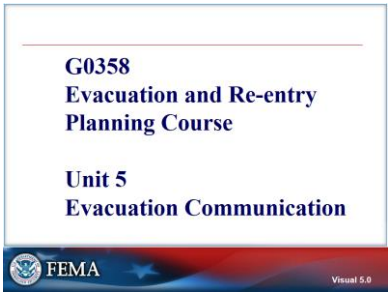
Unit 5: Evacuation Communications

Notes	Content
Visual 5.0  	**Evacuation Communication** At the conclusion of this unit, participants will be able to do the following: 1. Decide what information to convey to the public about evacuation. 2. Determine how to communicate evacuation information to the public to ensure that instructions will be understood and followed. 3. Determine when to release information about evacuation to the public. 4. Determine who is responsible for evacuation communication in their home jurisdiction. This unit will cover the following topics: • Community education about evacuation before any event • Communicating evacuation information to the public when evacuation is recommended or ordered • Communicating information to the public during the evacuation • Communicating evacuation information to special populations, transients and tourists
	References The following sources will provide information used in this unit: www.ready.gov Basic Disaster Supply kit: https://www.ready.gov/kit

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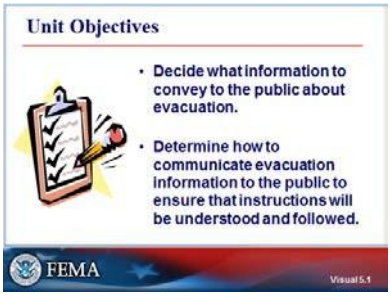
A suggested schedule for this unit follows:

Introduction	10 Minutes
Educating the Community About Evacuation	10 Minutes
Communicating Evacuation Readiness Information	10 Minutes
Communicating the Evacuation Order	30 Minutes
Total Time	1.0 Hour

INTRODUCTION

Visual 5.1



Objectives

At the conclusion of this unit, participants will be able to do the following:

- Decide what information to convey to the public about evacuation.
- Determine how to communicate evacuation information to the public to ensure that instructions will be understood and followed.

Visual 5.2

Objectives

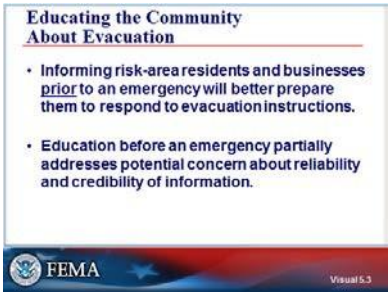
At the conclusion of this unit, participants will be able to do the following:

- Determine when to release information about evacuation to the public.
- Determine who is responsible for evacuation communication in their home jurisdiction.

Notes	Content

EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY ABOUT EVACUATION

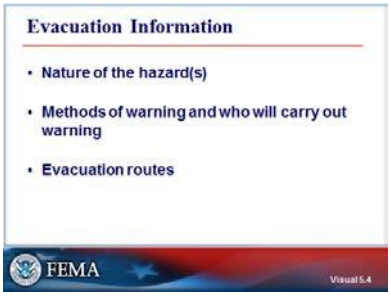
Visual 5.3



When an emergency occurs, usually there is no time for educating the community about the jurisdiction's emergency plans, only for warning and emergency public information.

- In communities where information has been disseminated and reinforced to risk-area residents and businesses prior to any emergency, the population will be better prepared to respond to evacuation instructions.
- Education before an emergency partially addresses the potential evacuees' concern about the reliability and credibility of information.

Visual 5.4



Evacuation Information

What kind of information will be helpful for risk-area residents and workers to receive prior to any emergency?

- Nature of the hazard(s)
- Methods of warning and who will carry out warning
- Evacuation routes

Visual 5.5

Evacuation Information

What kind of information will be helpful for risk-area residents and workers to receive prior to any emergency?

- Information about emergency shelters
- Information about risks of in-place sheltering
- Information about care of pets and domestic animals

Note that these items will all be covered in the evacuation plan/annex.

Public information materials should be consistent with procedures described in the plan or annex.

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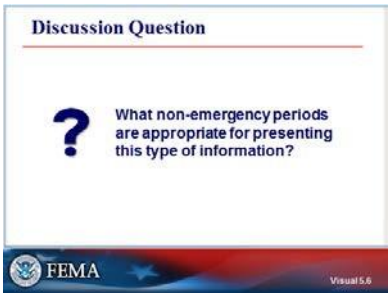
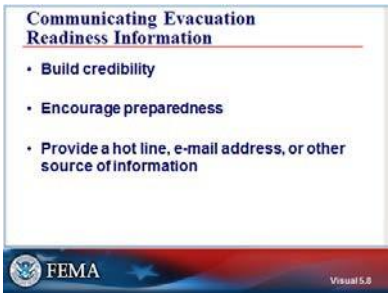
Visual 5.6 	**Discussion Question** **What non-emergency periods are appropriate for presenting this type of information?**
Visual 5.7	**Methods of Communication** How can this information be presented so that residents and workers will read or listen and recall when needed? • Television feature or news • Newspaper insert • Radio spots • Direct mailing • Display at public buildings and in libraries • Phonebook inserts • Utility bill (water, electric, natural gas) inserts • School handouts to students
	COMMUNICATING EVACUATION READINESS INFORMATION
Visual 5.8 	**Readiness Information** • Build credibility • Encourage preparedness • Provide a hot line, e-mail address, or other source of information

