

Overview

Do 1 Thing a practical application of decades of research into disaster behavior and communication. It is intended to overcome barriers to emergency preparedness, but it is also intended to facilitate better crisis decision-making during an emergency event. It is more than an emergency awareness program, it is a program that improves disaster outcomes through action.

Application

The goal of Do 1 Thing is that everyone has access to information about risk and vulnerability, allowing them to make informed decisions; and access to resources that can help them become better disaster decision-makers.

Do 1 Thing approaches accessibility in two ways: first, by making materials as accessible as possible, and second by partnering with organizations and volunteers to reach those don't have regular access to the internet. Do 1 Thing's accessible materials include low-literacy, large print, audio files, close-captioned videos, braille, and translations into several languages.



Emergency Preparedness

Do 1 Thing is based on proven communication principles. Successful communication, as outlined by Dr. Dennis Mileti and other disaster researchers, is a process where information is:



Barriers exist in each step of the communication process and the information provided may be disregarded at any point. Do 1 Thing materials are designed to overcome these barriers using effective communication techniques and by employing themes of:

- **Personal responsibility** (you are the only one who can ensure your own safety and the safety of your family in an emergency)
- **Social responsibility** (every step you take in becoming prepared will help first responders, your loved ones, and others in your community; if you know your family is taken care of, you will be better able to help others)
- **Disasters change things** (You may not have the things you take for granted every day—electricity, water, cell phones, 911, in-home assistance, etc.)
- **Empowerment** (You can make a difference by taking a small step)

Disaster Decision-Making

Emergencies are high-stress situations where decisions with serious consequences may be required under less than optimal circumstances. Do 1 Thing recognizes that decisions are made by the process of sensemaking (as described by Dr. Karl Weick) and that disaster decisions in particular are heavily influenced by our normalcy bias.

Sensemaking is a process that we go through automatically in an unfamiliar situation. It's the "wait a minute, what's going on here?" and the "Oh, now I get it," process. In an emergency, under stress and in a chaotic environment, sensemaking becomes more difficult. People may misinterpret or even ignore the feedback they are getting and make poor decisions, often with serious consequences. Feelings of betrayal, being overwhelmed or helpless, denial, anger and panic are often signs that sensemaking is not working effectively in a crisis.

Normalcy Bias is our belief that our actions will always have the same outcome, regardless of circumstances. For example, a new driver may expect that applying the same pressure to the brake pedal at the same distance from a stop sign will always result in a safe stop. It's not necessarily that they don't understand that it is harder to stop on wet or icy roads, but they may overestimate their own ability to control the car and how the car will respond under those conditions.

Do 1 Thing enables sensemaking in a crisis by helping individuals build a framework through which they can interpret and act on information received both before and during an emergency. This mental framework can help overcome normalcy bias by teaching people recognize the signs of a crisis and understand that the event may have unpredictable outcomes.

Completion of preparedness tasks also contributes to improved disaster decision-making and to the development of a good mental framework for emergencies.

- Accomplishing the tasks associated with preparedness increases self-efficacy
- Having needed items on hand in an emergency reduces stress and increases a sense of control
- The act of planning for emergencies provides an opportunity for people to think and talk through how the event might affect them

Conclusion

Do 1 Thing seeks to engage people as active participants in the process of preparing communities for disasters. We acknowledge that they have a choice in preparedness and in how they will respond in a disaster, and that they have unique circumstances and perspectives that influence what they can and will do. Not only should information be in an accessible format, but recommendations and activities should be flexible enough to be adapted to as many circumstances as possible. These principles underlie all of the organization's activities.