The Principles of Effective Warnings

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The e-book *The Principles of Effective Warnings: For Emergency Agencies, Health and Education Authorities, Local Government, Media, Business* focuses on how effective warnings might be developed for different emergency situations, so that people can take action to protect themselves. Ian Mannix is the editor of this publication, and he has drawn from a range of experts to provide input. He has also contributed to many chapters himself. The book provides a starting point for people learning about the basic aspects of what constitutes effective warnings.

Unlike many warnings publications, the book starts with a human-centred focus, rather than technical. The first chapter summarises some of the key components of effective warnings from a people perspective, such as the aims of a warning (i.e. understanding the threat and taking appropriate action) and the components that might affect such responses (e.g. interpretation, consistency, trust). It links with key warning principles recommended in Australia (e.g. by the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience).

Subsequent chapters dive more into the context and specifics of warnings. Chapter 2 outlines different disasters and how warnings might apply within those contexts, and delves into issues regarding ethics, duty of care and legal issues. Trauma psychologist Rob Gordon contributes a chapter (Chapter 3) on how humans respond to disasters across response through to the recovery phase. Given that disasters can be highly stressful for people, he also touches on how you might communicate with people in a stressed state, an important consideration when issuing warnings and subsequent supporting information. Additionally, he covers the needs of diverse and vulnerable communities before and after emergencies. There are brief chapters (4 and 5) on global warming and risk. These chapters touch lightly on the topics themselves, but do not have in-depth discussion of their relationship with warnings.

Chapter 6 focuses heavily on warnings, and the research behind them. It draws from prominent researchers in the warning space (e.g. Dennis Mileti, John Sorenson) to understand the key social components that influence the warning process. It discusses the context for different types of warnings (e.g. for different hazards) and proposes a framework for different warning pathways. Aspects of warnings such as frequency, timing, alert levels and more are also presented. The final two chapters (7 and 8) look more closely at how to create an effective warning in terms of wording, content and source, and provide commentary on the holistic nature of warning systems. At the back in the appendices, there is a long list of warning examples, and resources for further reading.

While this publication is based on relevant literature, some aspects are referenced well throughout the text, and others are missing key references. In particular the new conceptual 'frameworks' and 'models' presented in the book would have benefited from referencing the sources behind the concepts. Additionally, while the publication has some great background material on effective warnings, the chapters tend to jump around a bit, reducing the flow of the book. As highlighted earlier, some do not seem to address the topic of warnings in detail. However, given its general readability, this is a good publication to flick though for an overview. It contains some useful material that can be further explored via the links to the background resources (for example, the Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook on Public Information and Warnings published by the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience). It also presents a number of examples that might be useful to practitioners when considering how to develop effective warnings.