Information seeking in a disaster

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What the literature says

- People hear/see and then confirm
- Rural people turn to radio and each other
- Urban people turn to television
- All use mobiles extensively
- Web/social media not yet top of mind
- Very few studies post-smartphone
First research phase - interviews

- Four locations chosen for disaster type
  - St George, Qld – slow flood
  - Toowoomba, Qld – flash flood
  - Airlie Beach, Qld – Cyclone Ului
  - Gerogery, NSW – bushfire
  (All smaller, local disasters, none catastrophic)

- 51 people interviewed
- October 2010-July 2011
- Convenience sampling
- Shortage of under 25s
- Shortage of ‘battlers’ and CALD respondents
- Rich data!
Interview findings

- Different info seeking for each disaster, possibly relating to disaster timing fast/slow?
- Rural residents – BOM for floods, neighbours/families via mobile, f2f, radio
- Urban – friends/ neighbours/family via mobile, f2f and email, television
- Previous experience of others in slow moving disasters/floods was important
- No time to listen to radio in bushfire

Second research phase - survey

- Web-based…
- …and letter box drop of 2000 hard copies in ‘battler’ suburbs in Toowoomba/Brisbane
- 302 responses – 277 electronic, 25 hard copy
- 246 responses from Australia
- Asked what DID you do/what WOULD you do
- August/September 2012
- Still preparing data for analysis
Preliminary survey results

- 302 responses
- 79.8% Australian
- Majority of Oz respondents Queenslanders
- 79.6% female
- 55% experienced disaster in past two years
- 82.5% of the experienced were via floods
- 6.9% younger than 25
- 19.7% 25-39 years
- 39.4% 40-55 years
- 26.6% 56-70 years
- 7.3% 71 years or older

How they first heard:
- 19.2% learned about disaster from other people
- 18% from TV
- 16.9% via radio
- 15.4% visuals - seeing smoke, water etc
- 1.9% via agency social media
- 2.6% via agency or government website
Revised survey results

Where did they go then?
- 27.1% News or weather website
- 18.8% radio
- 13.2% agency or council website
- 11.3% television
- 5.3% agency social media

Main sources of info? A toolkit, but ‘very important’ and ‘most important’ were:
- 75.4% news or weather website
- 73.4% radio
- 72.6% television
- 68.8% visuals
- 68.1% other people by voice or face to face
- 58.2% agency phone or text message
- 52.8% agency or council website
- 43% contact with friends/family via email, social media
- 41.8% agency/council social media
- 36.3% contacts in agencies
- 27.5% newspapers
Preliminary survey results

- Contact with friends and family?
  - 45.9% mobile phone voice calls
  - 18.4% landline
  - 16.4% text
  - 11.9% face to face
  - 5.3% social media
  - 2% email

Contact with friends and family when you are outside the disaster zone?
- 72.3% had contacted friends/family who were in a disaster zone in past two years. This is how they did it:
  - 38.6% via mobile voice
  - 22.2% via landline
  - 19.3% via text
  - 9.1% via social media
  - 7.4% via email
  - 4.4% via other people, Skype, police or agency
## Preliminary survey results

### Slow flood vs. Flash flood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Slow flood</th>
<th>Flash flood</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respondents</strong></td>
<td>40 respondents, 62.5% urban</td>
<td>83 respondents, 48.2% regional, 41% urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learned about it via:</strong></td>
<td>- television 27.5%</td>
<td>- Visuals 24.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- radio 25%</td>
<td>- Other people direct 20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- other people direct 15%</td>
<td>- Television 14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Then:</strong></td>
<td>- News or weather website 25%</td>
<td>- News or weather website 34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Emergency agency/council website 17.5%</td>
<td>- Radio 22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Television 17.5%</td>
<td>- Television 14.6%</td>
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### Main sources ('very' and 'most important')

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slow flood</th>
<th>Flash flood</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Television</strong></td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergency agency/council website</strong></td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>News or weather website</strong></td>
<td>72.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Radio</strong></td>
<td>72.9%</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social media (includes email)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Official pages/accounts</strong></td>
<td>45.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friends/relatives</strong></td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>News or weather website</strong></td>
<td>78.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Radio</strong></td>
<td>73.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Television</strong></td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis to be done

- Age and gender
- Disaster experience
- Time taken to look for information
- Those who reported their experience against those who reported their intentions
- What they think others would do in the same situation
- Location
- Exploratory analysis of Europe vs Australia (small European sample)

What does it mean?

- Mobile phones critical to disaster communication
- WOM, prior experience needs to be tapped into…
- …so we need to proactively get people onto social media
- Radio should be central, used more carefully
- Television too – needs to be supplied more footage and story ideas to prevent switch off
- Visuals important, disaster location key information – maps should be central to most disaster communication
Questions?

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