



FEMA

What People Know about Flood Risk

Results of the Risk MAP National Surveys
USACE Flood Risk Management and Silver
Jackets Workshop: August 17, 2011

RiskMAP
Increasing Resilience Together



Agenda

- Background
- Public survey
- Local official survey
- Cross-survey takeaways
- 2011 survey details

Background

- **FEMA surveyed local officials and the public to:**
 - Provide a baseline of flood risk awareness
 - Inform national outreach and community engagement
- **FEMA will conduct annual surveys to measure progress toward its awareness goals:**
 - Public awareness and understanding of risk management
 - Local official awareness of flood risk within Risk MAP project areas



Public Survey Overview

- Conducted 1,019 interviews by phone between July 13-21, 2010
- Valid at the National and Regional levels
- Respondents were 83% homeowners, 16% renters
- Objectives, to determine:
 - Current awareness and understanding of flood risk
 - Actions taken to date to mitigate flood risk
 - How respondents currently receive flood risk information
 - How respondents *prefer* to receive flood risk information



Public Survey Findings

- **Most do not believe they are at risk**
 - Most (69%) do not believe they are at risk of flooding
- **Many are confused about flood insurance**
 - Many (27%) believe that flood damage is covered by their homeowners insurance
 - 33% in R2 and R10 believe it is covered
 - Most (67%) do not believe that federally-backed flood insurance is available



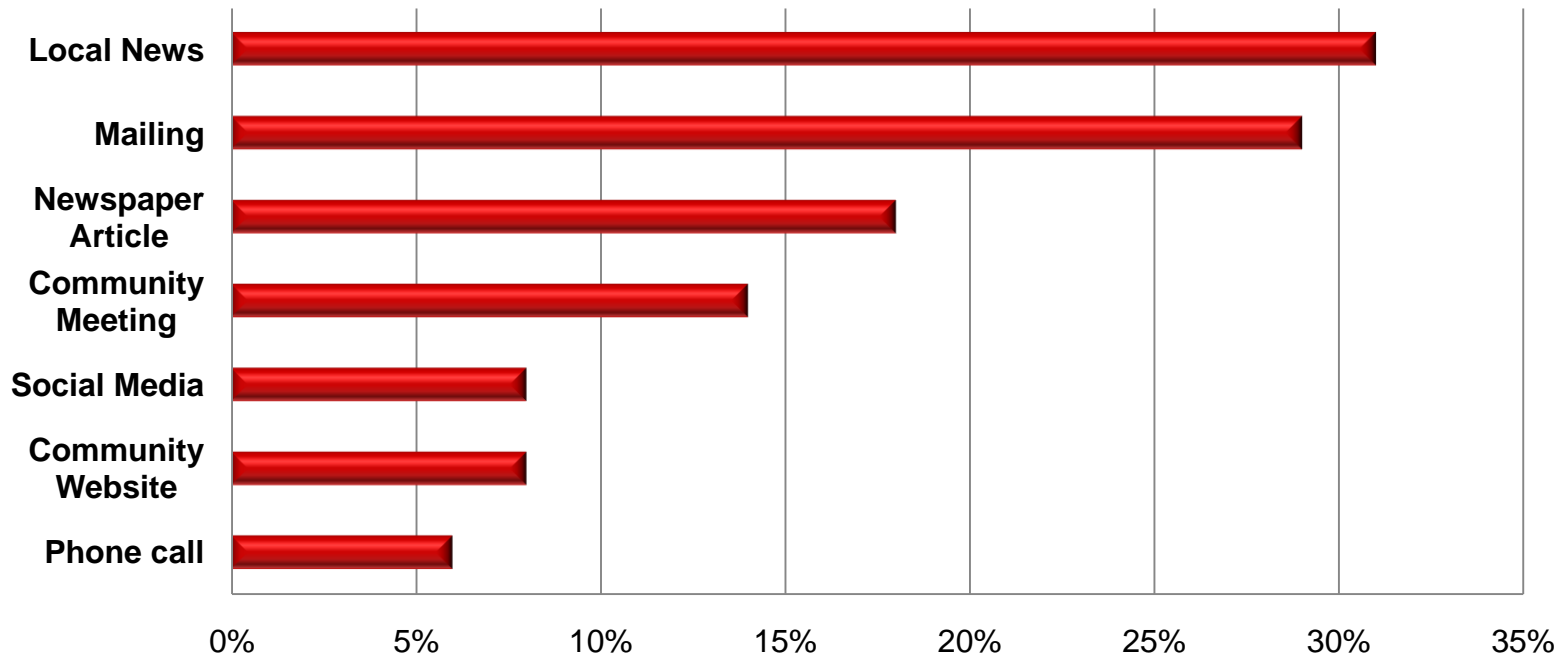
Public Survey Findings (cont.)

