

CAMPUS PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS TRAINING: SURVEY RESULTS

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ABSTRACT

While crisis and disaster preparedness planning has long been discussed in the emergency management literature, the catastrophic events of 9/11, among numerous others, catapulted this area of research into many diverse disciplines beyond its original scope. In response, practitioners and academics alike have answered the call for better and more advanced crisis and disaster preparedness planning in an effort to improve responses when a critical event occurs. This exploratory survey research investigated perceived crisis and disaster preparedness and resulting feelings of safety and/or fear of faculty and staff at one university.

METHODS

This paper will report the results of a survey of the faculty and staff at a small regional comprehensive university. This study builds on a pilot survey examining disaster preparation and knowledge of two respondent groups, individuals who participated in campus training and individuals who did not attend the training. Our hypotheses are based on the literature available.

Survey topics included individual knowledge and attitudes regarding campus safety policies and disaster preparedness policies and procedures. Specific survey items addressed

- knowledge of evacuation planning and location of emergency exits and emergency call boxes;
- knowledge of location of emergency equipment and resources such as fire alarms, utility shutoffs, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, AED defibrillator boxes;
- knowledge of campus safety and security policies including disaster response, active shooter response, bomb threat, communication plans, continuity plans, data backup plans and emergency alert systems;
- perceptions of the effectiveness and adequacy of campus disaster preparedness plans and training including feelings of safety in offices, classrooms and other campus spaces, willingness to help with campus disaster preparation, perceptions of adequacy of campus safety preparations;
- and finally perceptions about the effectiveness of campus safety and security training (for those who attended the training) including personal feelings of preparedness and safety.

Hypotheses were tested using the Fisher Exact test for comparing the responses of two groups. Results are provided from the pilot study, and will be updated from the larger study at the conference.

<i>Hypotheses</i>	<i>Results</i>
<i>Hypothesis Ia: Compared to individuals who did not take the county sheriff's training, individuals who attended the training would be more informed about exits, evacuation plans, location of fire extinguishers and so on.</i>	No significant ($\alpha = .05$) differences.
<i>Hypothesis Ib: Compared to individuals who did not take the county sheriff's training, individuals who attended the training would be no more informed about</i>	No significant ($\alpha = .05$) differences.

<i>contingency plans for jobs, compensation, and benefits.</i>	
<i>Hypothesis 1c: Compared to individuals who did not take the county sheriff's training, individuals who attended the training would be no more informed about communication plans following a crisis or disaster.</i>	No significant ($\alpha = .05$) differences.
<i>Hypothesis 1d: Compared to individuals who did not take the county sheriff's training, individuals who attended the training would be more confident that the workplace is secure.</i>	No significant ($\alpha = .05$) differences.
<i>Hypothesis 1e: Compared to individuals who did not take the county sheriff's training, individuals who attended the training would be more likely to consider a crisis or disaster a real possibility.</i>	No significant ($\alpha = .05$) differences.
<i>Hypothesis 1f: Compared to individuals who did not take the county sheriff's training, individuals who attended the training would be more likely to conclude that there would be negative consequences for the campus, the students, and our stakeholders if a crisis/disaster were to occur. The results for hypothesis 1f included significant differences in responses between the trained and untrained groups. We hypothesized that the trained group would be more perceptive and attuned to the potential for harm to the institution associated with a crisis or disaster, but the results contradicted our hypothesis.</i>	
<i>Hypothesis 1g: Compared to individuals who did not take the county sheriff's training, individuals who attended the training would be more aware of security enhancements.</i>	No significant ($\alpha = .05$) differences.
<i>Hypothesis 1h: Compared to individuals who did not take the county sheriff's training, individuals who attended the training would be more likely to volunteer for or accept obligations to make the campus more secure. Untrained respondents were more than twice as likely to indicate a willingness to make personal commitments and/or sacrifices to improve campus emergency preparedness when compared to the respondents who attended the sheriff's training. Two of the items Q10 and Q25 were near significance on the Fisher Test for difference of proportion.</i>	
<i>Hypothesis 1ia: Having taken the county sheriff's training, faculty and staff will feel safer at work. The results contradict the safety hypothesis indicating that trained individuals do not feel safer in their offices or the school's classrooms. Trained faculty and staff feelings of anxiety regarding safety in the classroom were significantly higher than untrained individuals at $\alpha = .05$.</i>	
<i>Hypothesis 1ib: Having taken the county sheriff's training, faculty and staff will feel more competent to respond to a crisis or disaster on campus.</i>	No significant ($\alpha = .05$) differences.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results presented above from the pilot study to a large degree do not support the hypotheses; it is anticipated that when the study is conducted with a larger population that significance will increase.

- In general the respondents, both trained and untrained, were not very familiar with the safety policies and procedures of the campus.
- The respondents, trained and untrained, were confident that the ongoing operations of the campus would not be impeded by a crisis or disaster.
- Faculty and staff, both trained and untrained, expressed the strongly held belief that it would be easy for an intruder to come into the workplace and that both workspaces (offices) and classrooms were not secure. In addition they expressed consensus that an active shooter or other crisis was a real possibility.
- Another interesting result is that untrained individuals were much more likely to agree with statements indicating a willingness to volunteer or take a leadership role in disaster preparedness.
- Finally, trained individuals reported that they did not feel safer in their offices and reported feeling significantly less safe in their classrooms after attending the training.