

Disability, Community, Emergency

Tamarack Emergency Preparedness Community of Practice

Tuesday, February 18, 2025
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About Me

- Strategic Designer, with a focus on public service design and delivery
- Conducted independent research on NWT Wildfire Evacuation
- Master's research included persons with disabilities in the examination of the design of a community garden

Disability and Emergencies

- MacEachen Institute - [Dalhousie University](#)
- The Conversation - [Fiona: People with disabilities need more support in extreme storms](#)
- Halifax Examiner - [Needs of People with Disabilities Must Be Considered in Emergencies, Advocates Say](#)
- Manitoba - [Disability Emergency Management Network \(DEM-NET\)](#)

Why focus on disability?

- 27% of the population has a disability
- In Nova Scotia, this is as high as 40% of the population
- The needs of persons with disabilities are diverse
- Services are more responsive and effective when we involve persons with disabilities in research, design, and iteration

Individual
Family
Service
Organization
Community

Before

During

After

Service Needs in an Emergency

1. Clear information
2. Economic sufficiency
3. Transportation
4. Safe accommodation
5. Service continuity

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Clear Information



Image Source: Canadian Geographic

1. Clear Information

- Accessibility compliant websites
- Advance notice of risk, ongoing communication of escalation, identification of steps required to stay safe, supports available
- Plain language
- Design for screen readers, assistive technology, for low vision
- Time stamped, centralized updates

Before

What to prepare
for

How to prepare

Support with
preparation

During

Supports
available

Steps to take

Safety
Considerations

After

Clean Up/Return

Re-establishing
safety and daily
life

Information Proliferates in an Emergency



Trust is a significant factor in how people select and manage information



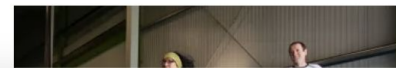
RCMP seek public's help over Fort Smith incidents

Aastha Sethi · February 17, 2025

'I wish we could work together in one huge practice'



After the upheaval of the past week's clinic closure, Yellowknife's veterinarians are talking about the possibility of closer collaboration within the industry.



Designing Government Websites as Services

Design with, to help people achieve goals

- What is the person trying to do? What do they need to do?
- What specific needs does the person have that might affect how they do that?
- What steps do they need to take now, next, and later?
- What supports are available to help them?

Understand who you are designing with

- A person with a disability
- A carer
- A parent of a child with a disability
- A child of a parent with a disability
- A community organization

*Each of these groups will likely require their own content

Until ChatGPT:

Most people searched for information via Google, not thru government directly

Government information needs to be structured around a goal, i.e “**Evacuate with a service dog**” for people to find and make use of information

Journey Based Website Design

- Conduct service design research with affected peoples and organizations to understand journeys, steps, and how to simplify information and pathways
- Create goal-oriented and step-based web content to guide people through a website based service, instead of relying on PDFs and forms
- Conduct usability testing of the content to ensure it meets the needs of those it intends to provide a service to
- Aim to reduce steps where possible, through back end design

Ideas on where to start

- Convert emergency preparation guidance into a journey based website
- Design for personalization using drop down menus that can identify specific needs and interests
- Use postal codes to identify available services in a community and identify direct linkages and connections that can be made to receive assistance
- Populate an emergency plan as the concluding screen of the website service and enable persons to email it to themselves, so they can share it with friends and loved ones

Emergency preparedness *guide*

for **people with**
disabilities/special needs



Know the risks



Make a plan



Design *with*