



Natural hazards: translating science for those in harm's way

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As scientists we thrive on discussing research with our colleagues. Are we taking the time to communicate with those living in areas particularly vulnerable to natural disasters? Are we doing enough to bridge the gap between monitoring and studying natural phenomena and translating our research results for engineers, policy makers, builders, lenders, insurers, educators, and relief organizations who may benefit? Literally translating a scientific research article into common language understandable by the non-scientist is one step. Yet large portions of the scientific literature, potentially useful to the public, remain "untranslated" in the scientific literature. Making the journals accessible to the public may be mere panacea. As a first step, research scientists should identify which areas of research are most useful to those living in hazard-prone parts of the world. Then, deliver that research in a context useful to the affected population. Appropriate vehicles for communication could include web sites, popular press, educational materials, and others. We need to redouble efforts to communicate research results to scientific colleagues who lack resources to attend meetings or have limited access to journals. Specific initiatives within scientific societies and collaboration with government agencies that support research can lead to delivering science to individuals and civic organizations that need the information to mitigate the next disaster.