- **People expect to hear about risk from local officials**
 - Many (41%) never hear about flood risk from local officials
 - 51% in R2
 - Many feel that the chief elected official (43%) and insurance agents (31%) should provide flood risk information
 - Over a third were informed of their flood risk when moving in
 - 38% informed by real estate agents
 - 23% lenders
 - 22% insurance agents
 - Most prefer to hear about flood risk from the local news (31%) and mailings (29%)
 - Meetings preferred in R6 and R7



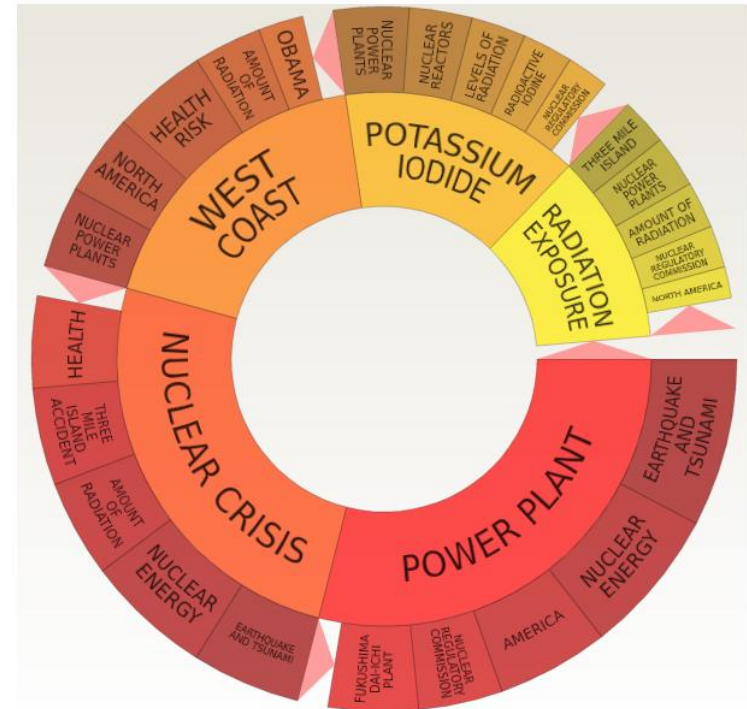
Public Survey Findings (cont.)

Preferred Method of Hearing About Flood Risk



A Note on Social Media

- While social media was not listed as one of the top three ways that the public prefers to hear about flood risk, it is an influencer
- Immediately following the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, FEMA's Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program tracked U.S. social media daily to:
 - Identify new or emerging areas of concern (e.g., from air radiation to food radiation)
 - Identify shifts in locations of concern (e.g., from the west coast to the east)
- As a result, FEMA was able to:
 - Update media materials and messaging to address concerns
 - Put media resources in areas where an event or gathering was being planned



Social Media Discussion Topic Frequency
(Excluding Twitter) on 3/21/11

Public Survey Findings (cont.)

- **They rely on past experience and maps**
 - Sources of flood information include flood experience (38%) and flood maps (30%)
- **Some have taken action to reduce risk**
 - Over a third have taken steps to reduce flood loss, 41% in R8, 24% in R2
 - 80% of those that did not take steps did not believe they were at risk



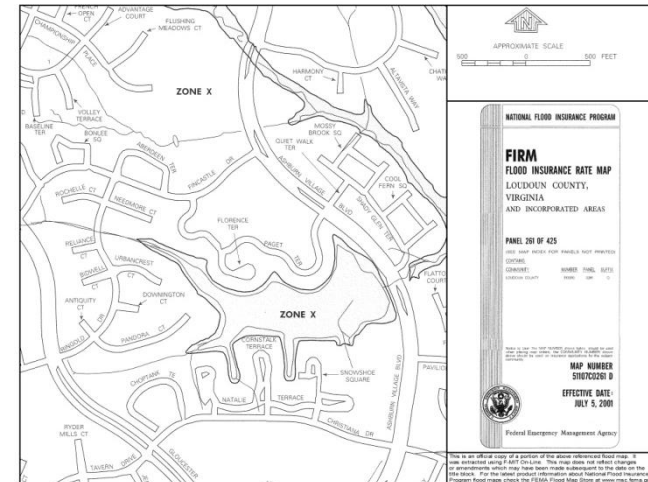
Public Survey Findings (cont.)

