

GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY
CITIZEN EXPECTATION SURVEY
RESULTS

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2017 Citizen Expectation Survey Results

THE RESULTS HAVE BEEN TABULATED

The results to the Grays Harbor County Citizen Expectation Survey have been tabulated. These county-wide survey results provide a basis to build stronger and more viable emergency and disaster plans, supporting all response agencies, local governments and the citizens of Grays Harbor County.

Although not a scientific survey, the results fit into a 95% confidence level with a +/- 3.54 % error.

The April 1, 2010 Census indicated a population in Grays Harbor County at 72,797.

The July 2016 Census estimate indicates a population in Grays Harbor County at 71,628.

WHY A SURVEY?

In 2013, Grays Harbor County Emergency Management received numerous inquiries and comments about site specific disaster and emergency situations in our cities and unincorporated areas of Grays Harbor County, many which have been contrary to all written emergency and disaster plans in existence. We worried that public awareness on emergency and disaster preparedness and actions was waning in all jurisdictions. Were these sporadic inquiries or did they represent questions and comments of a majority of citizens in our county? What if the unthinkable occurred? How would we communicate? Would citizens evacuate if told of impending danger? Would they know where to go for food, shelter or medical assistance? How prepared are our citizens and do they realize the impacts of each specific event upon their family, home and community? The results from the 2013 survey set the foundation for the Grays Harbor County Emergency Management Program.

In 2017, Grays Harbor County Emergency Management decided to run another survey to see if any of the implemented changes to our public awareness and information program were successful and where current efforts need to be focused in our Emergency Management Program.

IN SEARCH OF THE ANSWERS

In March 2017, Chuck Wallace, the Deputy Director of Emergency Management at Grays Harbor County Emergency Management along with Carmin McCullough, the Emergency Management Program Assistant conducted a Citizen Expectation Survey to assess two main areas. One assessed the level of emergency and disaster awareness throughout the county.

Second, and most important, we attempted to assess the level of preparation Grays Harbor County citizens possess and their intentions and expectations to an emergency or disaster situation.

The Grays Harbor County Citizen Expectation Survey 2017 was written, developed and launched in March 2017, using the December 2013, Citizen Expectation Survey as a template. The responses far exceeded our expectations with over 758 valid responses received from all areas of the county, including our neighboring tribal nations.

The Survey was also used as part of a Region 3 Homeland Security Citizen Expectation Survey with Grays Harbor County, Pacific County, Mason County and Thurston County (along with the Cities of Olympia and Lacey). Lewis County declined to participate. Results will be tabulated and shared with our regional, state and local partners as well as FEMA Region 10.

RESULTS

AT RISK POPULATIONS:

Families with children 5yrs and younger – 12.41%

Families with senior citizens – 40.62% (19.6% - 2010 Census data adjusted to 2015)

Families with at least one disabled member – 17.87% (4.51% increase from 2013)

Families with household pets – 68.54%

Non-English speaking members – 0.59%

SUMMARY - All of these populations raise questions for jurisdictions and response agencies. Will these specific populations need assistance during an emergency or disaster situation? If an evacuation occurs, do these citizens have the ability to leave? Do citizens need assistance or will many decide not to leave because of a pre-existing health condition or fear of separation from family or pets?

A large senior citizen population was identified from survey respondents which is approximately 21% higher than the demographics from the 2015 adjusted census data.

Taking these results into consideration, it is possible 20% or more of our population fits into an “at risk” category on a daily basis, meaning even prior to any emergency or disaster event occurring, at least 1/5 of our population is already in need of some type of assistance.

There are numerous non-English speaking people in Grays Harbor County. A flaw of the survey was it didn't target this audience. All non-English speakers are considered "at risk" in our county.

HOW DO CITIZENS PRIMARILY RECEIVE STATE AND LOCAL NEWS AND INFORMATION?

Internet – 37.04% Television – 32.94%
AM/FM Radio – 8.73% Newspaper/Magazine – 3.70%
Social Media 17.59%

SUMMARY - These numbers reflect our changing world including the use of social media. The internet is a primary place for most in the county to receive information. Television ranks high but it raises questions about the reliability of the disaster and emergency information for our county since we are 3 hours from both Seattle & Portland; the television hubs. AM/FM radio will be relied upon a great deal to relay site specific disaster information to our communities, however according to these results, most don't consider AM/FM Radio as a primary source for information.

