



National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences
Your Environment. Your Health.



EJ and Natural Disasters Report

Tim Fields and Joy Lee

National Clearinghouse for Worker Safety
and Health

EJ and Natural Disasters Committee

- Brings Federal officials together to:
 - Assess major EJ issues as it relates to natural disasters
 - Identify time sensitive solutions to address natural disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery in vulnerable, overburdened, and underserved communities
 - Ensure that the interests of Federal agencies are addressed, and that appropriate Federal EJ policies, programs, and activities are implemented



EJ and Natural Disasters Virtual Town Hall Meetings

- 3 Virtual Regional Meetings
 - Southeast and Caribbean Basin (January 27, 2021)
 - Gulf Coast (February 24, 2021)
 - West, Southwest, Rocky Mountains, and Plains Regions (March 29, 2021)

https://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/events/pastmtg/hazmat/2021/ej_town_halls/index.cfm

EJ and Natural Disasters Town Hall Meetings

- Purpose

- To gain a better understanding of how natural disasters and COVID-19 impact minority, low-income, vulnerable, overburdened, and underserved communities.
- Identify how the Federal government can better provide support to these communities to prepare and respond to their needs before, during, and after natural disasters



- Goal

- Gather lessons learned and best practices from on the ground voices.
- Identify action steps which the Federal government can work on to better assist vulnerable, overburdened, and underserved communities.
- Identify concrete action items, such as specific projects, that the Federal government can work on to meet the EJ concerns and needs of these communities.

EJ and Natural Disasters Town Hall Meetings

Methodology

- Weekly Planning Committee Meetings
 - EJ and Natural Disasters Committee members, Regional Federal staff, NEJAC members, members of the community, academia, and worker organizations

Format

- 5-8 minute presentations from regional Federal agency and community representatives
- Breakout groups to allow for participants to share thoughts and experiences

Disaster Preparedness and Response Training

- Offered to interested community members, grassroots organizations, local and state governments, and volunteers in each region.
- Conducted by WTP grantees and aimed to provide a general awareness about how to safely respond to disasters.
- Content about preparedness, mental health resilience, and response as it related to major themes in their regions.



EJ and Natural Disasters Committee Output

- A final report that:
 - Summarizes major EJ concerns as it relates to disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery as shared by stakeholders
 - Defines general principles to the Federal government on how to address EJ concerns in overburdened and underserved communities related to natural disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery



Major Findings

Natural disasters can have devastating consequences and leave lasting damage in vulnerable, overburdened, and underserved communities.
Some major findings are:



General Principles

The report details general principles to better address EJ issues in the context of disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. **Some general principles include:**

General

- Reach out, listen to, and partner with frontline, grassroots, and faith-based communities, and engage in periodic, strategic disaster response planning and training with community stakeholders.
- Ensure clear pathway for communication by carefully considering language, methods of outreach, and cultural sensitivity when reaching out to communities.

Preparedness and Mitigation

- Participate in local emergency response exercises that include community residents and state, local, and Tribal officials
- Focus on prevention by looking at current policies and regulations that affect the environment, housing, and health

“Neighborhood organizations such as churches should become more involved in promoting educational messages about emergency preparedness.”
-Town Hall Meeting Participant

“Programs developed by the Federal government needs to be culturally and linguistically appropriate to the community.”
-Town Hall Meeting Participant

General Principles

The report details general principles to better address EJ issues in the context of disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. **Some general principles include:**

"We need to address structural racism structural inequities that exists within our agencies within the government within institutions that are responsible for assisting communities to respond to these events."

-Town Hall Meeting Participant

Response

- Take into consideration other issues that may complicate or delay disaster response and recovery activities in EJ communities
- Work with state, local, and Tribal governments to establish communication centers or hubs

Recovery

- Compile and share information and resources about natural disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation from all Federal agencies with the public in easily accessible platforms
- Fund worker training programs for EJ communities that places an emphasis on safety and health

Next Steps

- Continue to engage stakeholders in conferences and meetings
- Prepare implementation plan to work on general principles shared in the report





Questions?

Tim Fields (tfields@michaeldbaker.com)
Joy Lee (jlee@michaeldbaker.com)