

Change Peoples' Behaviour with GeoHazard Knowledge

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Summary

Volcanoes, earthquakes and tsunamis rank up there with dinosaurs as geoscience attention getters. The challenge in my job is how to use that public interest in geohazards to encourage individuals to become personally prepared for natural disasters. In this talk I will describe how we are approaching this in Natural Resources Canada's Public Safety Geoscience Program. In the "Increasing Personal Preparedness for Geohazards" project we are:

- Improving access of provincial and territorial emergency management organizations to our geoscience knowledge
- Canvassing the world for the best practices of other geoscience agencies involved in this work
- Developing material to have at the ready for teachable moments following significant events nationally and internationally
- Creating classroom resources focussed on Canadian events for landslides, earthquakes and tsunamis
- Consolidating our departmental geohazard/natural hazard information on the web

Given that the "be prepared" piece is outside of our departmental mandate and that changing behaviour involves social marketing, a field outside our geoscience realm of expertise, it is clear that that we must work in partnership with others to achieve our goal of making Canadians safer. Our contribution to increased preparedness is the dissemination of authoritative geohazard information from a trusted source.

Face to face communication of the message "geohazards happen here too, you need to be prepared" is important. I will describe how we have used post-event teachable moments (the 2004 Indonesian earthquake and tsunami; January's earthquake in Haiti) and even created opportunities (National Science and Technology week or Emergency Preparedness week events) to deliver that message.