

2006 KING COUNTY FLOOD HAZARD MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE
March 2012

TOPIC:

Equity and Social Justice: Outreach to Vulnerable and Underserved Populations

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

The River and Floodplain Management Section's (RFMS) public service roles are primarily to:

1. **assess** flood and erosion risks in King County;
2. **communicate** flood risks to the public; and
3. **reduce** flood risks, including repairing and maintaining levees.

How should the King County Flood Hazard Management Plan be used to direct our efforts to ensure that the River and Floodplain Management program is providing these services equitably throughout King County?

BACKGROUND:

The King County Equity and Social Justice Initiative¹ (ESJI) directs all King County government services to be done in a fair and just manner – ensuring that those without traditional access to resources are being served – and to view the development of all policy, procedures and communication through this lens.

King County also has an Executive Order in place, establishing criteria for a Written Language Translation² process that requires a reasonable effort be made to provide all print materials in the languages spoken by the target audience.

Lastly, the King County Flood Control District has directed the River and Floodplain Management Program to ensure that we are reaching vulnerable populations³ in our public outreach and education efforts.

RFMS, in response to these directives, has:

- Produced and promoted flood safety videos in the top 21 languages spoken in King County
- Provided language translation services available 24 hours a day to callers
- Developed maps based on King County 2010 census data to show the predominant language(s) spoken in the King County floodplain
- Produced all flood outreach materials in Spanish.
- Inserted directions for contacting King County, translated into 21 languages, into all critical flood information mailings sent countywide.
- Improved communication coordination with Public Health – Seattle & King County, Office of Emergency Management, and the American Red Cross Serving Kitsap and King County.

¹ King County Equity and Social Justice Initiative - <http://www.kingcounty.gov/exec/equity.aspx>

² Written Language Translation - <http://www.kingcounty.gov/operations/policies/executive/itaeo/inf142aeo.aspx>

³ Vulnerable Population Segments - <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/preparedness/VPAT/segments.aspx>

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- Accounted for vulnerable population segments that may be positively or negatively affect by future outcomes of a levee setback planning study in the Lower Green River valley. Study results found that the study area included a larger percentage of vulnerable population than King County and the Puget Sound as a whole. Therefore, residents of the study area stand to benefit the most from ecosystem services provided by flood risk reduction services, contributing to the goals of King County’s Equity and Social Justice Initiative.

Flood risk reduction projects are sited and designed to mitigate flood and erosion impacts regardless of the economic group or population. Flood risk reduction project priority, selection and implementation are based on risks associated with death, human injury, and potential land use damage.

King County considers equity and social justice impacts in their public information and education programs to provide fairness and opportunity for all people, particularly for people with limited English proficiency or when decisions that have a negative impact on fairness and opportunity are unavoidable, steps are implemented that, mitigate the negative impact.

DISCUSSION

1. What networks can we build or enhance to improve our delivery of the Flood Education and Flood Preparedness Program⁴ to vulnerable or historically underserved populations⁵?
 - **Example:** As a lesson learned from Hurricane Katrina, a recommendation is to formally coordinate with regional animal services and shelter organizations to improve messaging and logistics for evacuating with animals.
2. How can we assess the effectiveness of outreach to vulnerable and underserved populations, knowing that this is a very difficult population to assess by traditional survey methodology?
3. What networks can we build or enhance to improve our delivery of the flood risk reduction programs to vulnerable or historically underserved populations? What alternative mitigation options could be proposed for special needs, such as low-income, physical or developmental disabilities?
 - **Example:** While all flood risk reduction projects and acquisitions are prioritized on the basis of flood risk, regardless of income, race or language spoken, the Flood Elevation Program⁶ is only available to those who can pay up to 25 percent, out of pocket, of the project cost (\$70K-\$120K) and any relocation costs needed if necessary. Additionally, property owners must pay for project costs up front and then be reimbursed by the county after project milestones are achieved. These requirements can make it difficult or impossible for residents without sufficient financial resources to participate in the elevation program.
 - **Suggestions:** Internships to provide training in the field and small business outreach.

⁴ **4.5.1** “The King County Flood Hazard Education and Flood Preparedness Program is designed to increase awareness of locally available resources and information to help citizens prepare for flood events and prevent, minimize, and recover from flood damage.”

⁵ Physically disabled; blind; deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing; mentally ill; developmentally disabled; impoverished; seniors; children; immigrant communities; limited English or non-English proficient; undocumented persons; medically dependent or medically compromised; chemically dependent; homeless and shelter dependent; clients of criminal justice system; and emerging or transient special needs.

⁶ Flood Buyout and Elevation Program - <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/waterandland/flooding/buyout.aspx>