

Region II

Increasing Engagement Through Telephone Town Halls



BURLINGTON COUNTY, NJ



RiskMAP
Increasing Resilience Together

THE CHALLENGE

With several remapping projects underway, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region II has been engaged with multiple communities, all at various stages of the Risk Mapping, Assessment and Planning (MAP) process. However, especially for public meetings, the Region noticed that it is often difficult to draw more than 50 people to come to an Open House after a long day at work. Given the duration of mapping projects, FEMA was looking for opportunities to engage more frequently with community members in between regularly scheduled meetings. They also wanted to ensure community members unable to attend in-person Open Houses or other public meetings received important information about ongoing Risk MAP projects. These touchpoints also needed to be easy to replicate in multiple communities.

THE SOLUTION

FEMA brainstormed different solutions and ultimately decided to conduct a Telephone Town Hall. This is when a large conference call is scheduled for community members to learn new information or receive updates on a Risk MAP project. In addition, community members are given an opportunity to ask questions of FEMA and its mapping partners. While the Telephone Town Hall solution could not serve as a replacement for in-person meetings, it was a great supplemental touchpoint to keep community members engaged in the process.

Burlington County, New Jersey, was selected as the community in which to pilot the first Telephone Town Hall on November 29, 2016. Burlington held two Open House meetings on June 28 and 29, 2016, so the Telephone Town Hall provided an opportunity for FEMA to follow up on information provided at that event and to ensure that community members did not have any unanswered questions. Using GIS tools, FEMA mapped the affected area, including up to a 100-foot radius around the local GIS flood map data, to determine which areas were invited to participate in the call. Contact information for 6,700 residents was purchased from the public voter registration database. In the days leading up to the Telephone Town Hall, invited residents received a recorded phone message from FEMA notifying them of the upcoming call.

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450+ ATTENDEES

THE OUTCOME

With more than 450 attendees, the Telephone Town Hall provided FEMA with an efficient and effective way to reach members of the community. Given that Burlington had recently entered the 90-day appeal period, the Telephone Town Hall served as an opportunity to remind property owners of the Risk MAP timeline and the comment and appeals process, as well as provide residents with general project updates on and discuss flood insurance. The latter portion of the call was a Q&A session to answer resident questions in real time. Resident engagement was high, with 20 questions asked over the course of the call.

- Number of dial outs: 6,681
- Number of accepted calls: 852
- Median age of caller: 64 years
- Average acceptant duration: 10.21 minutes
- Max number of people in conference: 475
- Total questions in queue/answered: 20/12

THE BENEFIT

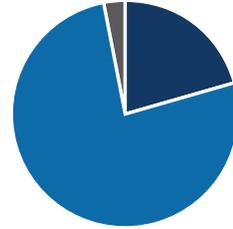
While nothing can replace the one-on-one interactions that Risk MAP meetings provide, Telephone Town Halls provide an opportunity to:

- Directly engage a high volume of people in a short time
- Gain further insight on area-specific concerns
- Deliver information in terms relatable to communities and individuals
- Easily replicable public outreach in many communities

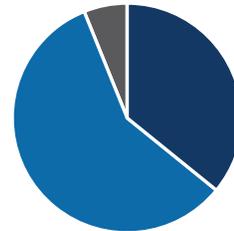
FEMA collected feedback from a handful of residents through submitted questions, as well as voicemails left by attendees. Based on feedback, attendance, and participation, FEMA found the Telephone Town Hall to ultimately be successful and hopes to replicate the process with future community engagements.

POLLING QUESTIONS

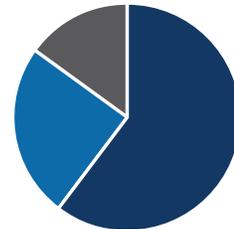
Has your home ever been flooded?
(121 participants)



Do you currently have flood insurance?
(125 participants)



Would you like to receive more information about flood risk and flood insurance?
(110 participants)



■ YES ■ NO ■ DON'T KNOW