

Building Resilient Neighborhood for Extreme Heat Events with prolonged power outages

- Key words: Extreme heat, emergency, power outage, vulnerable populations, Tucson, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Menlo Park Neighborhood Association, Cress Lander Gardens, Mercado District

Background or History

Include here a description of why the intervention was deemed necessary.

- Cress Lander Gardens Section 8 housing for low-income, homebound, elderly and disabled population in Tucson, AZ
- High risk neighborhoods not prepared for a prolonged regional power outage during a period of extreme heat
- Gene Einfrank and Greg Smith, who are residents of the adjacent Mercado housing community



Workshop presenters from El Rio Community Health Center, Tucson Water, and Tucson Fire.

The Intervention

How the project was implemented:

- The project was funded by a CDC sub-grant from MWPERLC at the University of Arizona, School of Public Health to offer a workshop to Build Resilience Neighborhoods to extreme climate related events
- Offering of a workshop for Cress Lander residents to prepare for the disaster scenario described above
- We partnered with the residents of the Mercado District of Menlo Park in Tucson, AZ
- As Cress Lander residents were not equipped or able to achieve their preparedness goals themselves, due to many significant disabilities
- Development of a helping collaboration with Mercado District neighbors who have more resources to achieve goals for this community
- 4 hr. workshop with Cress Lander residents to provide information regarding the risks of extreme heat and then brainstorm specific projects (as described above) to help mitigate the risks and increase resiliency.
- The intervention timeline was 8 weeks
- Provide assistance in reaching the goals of the workshop for emergency food and water storage and development of a community emergency contact registry.

Positive Impacts

How the project impacted/improved the target population's status quo:

- Proximity of Cress Lander to Mercado District and participation of helping neighbors in preparedness workshop.
- Objectives were partially met. The Cress Lander directory is not fully complete due to incomplete participation of some residents and, while a suitable storage area for emergency water and food supplies have been identified, permission to utilize it has yet to be obtained from the Section 8 administrator.
- The project ultimately reached approximately 14 out of 43 residents
- The intervention increased the awareness and social cohesiveness between Cress Lander and Mercado District neighbors and a corresponding willingness to assist less able neighbors.
- A sense of ownership and commitment to assisting Cress Lander neighbors is a direct result of this intervention.

Lessons Learned

Challenges and lessons learned during project implementation:

- More than half of Cress Lander residents spoke only Spanish. Translators assisted during the workshop and subsequent outreach and all written materials were translated into Spanish.
- It is inherently difficult to engage those who choose not to participate in the process.
- Persistence is the key to accomplishing the goals set forth at the beginning of the project.
- The monetary cost of the project (printed materials) was negligible and well worth the benefit.
- More participation by Cress Lander and volunteer time by Mercado District residents, as well as a more engaged Section 8 administrator will be required if the project is to be sustained.
- Public housing administration needs to take measures to anticipate the needs of residents and provide assistance and/or resources to help them survive heat related emergencies

Conclusion

While there has been limited success to date with the primary objectives of this project, the increased social cohesion that grew out of the effort forms a solid base for moving forward.

Contact

For more information about this program, please contact:

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