



Coping with floods after the severe event in 2002: Recent changes in preparedness, response and recovery of flood-affected residents in Germany

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In the aftermath of the severe flood in August 2002, a number of political changes on flood policies in Germany and Europe were launched aiming at an improved risk communication and management. The question arises, whether flood-affected private households are now better prepared than in 2002. Therefore, computer-aided telephone interviews with private households that suffered property damage due to flooding in 2005, 2006, 2010 or 2011 were performed. The obtained data were also compared to results from a similar investigation carried out by Thielen et al. (2007 - *Hydrol. Sci. J.* 52(5): 1016-1037) after the flood in 2002. After 2002, a larger part of people knew that they are at risk of flooding and the level of private precaution increased considerably. Yet this knowledge did not necessarily result in actual building retrofitting or flood proofing measures. Accordingly, the benefits and cost savings of these actions still have to be communicated in a better way. Best precaution before the flood event in 2011 and 2006 might be explained by more flood experience and overall greater awareness of the residents. Early warning and emergency response were substantially influenced by the floods' characteristics. In contrast to flood-affected people in 2006 or 2011, people affected by floods in 2005 or 2010 had to deal with shorter lead times, less time to take emergency measures and consequently suffered higher losses. Therefore, it is important to further improve early warning systems and communication channels, particularly in hilly areas with fast onset flooding.