SMS Text Messaging for Public Health Emergencies

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Here’s where we’re coming from.
National Health Security Strategic Objectives

#5: Improve community resilience and emergency response through timely and effective communications
Our vision

From: 546426
boil water order issued for
city of duvall. Drink only
bottled water or boiled
water until further notice
11:23am 7/16/09
How do we reach our vision?

- Technical
- Logistical
- Audience
- Cost
- Legal issues
Who do we want to reach?

And how do they use texting?

Photo by Stephen Goyer
Example Texter Types

On-the-go Texter

Security Texter

Social Texter
Telephone survey: What does our texting public want from Public Health?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Message</th>
<th>% of participants who are likely or very likely to sign up to receive messages.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Messages about emergencies</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages about emergency preparedness</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health tips</td>
<td>26%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
How do you get people to sign up?

For emergency updates
    text 4publichealth
What increases opt-in?

- Perception of high value
- Messages personalized to the consumer
- Assurances of limited texts
Texting a second dose reminder
It’s been 30 days since your child got their flu shot at the health clinic.

Here’s your reminder to get them a 2nd dose of vaccine. Call your doctor or pharmacy for an appt. today.

Ok to send?
What legal issues should you expect?

CAUTION

Protected Health Information Ahead
It’s been 30 days since your child got their flu shot at the health clinic.

Here’s your reminder to get them a 2nd dose of vaccine. Call your doctor or pharmacy for an appt. today.
Keep your children protected against the flu. Some kids need a second dose 30 days after they receive their first flu shot.

Do you remember asking for a text message reminder for flu vaccine? Its time! Call a doctor or pharmacy to schedule an appointment.
Lessons learned

*84% OPT-IN
Next Steps

Security review of text messaging

SMS texting in multiple languages

Calls with health departments

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Research Team

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For more information

- About the text messaging project: [http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/preparedness/texting](http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/preparedness/texting)
or contact Hilary Karasz at [hilary.karasz@kingcounty.gov](mailto:hilary.karasz@kingcounty.gov)

- About the Northwest PERRC research on emergency communication to vulnerable populations: [http://www.nwcphp.org/research/nwperrc](http://www.nwcphp.org/research/nwperrc)