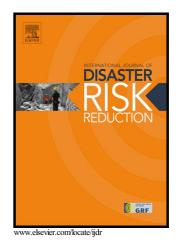
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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Eyeing the storm: How residents of coastal Florida see hurricane forecasts and warnings

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Abstract: This paper examines the societal dimensions of warning decisions during extreme weather events in one of the most hurricane-prone areas in the U.S., Miami-Dade County, Florida. With the aim of informing improvements in the hurricane forecast and warning system, and better understanding warning decisions in extreme weather events, we explore how members of the public obtain and use hurricane forecasts and warnings in decision making. Results from in depth mental models interviews with members of the public (N=28) and survey data from three counties in Florida (N=460) show that a large majority of respondents have some hurricane experience, which influences their thinking about storm impacts, individual actions to mitigate the hazard, and vulnerability to the hazard. Comparison with results from previous research with warning system professionals (National Weather Service forecasters, media broadcasters, and public officials) indicates several gaps between professionals and laypeople including different perceptions of hurricane risks overall and related to flooding from storm surge. The findings suggest several areas for improvements in the hurricane forecast and warning system.

Keywords: hurricane, forecast, warning, mental models, risk communication

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