



Driving into danger: Perception and communication of flash flood risk from a cultural perspective

A. Coles, K.K. Hirschboeck, and S. Fryberg
University of Arizona

Flood risk managers educate the public on the dangers of driving through flooded roadways, yet losses to life and property continue to occur. This study integrates cultural psychology and risk perception theory to explore how culture, psychological processes, and behavior influence one another. Flood risk managers in Tucson, Arizona collaborated in the development of a questionnaire mailed to local residents. Questions regarding levels of trust, self-efficacy, social autonomy, social incorporation, time perspective, and situational factors were analyzed with respect to whether respondents stated that they have or have not driven through a flooded roadway. Respondents' decisions are influenced by the presence of signs and barricades, passengers, risk of personal injury or damage to the vehicle, and the availability of flood-related information. The most influential factor is the prior successful crossing of other vehicles. The results illuminate complex interrelations among the cultural factors and provide considerations for future risk perception research.