- **Awareness prompts action and understanding**
 - Those who believed their community was at risk were more likely to:
 - Have reviewed their flood map
 - Believe flood insurance was available
 - Have taken steps to prevent flood risk
- **Flood maps provide understanding**
 - Those who reviewed their flood map were more likely to:
 - Believe their community was at risk for flooding
 - Believe flood insurance was available
 - Have taken steps to prevent flood risk



Opportunities Identified by Survey

- Citizens expect to hear about risk from local officials and insurance agents
 - Most don't believe that they are at risk
- To raise awareness of flood risk:
 - Draw upon first-hand experience
 - Address insurance confusion
 - Note that they may have already taken other steps to reduce flood risks
 - Show the flood maps and other tools
 - Use mailings, local news



Local Official Survey Overview

- Collected 718 responses to online survey, July 2010
- Valid at the National level
- Objectives
 - Understand their awareness and understanding of local flood risk
 - Identify the types of flood prevention or flood risk reduction activities undertaken
 - Determine if and how they share flood risk information with their citizens
 - Understand how FEMA can make it easier for them to communicate about flood risk



Local Official Survey Findings

- **They know their communities are at risk**
 - Most (68%) know that their communities are at risk for flooding, but may underestimate that risk
 - They learn about flood risk from flood maps (80%) and personal experience (69%)
 - Those aware of their flood risk take action
 - Public officials who thought their community was at a risk for flooding were more likely to say their community has taken action to prevent flood risk
- **They know flood insurance is available**
 - Most (78%) are aware of the availability of federally-backed flood insurance

Local Official Survey Findings (cont.)

- They have taken steps to reduce risk
 - Almost two-thirds of communities have taken action to reduce flooding
 - Of those that did take action, 56% cited planning and zoning, 48% building codes, 47% storm water management



Local Official Survey Findings (cont.)

- **Mitigation plans increase awareness, not mitigation activities**
 - Just over half have FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plans
 - 31% were not sure
 - Those who have a FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plan:
 - Are not more likely to take action than those that do not have a plan
 - Are more likely to communicate at least annually about flood risk
 - Are more likely to characterize their flood risk as high
 - Are more likely to believe flood insurance is available



