

CJP Community Forum: Resilient to Extreme Weather

Thursday, November 20, 2025

Meeting Notes

Attendees - in person

- John Wasiutynski - Project Staff, Mult Co Office of Sustainability
- Brendon Haggerty - Project staff, Mult Co Environmental Health
- Tim Lynch - Project Staff Office of Sustainability
- Monique Smiley - Project Staff, Mult Co Office of Sustainability
- Denise Lopez - City of Gresham
- Diana Meisenhelter - Extinction Rebellion
- Noriko Yamaguchi - OHSU/PSU School of Public Health

Attendees - Online

- Jairaj Singh - Project staff, Mult Co Environmental Health
- Abe Moland - Mult Co Health Department
- Nsilo Berry - Mult Co REACH
- Alice Busche - Mult Co Emergency Management
- Gail Zuro - Mult Co Emergency Management
- Renee Curtis - Mult Co DCHS
- Jessica Hua - Oregon Health Authority
- Mary Rudoph-Knobbe - NW Natural
- Maleek McKenzie - Sierra Club

Intros

Metrics

- Recommend to include some positive measures, places served, community awareness of resources
- Access to resilient hubs in conjunction to other types of services expanding to schools, churches, etc. (checklist of supply depots to track over time)
- OSHA compliance with measures that specifically address worker safety to extreme weather (heat risk for example)
- Important to recognize and talk about the intersection with disasters, important but folks are experiencing extreme weather more regularly
- Experience with extreme weather may serve as test and learning opportunities for major disasters. Each event is evaluated (after action report), process improvement
- NET groups often respond in extreme weather shelters (called disaster resource centers in the County), important to grow those networks
- High severity, low probability events - can't model because they happen so rarely, like the 2021 heat dome.
- Low severity, high probability - heat waves, wildfire smoke
- Challenge of combined risks, high heat, with high wind that knocks our power

- Differentiation between climate change driven vs climate/weather events. Not always a clear linkage.
- Difference in how heat and cold events are experienced. See more health impacts from cold (2-3x magnitude of morbidity, mortality), than heat. Includes falls from ice.
- Question about probability of atmospheric rivers, snow pack, flooding. Seeing globally.
- 1996 flood, high rain immediately after significant low elevation snow pack. The probability of having a low elevation snow pack may decrease with climate change, but doesn't mean that the risk goes away entirely.
- On average, see more cold related deaths, but including heat domes puts heat deaths at a higher rate.
- Also important to recognize that different populations have different susceptibility to weather extremes => how are we thinking about the metrics with respect to defining extreme weather events, and will we differentiate in the metrics.
- Differences in how health impacts are coded during emergency visits. For example, someone who died due to power lines falling on their car, wouldn't necessarily be associated with Extreme Weather or Climate Change.
- Natural overlap between the metrics in this goal, health goal, air goal. Extreme heat => worsening air quality. But high heat itself is enough to trigger respiratory health issues. May want to think about presenting metrics as cross cutting rather than isolated in goals.
- Q: re emergency management. How/does it respond when two lesser events combine to (heat and wildfire for example) that trigger a more serious threat.
- The County has a response for extreme weather and takes into account all relevant factors, like heat and smoke to calibrate a response. But it can be a challenge to respond to overlapping threats. The County brings together a broad group of folks to consider how to respond, including National Weather Service, State, and local agencies. Hinges on communications and coordination among those many actors.
- The county tries to maintain robust HVAC and filtration systems, many sites have this, but also have to consider spaces that don't have these resources and how to continue to serve the community.
- What are the existing cycles of emergency preparedness, how effective were we in the last event, and was there a justice component to that assessment?
- Public health has an end-of-season health hazards report, which includes demographic breakdown.
- For example, Hispanic/Latine folks were showing up at higher rates with carbon monoxide poisoning (related to cold weather). Older men living alone showing up higher in heat events.
- Small differences in experience (year to year unexpected events like the tragedy of a family dying from exposure to live electrical wires while trapped on ice in a car) can spike mortality data. Need for detailed root cause analysis (after action process), what plans say we should do, what we tried to do, who was impacted. Try to make that assessment as inclusive as possible, all levels of providers and those seeking services. But there is still more to do on the after action reporting front. Multnomah County Emergency Management has an ongoing improvement plan, calling for 5 ways to get to the root cause.
- There can be challenges in planning across different systems (Emergency Management / Public Health) that might have different approaches.

- Access to park/green space and infrastructure for shade cooling - how far do you have to travel to these spaces if your home can't keep you safe. (Link to green space/infrastructure)
- Currently measure distance to a park of a certain minimum size, which might not capture whether it can serve for heat resilience.
- Even if we don't have resilient hubs set up yet, one thing that is really important is to talk to affordable housing providers. They are exempted in the climate resilience planning and there needs to be health standards for landlords to ensure people in affordable housing are safe.
- Percentage of priority/most impacted communities that are covered under different services, particularly an issue that has been named by community members in East County/Gresham => goal of 100% of impacted communities have access to these resources
- Multnomah County does have a lot of data about heat islands, which are used to help deploy resources. Also risk data, to target houseless folks when cold and housed folks when hot.
- Affordable housing workgroup meets currently, in part in response to loss of life in affordable housing during the heat dome.
- All actions / supports are ultimately local, serving in community, but is the responsibility at all levels. Also important to focus on the efforts needed between events.
- Can be a challenge for communities to prepare, or understand if they are prepared, when events are really inconsistent, not regular, annual. Challenge to maintain coordination.
- There will be a 30th year anniversary recognizing the floods, given many people did not experience it and may not heed warnings/guidance.
- The Emergency Management strategic plan has specific metrics that would be good to crosswalk with the Climate Justice Plan
- Distance to resilience hubs for communities.
- Metric idea - include something around economic impacts, business closures. Related to the parametric insurance, what events would be considered and how might they be addressed.

