

FACTSHEET RISK COMMUNICATION MEASURES

Accompanying information and dialogue during implementation of reconstruction and flood prevention measures for increasing risk awareness and acceptance by citizens

Where was it implemented?

City of Meissen, Saxony, Germany

Related to measure from the catalogue of measures

- Provision of information as reading materials
- Interactive communication and participation formats
- Contact persons and consultation hours for citizens' consultation

Target group

general public

Problem

On 27 May 2014, the district Meissen-Triebischtal was affected by a heavy rain event of 40-60 l/m² precipitation per hour in the catchment area of the Triebisch river and its tributaries. Resulting floodings and mud flows on and from farmlands passed the forested valleys, reached the settlement area of Triebischtal and caused damages of 6 mio. Euro.

The extensive measures for damage repair, reconstruction and risk prevention required a high degree of accompanying public relations work.

The screenshot shows a webpage from the City of Meissen. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'HOME | KONTAKT | IMPRESSUM'. Below that is a header with the city logo and the text 'Willkommen in der Porzellan- und Weinstadt Meißen'. The main content area features a large photo of the city's red-roofed buildings. Below the photo is a sidebar menu with 'Rathaus' selected, listing various city departments like 'Städtische Einrichtungen', 'Städtische Gesellschaften', etc. The main text area is titled 'Pressearchiv' and shows a press release from 'Dienstag, 14. März 2017' with the headline 'Aufforstung zur Hochwasserprävention - Pflanzung tausender neuer Bäume in Korbitz'. The text describes the planting of thousands of trees on former agricultural land to improve flood protection. A photo shows two people planting a tree in a field. The text concludes with 'Oberbürgermeister Olaf Raschke. Es wurden zunächst die vier Flächen für eine Aufforstung vorgesehen, die mit der'.

Screenshot of a press release of the from March 14, 2017 about prevention activities in the affected area.

Source: City of Meissen (2017), URL: <https://www.stadt-Meissen.de/Aufforstung.html> (20/10/20219)

Description and aim

The City of Meissen conducted many interviews with citizens and the media. Almost 20 press releases and several journal articles were published by the municipality to inform the public about the heavy rain event including damages and later on about ongoing repair and (re-)construction activities (see picture above). Information have been provided to the public directly via the homepage of the municipality, their official gazette and were disseminated through the media. Additionally, the City of Meissen showed commitment on conferences to share their experiences with the expert audience and organised public information events for their citizens. Being part of the RAINMAN project is also a decision made by the municipality and belongs to their local bundle of measures. After having finished the reconstruction measures, information boards were positioned in the area. Implemented measures in the valley "Kirchsteigbachtal" have been visited by the RAINMAN project partners and were explained on an an excursion, which has been announced in their official gazette.

Effect of measure

Regular and continuous information of the public improve the acceptance of planned and implemented measures. When citizens are involved in the participation process in an early stage, better solutions for all parties involved can be found and conflicts are avoided. Information boards help to keep the risk permanently in mind and the memory alive.

| Description of implementation | |
|--|---|
| Effect horizon: short-/medium-/long-term | Involved stakeholders: City of Meissen, various media |
| Lessons-learned | |
| <p>Main success factor: By making use of a diversity in communication methods and dialogue formats, several stakeholders and citizens across different ages were addressed and reached. This led to an enhanced risk awareness and better acceptance of implemented measures.</p> | <p>Main challenge: Not all by public authority planned measures to reduce the risk of floods receive equal acceptance amongst citizens, especially when they pursue different targets. Compromises between all parties involved as well as a high level of sensitivity during the planning process are required.</p> <p>It is of importance to find a compromise between knowledge transfer, information about planned measures and balance of interests of all involved stakeholders.</p> <p>Media, especially social media, are not a suitable communication channel to balance interests.</p> |
| <p>Synergies / beneficial aspects: Positive press work about flood prevention, especially the communication of best practice examples to other stakeholders with similar problems and interests raises risk awareness, the consciousness about the necessity of prevention as well as the need for choice of suitable prevention measures.</p> <p>Press releases about planned and implemented measures might catch the attention of other cities and communes and measures can serve as a good example for others with similar problems.</p> | <p>Conflicts / constraints: Public information events require a very good preparation and much sensitivity to deal with the issues and concerns of the citizens and cope with the manifold interests of the many parties involved appropriately.</p> |
| Key message to others starting with a similar task | Contact |
| Encouragement of risk awareness and risk communication are a crucial part of heavy rain risk management. Proactive communication of planned precaution measures and a dialogue between all stakeholders and the public are of enormous importance. Risk communication should aim to sensitize consciousness of possible action strategies, but should point out limits of what is possible at the same time. | City of Meissen, Office for Public Relations, Markt 1, 01662 Meissen E-Mail: presse@stadt-meissen.de |
| Further information (in German) | <p>Steffen Wackwitz (2015): Das Starkniederschlagsereignis in Meissen im Sommer 2014, in: WasserWirtschaft 9/2015, URL: https://www.springerprofessional.de/das-starkniederschlagsereignis-in-Meissen-im-sommer-2014/6110106, 13.11.2019.</p> <p>City of Meissen: Pressearchiv [press archive] - search: „Kirchsteig“, „Korbitz“, „Starkregen“ for press releases from 2014 to 2018, URL: https://www.stadt-Meissen.de/pressearchiv.html, 16.12.2019 (any press releases in German)</p> |