HOW DO YOU PRIMARILY RECEIVE YOUR LOCAL WEATHER FORECAST INFORMATION?

Internet – 61.24% Social Media – 6.35%
Television – 25.00% Newspaper – 1.06% AM/FM Radio -6.35%

SUMMARY – The results reflect a dependence upon television and the internet in accessing weather forecast information. The issue is there are numerous internet sites providing forecast information. Dependence upon one or another is a personal choice. Forecast information can differ significantly between weather forecasting agencies creating contrasting responses to the information by the citizens within a single jurisdiction.

WHAT IS THE FASTEST AND SUREST WAY TO DELIVER EMERGENCY AND DISASTER NEWS AND UPDATES TO CITIZENS?

Text – 59.45% (44.83% IN 2013) Phone – 10.70%

E-Mail – 9.38% Television – 5.42%

Weather Radio – 6.21% AM/FM Radio - 2.51% (6.86% IN 2013) Facebook - 5.28%

SUMMARY – The results reflect how large an impact social media and technology plays in our society, reflected in our increased reliability upon text messaging. AM/FM Radio has dropped in delivery dependence, however it is one of the fastest and reliable ways to deliver an emergency message over a large region using various radio broadcast sites. All emergency or disaster messages directed to the citizens must be sent using multiple means of communication.

DOES YOUR FAMILY HAVE A FAMILY EMERGENCY PLAN?

YES – 50.47% NO – 49.53%

Does your plan include a specific meeting area? – 54.2% of those voting YES

Does it include ways to communicate and contact others? – 71.3% of those voting YES

Does it include how and where to evacuate? – 66.4% of those voting YES

SUMMARY- Only half of all citizens who responded have a family emergency plan, basically unchanged from 2013, (51.1%). This will quickly become problematic during any event where families are separated from one another. Of those who have plans, many do not include information on specific meeting areas, ways to communicate or how and where to evacuate. This is an indication they are not sure what to include in a plan and may lead them to believe they are more prepared than they actually are. Questions arise whether the citizen unpreparedness is due to a lack of disaster and emergency awareness, information, misinformation, citizen apathy and/or a feeling their family may be safe from specific incidents or hazards.

DOES YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL HAVE AN EMERGENCY PLAN FOR DISASTER?

YES - 65.2% NO - 2.8% UNSURE - 32.1% (24.5% in 2013)

SUMMARY – The predominant issue from this question is the number of unsure responses. Nearly 1/3 of the survey respondents with school aged children are not sure whether their child's school has a disaster plan, a 7.6% increase from 2013. This relates directly with the prior question on family emergency plans. If an event occurs when the family is separated, this will add to the confusion and stress of the situation. Questions arise whether schools provide this information to all families during the start of each school year, if so, possible changes to the delivery methods may be needed. The information may need to be reinforced multiple times throughout the school year.

DOES YOUR WORKPLACE HAVE AN EMERGENCY PLAN FOR DISASTER?

YES - 69.2% NO - 15.5% UNSURE – 15.2%

SUMMARY – The predominant issue is the number of NO and UNSURE responses. 30.7% of the workers who responded either work in a business without a plan or don't know if one exists. This will be significant if an emergency or disaster situation occurs during the work day.

DO YOU AND ALL OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR FAMILY INCLUDING PETS HAVE A GO KIT/GET AWAY BAG FOR DISASTER?

We have none – 47.61% (45.49% in 2013)

I do not know what a Go Kit or Get Away bag is – 13.83% (18.51% in 2013)

68.54% of the population has at least 1 pet, yet only 12.23% have Go Kits prepared for their pets,

SUMMARY – Nearly half of all respondents are not prepared for one (1) day away from home, let alone any disaster event of longer duration. In 2013, 18.51% did not know what a Go Kit or Get Away Bag was. In 2017, the number was significantly reduced to 13.83%, however the numbers of those who had no Go Kit virtually remained the same. It raises questions why no action was taken to prepare a Go Kit even though many more know what they are and the role they play during an emergency or disaster.

Few citizens have Go Kits for their pets. This raises concerns people may not think about their pets in preparing for emergencies or don't fully understand the complications that may arise in the evacuation and sheltering of pets.

