

Increasing Disaster Resiliency in Mobile Home Park Communities Through Youth Disaster Preparedness Education: A Pilot Project

Abstract

Disaster preparedness is an effective way to minimize physical, emotional, and financial harms that exist as a result of disaster. Mobile home parks can be especially vulnerable to hazards, such as flooding, fire, and extended power outages, given their density, inappropriate siting in low-lying areas and proximity to negative community facilities. Previous studies have shown that children can play a special role in disaster preparedness. Ronan and Johnson (2005) have encouraged the creation of youth based initiatives in their research and concluded that it is important that programs developed for the youth populations are put into use, and that these programs cater to their educational needs. The goal of this action research project is to develop and evaluate a workshop for children living in mobile home parks in Vermont, that can best prepare them and their families for disaster. The workshop was held in a rural community with a high mobile home housing ratio. Highlights of the afternoon included learning about predicting weather conditions and receiving a disaster kit to take home. The outcome was positive in several ways. Test results showed dramatic improvement, and therefore the educational methods and programs used can be deemed effective in raising awareness and preparation for hazards and storms. The participants and our

community partners also reported that they were pleased with the workshop and the disaster kits that were distributed. Recommendations on program format and potential platforms for future use include: dividing age groups, using community leaders as speakers and using interactive computer programming.