability – Identifying a Collective Responsibility for Individual Safety. Draft report prepared for the Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response, Public Health Agency of Canada. 2007.

Mackinnon, Susanne. Advanced Planning Unit Southwest Region, Draft 2007 Freshet Vulnerable Populations Review. June 2007.

Mileti, Denis S. Public Hazards Communication and Education: the State of the Art. University of Colorado at Boulder.

Ministry of Health. A Profile of Seniors in British Columbia. British Columbia 2004.

National Organization on Disability. Emergency Preparedness Initiative. Guide on the Special Needs of People with Disabilities for Emergency Managers, Planners and Responders.

National Organization on Disability. Report on Special Needs Assessment for Katrina Evacuees (SNAKE) Project.

National Environmental Justice Advisory Council. The 2005 Gulf Coast Hurricanes and Vulnerable populations – Recommendations for future disaster preparedness/response. August 2006. www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/publications/ej/nejac/gulf-coast-recomm-9-27-06.pdf Accessed February 1, 2008.

New Westminster ESS Program, ESS Office and the Emergency Social Services Association Translation Guide for Emergency Social Services. See www.ess.bc.ca/docs/ESS_Translation_Guide.pdf.

Nova Scotia. Are you ready? Nova Scotia's Guide to Disaster Preparedness: Tips for Persons with Disabilities. January 2007.

Public Health Agency of Canada. Building a Global Framework to Address the Needs and Contributions of Older People in Emergencies. A Report based on the 2007 Winnipeg International Workshop on Seniors and Emergency Preparedness. Winnipeg, Manitoba. February 6 – 9, 2007.

Statistics Canada. 2006 Census of Canada. www12.statcan.ca/english/census/index.cfm accessed February

Public Safety Education Resource and Information Sharing Matrix

Appendix posted separately