

National disaster recovery principle 5: communicate effectively

Speed read

- Good communication between affected communities and other partners is a crucial foundation of recovery. Where communication is strong, recovery goes well. Poor communication can hamper recovery.
- Recovery communication includes sending, gathering, managing and evaluating information, where: 'communication' is the process and 'information' is the message being sent or received.
- There are three broad rules for recovery communication.

Key points

Communication in recovery should:

- begin as early as possible in a disaster
- include an event-specific website and/or other medium that shows all available information and is updated regularly
- specifically addresses the needs and concerns of local communities
- be expressed in clear, consistent, plain English
- be tailored to local communities and delivered to the various groups within communities
- be provided in easy to understand formats with the aid of visual comparisons
- include practical information and advice.

Three rules for recovery communications:

1. Is it relevant to the affected people?

People affected by disaster are overwhelmed by huge amounts of information. Following a disaster, people want to know:

- what is happening with the recovery process
- what support is available
- what they need to do to qualify for support
- what they can do if they have questions, concerns or complaints.

2. Is it clear?

After a disaster, people often have trouble remembering or understanding information. It is not appropriate to use jargon, overly complicated or technical language.

- Short, sharp amounts of relevant and practical information is best
- Ensure there is a clear call to action in the communication (what does the person actually have to do?)
- Ensure that there are formats available for people with a sensory impairment and/or people from CALD backgrounds. When using text-based communications, ensure the size of the text is readable.

3. Is it targeted?

The method of communication you use should fit the audience. Know your audience and the best way to reach them.

Take action

- Use the [Communicating in Recovery Guide](http://bit.ly/RedCrossCommunicating) (Australian Red Cross 2010) (<http://bit.ly/RedCrossCommunicating>)
- Put up the [principles of communicating in recovery poster](http://bit.ly/RedCrossCommunicatingPrinciples) in your office or recovery centre (<http://bit.ly/RedCrossCommunicatingPrinciples>)
- Consider undertaking professional development: [Communicating in Recovery training program](http://bit.ly/RedCrossRecoveryTraining) (<http://bit.ly/RedCrossRecoveryTraining>)
- Use the Checklist: [Applying the principles post-disaster](http://bit.ly/RecoveryPrinciples) (SRRG 2018) (bit.ly/RecoveryPrinciples)

More information

- [Community Recovery Handbook](#) (AIDR 2018)
- [Recovery Collection on the Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub](#)