I EXPECT TO BE PERSONALLY AFFECTED BY THIS EVENT WITHIN:

Earthquake

Tsunami

Flooding

27.79% - 3 years or less

16.89% - 3 years or less

63.11% - 3 years or less

48.64% - 10 years or greater

59.4% – 10 years or greater

19.33% - 10 years or greater

SUMMARY – 8.22% of respondents to the survey are unaware or unsure about their risk to specific hazards. Earthquake (48.64%) and Tsunami (59.4%) responses indicate many aren't expecting any impact for 10 years or greater with the exception of flooding where 63.1% expect to be affected by flooding within the next 3 years. The time expectations may be extremely significant when discussing whether citizens are preparing or not for disaster events and whether they are preparing using an all hazard approach.

IF YOU RECEIVED CONFLICTING INFORMATION ABOUT AN APPROACHING DISASTER EVENT, WHO WOULD YOU CONTACT IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE CORRECT INFORMATION YOU WILL NEED?

Local Emergency Management – 40.13%

Local Law Enforcement – 10.6%

Local County Government – 9.53%

Local Fire Department – 8.59%

All Others 31.1%

SUMMARY – These numbers are extremely worrisome. Over 1/3 of respondents will be in search of confirmation of an approaching disaster event by someone other than local emergency management, law enforcement, fire or county government. Rumor and misinformation could gain momentum during this search period and contribute to significant impact of the event upon citizens receiving such information.

IF A DISASTER SITUATION WAS IMMINENT, WOULD YOU EVACUATE YOUR HOME IF TOLD BY AUTHORITIES?

YES – 80.29%

NO – 2.78%

UNSURE – 16.93%

SUMMARY – These numbers indicate nearly 20% of respondents will not evacuate or will need to think about the situation before leaving home. Understanding every emergency or disaster event is unique, these responses truly signify how important the initial message to evacuate will be for all citizens and the fact a consistent message needs to be broadcast over a variety of communication outlets for those seeking confirmation.

AS A PET OWNER, IF YOU WERE TO EVACUATE, WOULD YOU BRING YOUR PET?

YES – 91.1%

NO -3.2%

UNSURE – 5.5%

SUMMARY – These numbers relate to issues many jurisdictions have had getting people to evacuate. Without their pets, they won't leave or will seek an alternative solution. In the past, most shelters were off limits to pets. The Pet Act of 2006 mandated that jurisdictions include pet and animal evacuations in their planning efforts, however pets and animals are still considered personal property according to the law and most plans begin evacuations with people, then personal property. The new wave of pet sheltering is to shelter along with their owners preventing separation.

IF YOU WERE TO EVACUATE, WHERE WOULD YOU MOST LIKELY GO?

68.50% - indicate they would evacuate to an area outside of Grays Harbor County

27.4% - indicate they would stay with family or friends or in a motel in Grays Harbor County.

4.09% - indicate they would not leave their home if an evacuation was deemed necessary.

SUMMARY - The numbers for those staying in county do not indicate which type of disaster event they would be considering. If it was for flooding, the numbers would be tolerable from a planning standpoint. If it was for a large tsunami event, the numbers show a need for full knowledge of the impact a true tsunami event would cause to the area.

**I EXPECT EMERGENCY RESPONSE AGENCIES TO ASSIST
ME IF I MUST EVACUATE MY HOME.**

YES – 19.74% NO – 61.19% UNSURE – 19.07%

SUMMARY – In a true disaster, emergency response agencies will be overwhelmed with emergency calls. The expectation that any response agency will arrive to assist is another area to increase citizen awareness. These results indicate 38.81% of respondents are unsure or believe response agencies will come to assist them, resulting in time lost waiting and looking for answers, when they could be attempting to evacuate. Response agencies will most likely NOT be able to assist individual citizens during an event of any magnitude. Personal preparedness and readiness actions must be instilled in all citizens through public awareness programs.

