Sarah Delicate - Clarington 2017 Flood Survivor & Reluctant Advocate
Agenda – 10 messages

1. Flood-Plain people are just Plain-People

2. Emergency responders – you’re it.
“Richies living the California lifestyle in their vanity houses”

- Not even close to true
- Dismissive & dangerous mental model
- Even the ‘richies’ pay their taxes and received permits

UNDERSTAND AND ASSESS SOCIAL VULNERABILITY, and respond accordingly.
Residents did not **ASK** to be flooded.

Unless you are equally going to blame people that live near trees for forest fire, near fault lines for earthquakes, near train tracks for train derailments, please do not blame people for living near water.

It’s just not helpful and it sets a very poor platform for trust relationships.

*It also ignores the decades of development and policy decisions that have decimated wet lands, paved watersheds, raised our lake levels and screwed our climate.*
Assume your residents know ZILCH about flood response or recovery.

Unless you have trained them in advance, they have no clue how to even fill a sandbag, let alone deploy one.

However, trust that you WILL NEED THEM in response, because you WON’T have enough responders, and calling in the province doesn’t happen quickly.

Consider training your risk-residents in advance, &/or train a suitability-sized public volunteer crew for rapid deployment.
Assume home insurance will NOT cover flood, and that residents know it.

Would you evacuate your home and risk losing it, or would you stay behind, fight with everything you’ve got, and ‘man’ your pumps 24/7?

Evacuation is not a plan, it is a last resort that will bankrupt families.

Assume residents will not leave unless forced.
When flooding extends over days and weeks, residents will be physically exhausted, mentally depleted, financially strapped and emotionally raw. They don’t have a home to ‘go-home-to’. Adjust your expectations.

Also, trust that residents already had the usual mound of crap going on in their lives, like sick and dying relatives, illness, job loss, divorce, etc.

If YOUR crew is also physically exhausted, mentally challenged and emotionally raw, then it’s time to call in help.
If you are NOT the ‘response’ in flood response, then who the heck is?

4.2 Provision and Distribution of Sandbags:

“Most of the Fire Chiefs or Deputy Chiefs contacted said that initial flood response sits with operations departments rather than the fire department. Fire department assists where it can and it is feasible but they don’t want to set a precedent for response.”

So... Fire does not want to set a precedent, and the municipality can decide if they want to help? How does this make sense?

Dillon Consulting research (2017), concluded that:

“Most of the Fire Chiefs or Deputy Chiefs contacted said that initial flood response sits with operations departments rather than the fire department.

Fire department assists where it can and it is feasible but they don’t want to set a precedent for response.”

Don’t wait to be ankle-deep to figure out ‘whose jurisdiction?’ it is. That kinda takes the emergency out of emergency response if you have to wait for a council meeting to talk it through.
Fire is not a ‘private home owner issue’, right?

Well, *neither is flood.*

You don’t bring buckets of water to residents and tell them to put out the fire.

Don’t just bring sand and bags and assume homeowners can hold back a flood. *They can’t.*

And if the issue is that you are not properly resourced to respond, then fight for the resources you need NOW. *Don’t just say this is not your problem.*

#7

Because it 100% is, and 100% climate change will bring it to you.
A general Emergency Management plan is NOT A FLOOD PLAN.

If your municipality does not have a specific plan for the hazard of flooding, then you simply don’t have a plan.

And never having had a flood is not a good enough reason for not having a specific plan. We have a plan for nuclear disaster, but have never had one.

That’s kinda the point.

Flood is now your #1 hazard.

Dillon Consulting research (2017), concluded that:

#8
Train and resource in flood response.

Just like fire, flood behaves differently in different situations. AND, like fire, flood needs to be prevented from spreading, or be strategically directed, as much as possible.

Don’t assume your responders and municipal staff have ANY idea what to do in flood. In fact, assume they don’t.

Train them. Then retrain them. Then hold practice drills. Then do it again.
The response needs to be ‘landscape level’.

A coordinated, informed and landscape-level response would have protected homes, citizens, and the evacuation route.

Here is clear evidence of the effectiveness of stronger, well-built walls.
It required 3 full days over 3 weekends to coordinate and implement landscape-level protections. The first 1/3 by the EMC and MNRF, the next 1/3 by the Deputy Fire Chief, and the remaining 1/3 initiated and coordinated by residents. There were over 100 volunteers and heavy equipment was required.
Your authority and reach in flood prevention and mitigation is EVERYONE’S best hope.

How you issue permits, build your roads and houses, manage your greenspace and watersheds, support your responders, manage your conservation authorities... all of this will save $$, properties, families and lives.

Prevent, Mitigate, Prepare.

In response, be ready to make quick decisions.

In recovery, plan for the future.

LOBBY FOR RESOURCES. Climate Change has been laid at your feet, and your responders and citizens are in harm’s way if you are not resourced adequately.