Floods Happen… Be Prepared

Lead Organisation: Civil Contingencies Unit and Staffordshire County Council

Partners:

- Environment Agency
- Lancaster University
- CUIDAR

The Project

The 'Floods Happen… Be Prepared' project took place at 3 schools across Burton and Tamworth: Paget School, Burton, Rawlett School, Tamworth and Landau Forte Academy Amington in Tamworth between May and July 2018, engaging a total of 440 students.

Flooding is one of the highest risks to people and properties in the UK so being prepared is essential. Due to this, Staffordshire County Council, SWM members, and the Civil Contingencies Unit supported by SWM members the Environment Agency and other partners, are encouraging residents in Burton to make sure they know their flood risk and are ready for flood events. Delivering these sessions to the children of the community is not only a fun way of providing them with necessary information, but also helps to engage their parents in the processes and encourages them to become more directly involved.

Flood awareness sessions were delivered to 440 year seven students across all 3 schools between May and July 2018. The purpose of the projects was to educate the pupils on the various aspects of a flood scenario and how it would feel to be involved in one. This included information and demonstrations on how they could prepare themselves, and the community, on how best to reduce the impact of the flood. This involved information on how to check their flood risk as well as what a 'grab bag' is.

Aims

- Increase community awareness about the residual flood risk in Burton and Tamworth
- Build community resilience to reduce the impact from flood risk

- Ensure young people are aware of their local flood risk and ways to prepare for this
- Increase the number of people that sign up to flood warnings in Burton and Tamworth
- Encourage young people to disseminate this information to their communities.

Challenges

The main challenge faced in delivering this project was the pupils were not aware of the flood risk due to the reliance on flood defences. As a result of this, being prepared was not a priority and many were not aware of taking up the preparation strategies discussed. Despite this, developing and implementing a multi-faceted approach and using internal partner organisations has been successful in increasing engagement with this issue.

A secondary challenge comes as many residents in the area believe that the only flood risk is the river; however, this is not necessarily the case. In this area and in others similarly built, surface water flooding can be a major issue. This occurs when there are not enough natural receptors, such as grass and plant life, to intercept the heavy rainfall. As eliminating floods is not an option, tackling these challenges is essential in reducing the impact of a flood.

The Outcome

Results

As a result of the sessions held at the schools, student preparedness has increased. Before the session, just 30% of the students involved in this project knew how to check their flood risk, by the end, this number was 96%. This represents a huge success for the event, as not only does it mean that the children directly involved will be more confident on how to respond to a flood event, it also means their parents and others will also benefit from this knowledge.

As well as this, prior to the session held at the school, only 19% of the students who took part knew what a ‘grab bag’ was. Following the session, this rose to 88%. This is, again, another enormous success for all those involved. Grab bags have become a key tool used by many in disaster scenarios, whether it be flooding or a house fire. Understanding the importance of such a tool, could be monumental in reducing the impact of a flood, both to human life and property.

Finally, by the end of the session, 88% of the students were able to name at least three ways in which they could prepare themselves for the event of a flood and 87% of pupils said that they would now be able to produce a flood/emergency plan for their household. This is one of the most important aspects of the event. By enabling these children to understand how to best prepare themselves for a disaster scenario such as a flood, this will again reduce the impact on human life and property. This could be by assembling an emergency kit, or by establishing an evacuation route with their family. It overall shows that the children are now better equipped to handle a flood.

In the Future

The success of this event has made it possible for The Environment Agency to continue to deliver these sessions in the future. The sessions were really enjoyed by all, both staff and students with one stating that it was “the best lesson ever.” As a result of the hard work carried out, the resources used have been left with the school so that they can now include them as a part of their year 7 curriculum. The schools have agreed to deliver this session in the future as part of the wider curriculum to their year 7 students. This means that from this point forward, all students attending the school will be equipped with the knowledge on how to both prepare for and respond to a flood situation.

As well as this, further sessions have been planned for the autumn Term for one secondary school in Tamworth and one secondary school in Burton, delivering the sessions to more than 740 students. If the success of this event is reciprocated, this will mean the continued delivery of this project to more and more areas of the UK, spreading this information further and further!

The Extra’s

Awards and endorsements

Laura White Head of Geography, Paget School, Burton: *"It was well planned and delivered.... the pupils got so much from the sessions too so a big thankyou from them"* and *“I really appreciate the enthusiasm, fun and purpose that was brought to the sessions!”*

Liz Fowler, Flood Resilience Engagement Advisor from the Environment Agency said: *“Children and young people are often forgotten when affected by flooding, but it has a devastating effect on the whole family, with families often having to move out of their home until it is repaired.”*

Paul Jenkins, Assistant Director of Learning from Rawlett School said: *"The fantastic flood lessons have given 200 students a greater awareness of flood risk and safety in an active and fun way.*

Students really enjoyed team work, problem solving and developing their decision making skills. A really valuable experience."

Laura Ball, Community Flood Resilience Officer from Staffordshire Civil Contingencies Unit said:

"Educating young people about the dangers of flooding as well as ways to reduce the risks through correct preparation is so important. Staffordshire Prepared want to make sure communities of tomorrow are able to be as resilient as possible against flooding."

Links and Downloads

Staffordshire Prepared website

Contact Details

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