

Say it Loud and Clear: Understanding Risk Communication in Alberta's Municipalities

This study intends to make a key contribution to evidence-based policy development to bolster risk knowledge — and its effective communication — to Albertans.



Five Case Studies

The team selected five case studies based on municipal size, known risk to natural hazards, and recent major disaster events.

1

Canmore

- Southern Alberta floods (June 2013)

2

Calgary

- Southern Alberta floods (June 2013)

3

High River

- Southern Alberta floods (June 2013)

4

Fort Vermilion

- Peace River Ice-Jam/Flood (April 2020)
- Floods (July 2011)

5

Fort McMurray

- Fort McMurray wildfires (May 2016)
- Floods (June 2013; July 2016; April-May 2020)

About the Project

Led by Dr. Sandeep Agrawal, this project aims to

- Understand the nature and state of risk knowledge that stakeholders have concerning new and existing developments in risk-prone areas;
- Identify the ways in which risk knowledge is communicated and;
- Recommend guidelines for effective risk communication

Key Approaches to Risk Communication

Public Events

- Workshops
- Presentations
- Advocacy
- Education Campaigns

Policy

- Updated development by-laws
- Defined hazards and risks
- Updated development applications

Media Marketing

- Social media
- Print media
- Broadcast media

Strategic Planning

- Public education
- Mitigation infrastructure
- Risk management plans



Preliminary Findings

- Disasters provide a 'window of opportunity' for reviewing existing risk information — and its communication — and building trust between communities and institutions
- Risk communication is a layered process involving a wide range of actors at the provincial and local level, though only some are fully aware of risks — knowingly or unknowingly.
- Risk communication takes three forms: emergency communication (via social media, mass media); short term communication (public engagement, signage, enforcement); and long term communication (education, regulation, and enforcement)
- Risk communication is a technical as well as a political process that determines who knows what and how much is known.
- Risks are forgotten with time, and, therefore, public and institutional memory are key factors in anchoring risk communication.