**IF GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY WAS IMPACTED BY A SIGNIFICANT DISASTER EVENT
LASTING MULTIPLE DAYS, I EXPECT FEDERAL AND STATE RESPONSE AGENCIES,
INCLUDING FEMA AND THE RED CROSS TO RESPOND WITHIN:**

19.26% - 12 hours 31.4% - 24 hours 13.06% - 2 days 10.82% - 3 days 25.46% - 4 days or more

SUMMARY – 69.35% of citizens who responded to the survey expect federal and state assistance within 2 days following a significant event is improbable, if not impossible, following any type of major earthquake or tsunami event. They occur without notice and no pre-staging of necessary supplies would be taking place at the time of occurrence. The 2 day threshold could possibly be reached in a major flood event.

These results may be generated by the old “3 Days - 3 Ways” program of FEMA and Washington State with respondents picking a midrange figure. The new standard in Washington State is “14 Days or More”. It will be interesting to see if this answer changes once the “14 Days or More” program has had a chance to be spread throughout the state.

IF GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY WAS IMPACTED BY A SIGNIFICANT DISASTER EVENT LASTING MULTIPLE DAYS, I EXPECT LOCAL, CITY AND COUNTY RESPONSE AGENCIES TO RESPOND WITHIN:

44.52% - 12 hours 26.95% - 24 hours 8.72% - 2 days 5.42% – 3 days 14.4% - 4 or more days

SUMMARY - Although local response agencies may attempt to mount a quick response in a major event, many access roads, facilities and equipment might be unusable affecting all efforts. The other most notable issue will be how long agencies can assist without reinforcement or being completely overwhelmed by the situation?

IN A SIGNIFICANT DISASTER EVENT LASTING MULTIPLE DAYS, WHO WOULD YOU SEEK OUT TO OBTAIN FOOD OR SHELTER ASSISTANCE?

38.06% - Unsure 11.46% - Church 7.64% - School 14.73% - Fire Department

SUMMARY – Any large impact event will definitely test our preparedness if we cannot evacuate prior to the event. Seeking food, shelter and medical attention will be a priority for all. 38.06% unsure responses is a major indication of the need for public outreach and awareness in every community. Food, water and sheltering are essential during the first 12-48 hours of an event.

In many of the other locations selected, Church, School and Fire Department, may not have the necessary resources to deal with those in search of food, shelter or medical attention.

HAVE YOU SIGNED UP FOR THE GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM?

YES – 59.95% NO – 12.47% I don't know what the Notification System is – 27.59%

SUMMARY – The 2013 YES (40%) and NO (25.81%) responses show our outreach efforts have been very successful to date. The responses indicating 27.59% not knowing there was a Notification System in the county, (34.19% in 2013) , also indicates outreach efforts are working, however it still indicates a strong need for better practices to increase awareness not only from a county level but in our tribal nations, cities and fire districts. The 12.47% NO responses to the notification system must be further investigated for information why those respondents decided not to join.

DO YOU HAVE A NOAA ALL HAZARDS “ALERT” WEATHER RADIO?

YES – 40.19% (37.63% in 2013) NO – 59.81% (62.37% in 2013)

SUMMARY – The question had a flaw in 2013 (We did not add it as the NOAA All Hazards “Alert” Weather Radio). However, the NO responses may indicate a feeling one does not need the weather radio for notification. More work must be done with this information, but one opinion is it has been associated with tsunami warnings. People who have no tsunami threat believe it has no use for their families. A different approach to outreach to the public must be accomplished by all levels of government.

SUMMATION

The 2017 Grays Harbor County Citizen Expectation Survey was conducted to help understand what our citizens are thinking and expecting if a major disaster occurs. The summary results indicate a need for enhanced public information and outreach at the state, county, tribal, city and fire district levels. Expecting citizens to follow old plans or the wishes of local government without reinforcing it with considerable public information and outreach, will exacerbate disaster consequences on all affected by the event. Preparedness will lessen the impact any major disaster event will have upon us, our families, friends, neighbors, businesses and communities.

Citizen and family preparedness are primary concerns for all forms of government and emergency management agencies. Communication by all available means, including social media, will increase the ability to change habits and reinforce clear and concise public messaging and information.

The survey has opened the door to the inadequacies of today. Our common goal must be to strengthen and emphasize the importance of community preparedness and disaster awareness in every jurisdiction. These survey results also provide opportunity to build stronger and more viable emergency and disaster plans, supporting all response agencies, local governments and the citizens of Grays Harbor County.