Strategies

- Resilience hub strategy needs a definition - Emergency Management recommends anything that provides a direct community service, trusted institution, think of this as more of a diffuse/many distributed approach.
- Resilience Hubs can span community and government services.
- Challenge of multiple layers of risks, 2021 wildfire smoke, high heat, covid - Saw huge difference in the capacity of different sites ability to respond.
- Named the state's microgrids bills, the importance of technical and other support for communities to pursue these opportunities. Even small scale power generation/batteries will be important for charging communication, medical supplies.
- Microgrid - self contained electric "grid" that can isolate itself (island) from the larger grid. Mentioned public safety power shutoffs (PSPS) where utility deenergizes the line serving a community for various reasons, often an extreme weather trigger. Still able to generate and distribute power in a local manner.
- Fare free during extreme weather events - also name that max service may be disrupted during heat. Q: Are we looking at which transit option becomes the most viable during that event, and tailoring the response to that.
- The challenge of declared emergencies is that it triggers financial implications, opens contracting rules. Not always as effective at saving lives and bringing resources to bear as

community connections and preparation. The higher the level the emergency is declared at, the farther from the community the response can become.

- Communication challenges during events, especially without common language like Resilience Hubs, folks have an expectation of service that may not be available. Strength of “micro” communities and tailoring – having it be focused on a hyper local level. Challenge is funding a response and it might look like mutual aid in many instances.
- Transportation is a huge issue. Counties don’t have that – the city sometimes does. Trimet. But sometimes the best solution is church vans and other community based resources can be the most impactful for serving communities.
- Recommendation - add natural gas language as resilience measure for homes, during the ice storm, provided heat for cooking, heating at furnaces, hot water. Texas example where gas provided essential safety for folks. It is important that natural gas is recognized for the continuity value, proven resource.
- Recommendation to focus on heat pump deployment, because of the value it brings in air conditioning. More effective than deploying ACs. Also recognize older proven tech like evaporative cooling. Which calls the need for ensuring water supply continuity. Also need some kind of battery, or s+s to specifically address folks with powered medical devices.
- Resilience language, value of microgrid and VPP, aligns with move to electrification. Examples of US North East black out, fatalities, people not able to meet medical needs, loss of food.
- Recognizing the challenge that Trimet is facing budget cuts, what does it look like to encourage an obligation to serve during extreme weather. Trimet is looking at instacart options for transit lift riders to address the ADA service obligation during cuts.
- Impact of household loss of food, other economic impacts, ways we can look to add strategies.
- Is there a way to include traditional knowledge, alternative practices like siestas, that may run counter to capitalistic or social conventions.
- Gresham heat strategy engagement, significant part of the community doesn’t feel heat risk because of community customs/experiences.
- Metrics, challenge of back sliding or tensions, tree canopy and wildfire, defensible spaces. Need a way to gauge where compromise is happening, actions that are in tension with one another across the goals, naming those and measuring.
- During the extreme weather is there a way to mitigate the utility cost impacts, concern about using resources during AC. Staff noted the low income bill discount programs available currently. Also that extreme weather prevention of shut offs.
- Ways to measure social cohesion, strength of community networks, alternatively measuring social isolation of individuals. Measuring microhubs.
- It is important to think through a continuum of response, full support of people for two weeks without any outside resources, versus a community space for teens that has AC. Need to give tools to communities to help navigate some of the questions of what level of service and what services will be provided, and who will be served by the resource.
- Schools for example are set up to support students and staff, not equipped to support the broader community safely unless there is a stand alone location that could be isolated.
- Opportunity to capitalize and grow where communities are coming together already around specific issues. For example, Oregon Rising teacher union could be through partners around something like using school assets. Including building on school connections to communities through SUN school and related programs.

- Strengthen and grow social networks in a place-based way.
- Awakening communities who are already serving communities, like schools, not necessarily asking them to serve new folks but serving them in a more expansive way. Community connections are what make communities resilient.
- Community asset mapping to understand what already exists, where the gaps are, is an important part of building resilience.

Zoom Chat Comments

- Alice B.: Thanks Brendon :) nice summary - public information and community engagement through our liaison program - helps elevate community voice and wisdom to inform operational objectives.
- Alice B.: I concur! Lots of cross over and it is important for us to recognize and consider how investments of resources, whether time, supplies, or other resources are best committed to serve those most impacted and that are resilient to a number of hazards...
- Juliae Z.: And to follow up to my comment, I am speaking specifically to outdoor public spaces, but this could extend to resilience hubs and indoor spaces as well. And proximity meaning the duration of time to get there without a car (not distance in miles). Another metric would be the number of resilience hubs available as well, which is different from my first added metric recommendation.
- Gail Z.: And must include training for those managing those community (v. government) based sites so they can better serve their communities. Taking EM preparedness work (which we can help with) with what they know will work with their communities is so key!
- Alice B.: <https://rdpo.net/emergency-toilet> :) what to do with pee and poo
- Alice B.: However - our schools are serving the LARGE community that they already serve!! And if all organizations consider serving the communities they already serve - during a disaster - the many hands concept is accomplished!!
- Alice B.: Awaken our community organizations' commitment to their communities - their possible roles during emergencies and disasters - we can help them understand how that might look 😊
- Alice B.: <https://multco.us/info/community-outreach-requests> - want a presentation?