Homeland Security

Science and Technology

Implementing the Disaster Recovery Tracking Tool

A DHS Science and Technology Center of Excellence Solution

Investigating Community Recovery

Disaster recovery is the least understood aspect of emergency management.[1] A greater understanding of the differential speed and quality of recovery is urgently needed to help communities become more resilient in the face of future natural hazards and disasters.

To help achieve this goal, researchers at the Department of Homeland Security Coastal Resilience Center of Excellence are investigating community recovery from disasters. Their findings will help inform recovery planning policy and create tools for use by communities, local and state officials, and federal partners such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Long Beach Pilot of the Disaster Recovery Tracking Tool

Coastal Communities Face Greater Risk from Hurricanes and Floods

Thirty-nine percent of the U.S. population lived in coastal shoreline counties as of 2010, and population growth along the coast is expected to continue into the future.[2] Higher and denser coastal populations combined with more intense storms and extreme flooding puts coastal communities at even greater risk of being impacted by disasters such as hurricanes and flooding.[3] A better understanding of recovery processes and how they can be measured over time will enable communities to improve their recovery planning by contributing to the development of a strong fact base. High quality recovery plans and processes informed by local knowledge and built around data related to local capacity, as captured in the proposed metrics, provide the opportunity to increase community resilience to future disasters.

Measuring Recovery

The **Disaster Recovery Tracking Tool** includes 79 metrics that measure how a community is recovering from a disaster. These metrics (e.g., total disaster related business closures, number of organizations involved in recovery, median home value) are organized in four themes and 10 focus areas that are based on FEMA's recovery support functions and core capabilities in order to link the metrics to the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) guidance. Researchers are also working to test ways in which the metrics can be used to characterize recovery progress, detect problems with recovery, and improve future recovery and resilience. A practitioner checklist will help end users decide which metrics to use and how to begin collecting data.

Real Users, Real Results

The results of this work are helping to inform FEMA Long-Term Recovery planning guidance in accordance with the NDRF. After key informant interviews and pilot tests with four New York communities affected by Hurricane Sandy, one planner pointed out, "A big value of the process is in the collaboration around data. Part of what this tool will do is help us figure out what data is not being collected and who needs to be in the room [to improve recovery outcomes]."

An online version of the tool can be accessed at ***http://trackyourrecovery.org/***.

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1 *Smith, G. & Wenger, D. 2006. "Sustainable disaster recovery: Operationalizing an existing framework," in H. Rodriguez, E. Quarantelli, R. Dynes, Eds.,* Handbook of Disaster Research *(pp. 234-274). New York: Springer.*

2 *National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. March 2013.* National coastal population report: Population trends from 1970 to 2020. *Available online at:* ***http://stateofthecoast.noaa.gov/features/coastal-population-report.pdf****.*

3 *U.S. Department of Homeland Security. June 2012.* Climate change adaptation road map. *Available online at:* ***http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Appendix%20A%20DHS%20FY2012%20Climate%20Change%20Adaptation%20Plan_0.pdf****.*