



Questions to Ask and What to Listen For

BUILDING RISK COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Use the following conversation starters to help people open up and share what they care about. In a group, consider multiple-choice questions, ask for a show of hands, or use polling software or flip charts to gather information. Ask people to share their experiences with hazards. It's a great way to get people talking.

Get the Conversation Started

Sample Questions

- “Tell me more” – is often enough to get someone talking. This helps you learn more about what is really behind their question or comment.
 - “Tell me more about [why you live where you do, your concerns about flooding, your thoughts on this new ordinance]” – helps evoke a more targeted response or helps narrow the focus of the conversation.
 - “Help me understand your situation” – can show that you care and want to help. It invites them to share information about their personal situation without feeling threatened or judged.
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Find Out Where They Live and Why

Tip: One way to connect with people is to learn more about what they like about their community.

Listen for why they may want to protect it.

Sample Questions

- Where do you live and why did you choose that area?
 - What do you like most about where you live and why?
 - What in your community is most important to you?
 - How long have you lived here? How long do you intend to stay?
 - It sounds like you have been here awhile, what are your thoughts on ____ ?
 - What motivated you to run for office to represent your town?
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Ask About Their Experiences with Flooding and Storms

Tip: This will provide some insight into their level of preparedness or denial about being impacted again. This can be an emotional conversation, so listen carefully to understand where they are and how you can help move them along the preparedness spectrum.

Sample Questions

- Have you seen flooding in your neighborhood or community? What was it like?
- Has flooding ever been disruptive to your daily life?
- During the last big storm, did your house have any damage?
- What concerns do you have about (flooding, future storms)?
- Do you have flood insurance? Why or why not?
- It sounds like you have some experience. What are your thoughts on flooding in our community?

Find Out How Prepared They Are

Tip: Listen for clues about what people have done and what they can't do, and why.

A *community-focused person* may prefer to identify preparedness opportunities the community can take together. An *individual-focused person* may prefer discussing actions they can take on their own to improve their personal situation. Individual-focused people may use “I” or “me,” while community-focused people may use “we,” in their answers. Use caution as this is not always clear-cut.

Sample Questions

- Do you have an emergency plan? Does your town have a hazard mitigation plan?
- What steps have you taken to protect your home from flooding or storms?
- What steps has the community taken to protect it from flooding or storms?
- What would you like to do to prepare?

Keep the Conversation Going

Tip: Hopefully, this will be an ongoing dialogue. Invite people into a conversation about potential actions and next steps.

Sample Questions

- How would you like to continue this conversation so we can help each other learn more?
- What hazard reduction solutions should we explore as a community?
- What next steps should we take to be better prepared?
- What actions are you interested in to better prepare your community, home, or family?

Need extra help?

- View sample conversations in the *Risk Communication Basics* guidebook at coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/training/risk-communication-guidebook.html.
- Attend the Building Risk Communication Skills Training. Learn more at coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/training/building-risk-communication-skills.html.