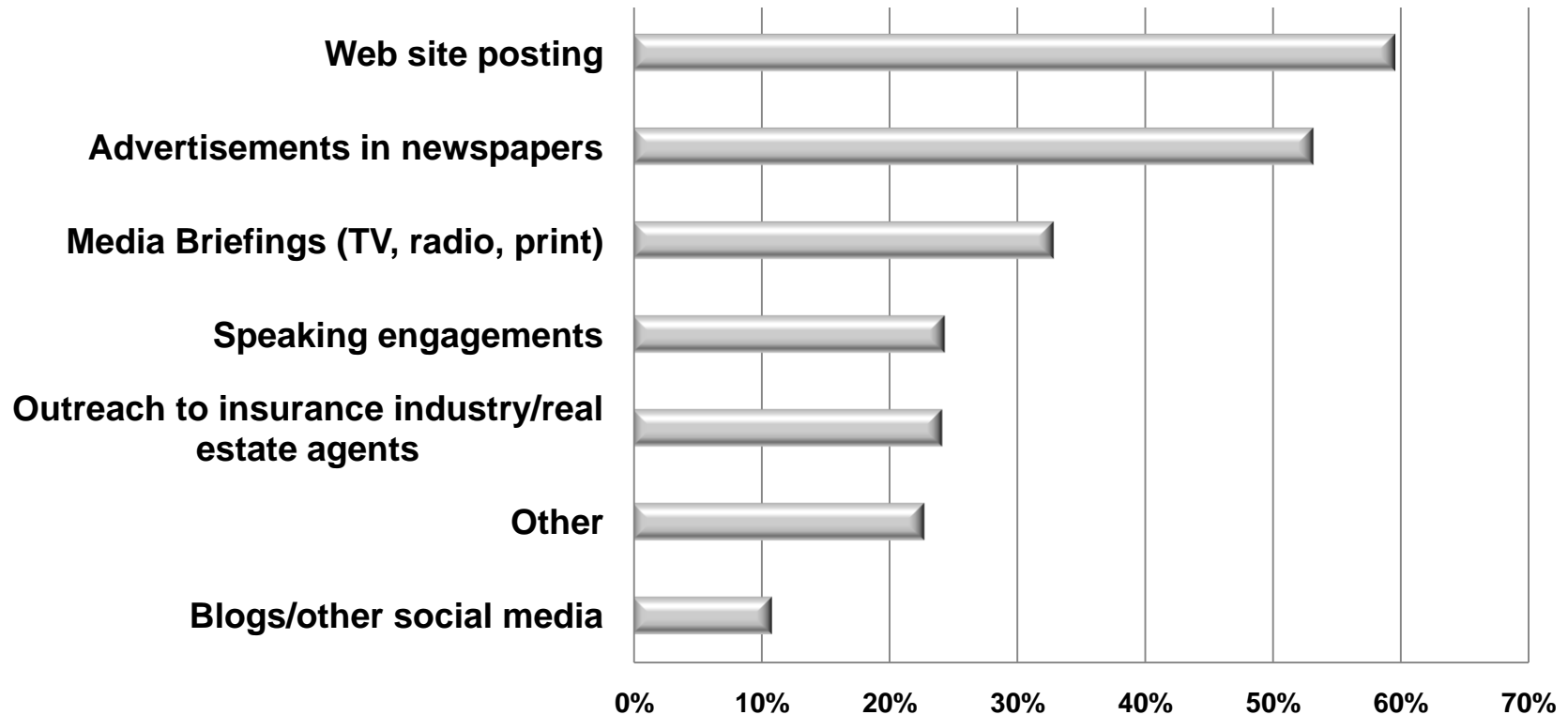
Local Official Survey Findings (cont.)

- **Many do not communicate often about risk**
 - Many understand they are responsible for communicating flood risk, but not many do it
 - 48% cited the Mayor as responsible, 43% cited the emergency manager
 - 32% have never communicated with citizens about flood risk
 - They prefer to provide new maps to their citizens through the Web (60%) and newspaper ads (53%)
 - 33% would brief local media



Local Official Survey Findings (cont.)

Local Officials' Methods for Communicating About New Flood Maps



Opportunities Identified by Survey

- **To raise awareness of flood risk:**
 - Share information about funding and resources available to enable/assist/incentivize mitigation activities
 - Encourage development and review of mitigation plans
 - Make flood maps as user friendly and easily accessible as possible
 - Arm those with mitigation plans with outreach materials

Cross-Survey Takeaways

- **Local officials understand that:**
 - Their communities are at risk for flooding, while the public does not
 - Federally-backed flood insurance is available, while the public does not
- **The public:**
 - Expects to hear about flood risk from local CEO's, but CEO's are not providing much information
 - Prefers to hear about flood risk through local media, mailings and meetings, while CEO's prefer to use Websites and newspaper ads



Risk MAP's Response

- **In response to the survey findings, Risk MAP has:**
 - Updated messaging
 - Updated talking points and materials to let local officials know that the public is looking to them for flood-related information
 - Shifted messaging focus from mitigation planning to mitigation action
 - Updated/created materials
 - Created media materials to support local official outreach to constituents
 - Created a letter template for local officials to send to constituents
 - Created an outreach strategy template that Risk MAP project teams can use to help communities create customized outreach strategies
 - Updated slide deck templates for Risk MAP meetings to encourage Risk MAP project teams to use stories and images to demonstrate flood risk information
 - Created a fact sheet on grant availability to share with communities
 - Shared findings
 - Shared information with FloodSmart to inform their insurance outreach
 - Shared findings at various conferences and with USACE, NOAA

2011 Surveys

- **Survey sampling changes**
 - Surveying the public and local officials in Risk MAP vs. non-Risk MAP communities
 - Adding more Tribal officials
- **Survey tool changes**
 - Questions related to risk behind levees and dams
 - Question related to flood risk to an individual's home or apartment
 - Refined questions about insurance
 - Added more on review of flood maps
 - Added more community demographic questions



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