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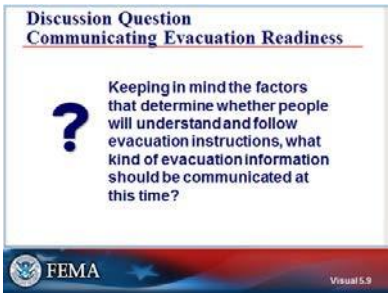
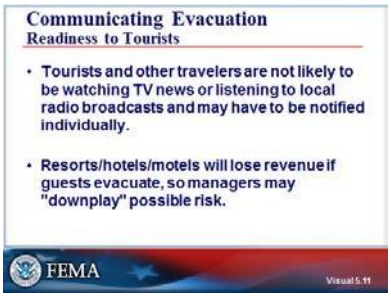
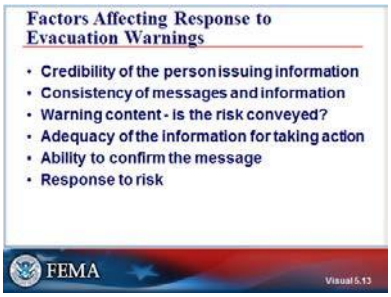
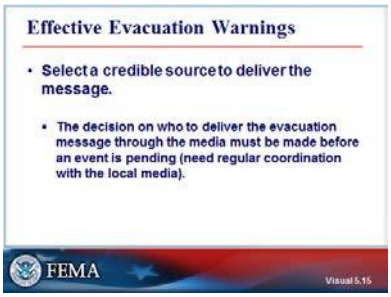
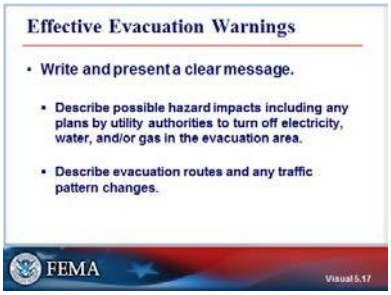
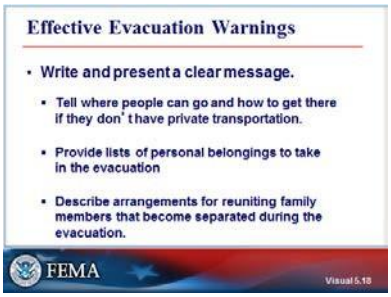
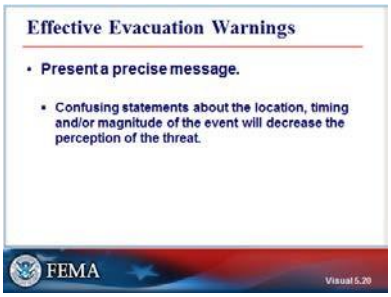
	Impending Storm A violent storm has formed and may affect your jurisdiction in the next few days. The news and weather channels are reporting on the storm's progress. If the storm hits your area, at its current force, it will cause heavy damage. Casualties are possible in this scenario if people are not evacuated. If the storm changes course, it will not cause much damage in your area.
Visual 5.9  	**Discussion Question** **Keeping in mind the factors that determine whether people will understand and follow evacuation instructions, what kind of evacuation information should be communicated at this time?** Notes:

Notes	Content
Visual 5.10 	**Readiness to Tourists** This is also a good time to check in with previously identified owners of resorts, hotels and motels. Be sure that they have established a method for warning and communicating evacuation information to guests.
Visual 5.11  	**Readiness to Tourists** • Tourists and other travelers are not as likely to be watching TV news or listening to local radio broadcasts and may have to be notified individually. • Resorts, hotels and motels will lose revenue if guests evacuate and managers may have a tendency to "downplay" the possible risk.
	COMMUNICATING THE EVACUATION ORDER
Visual 5.12 	As we discussed earlier, people almost always discuss the decision to evacuate with family members, neighbors, and people they expect to be knowledgeable (e.g., lodging staff). • Communicating the evacuation warning officially begins the movement of risk-area population to a safer area. • The evacuation warning and information must be consistent from all sources so that people will not find discrepancies when they compare notes. • Multiple consistent messages will get people to take action sooner.

Notes	Content
Visual 5.13 	Credible local officials personally issuing the warning message using mass media have more impact than a reporter or "crawl lines" on the TV screen. • Credibility of the person issuing information • Consistency of messages and information • Warning content - is the risk conveyed? • Adequacy of the information for taking action • Ability to confirm the message • Response to risk
Visual 5.14 	**Effective Evacuation Warnings** Select a credible source to deliver the message. • Emergency personnel with previous experience and public exposure in an evacuation operation will also have credibility • If the public doubts the source, they will ignore the warning.
Visual 5.15 	**Effective Evacuation Warnings** Select a credible source to deliver the message. • The decision on who to deliver the evacuation message through the media must be made before an event is pending. That fact reinforces the necessity for regular coordination with the local media.

Notes	Content
Visual 5.16 	**Effective Evacuation Warnings** Write and present a clear message. • People looking for reasons not to leave will find them in ambiguous messages. • Be specific about areas that will be affected as well as the risks that are posed.
Visual 5.17 	**Effective Evacuation Warnings** Write and present a clear message. • Describe possible hazard impacts including any plans by utility authorities to turn off electricity, water, and/or gas in the evacuation area. • Describe evacuation routes and any traffic pattern changes.
Visual 5.18 	**Effective Evacuation Warnings** Write and present a clear message. • Tell where people can go and how to get there if they do not have private transportation. • Provide lists of personal belongings to take in the evacuation. • Describe arrangements for reuniting family members that become separated during the evacuation. Notes:

Notes	Content
Visual 5.19 	**Effective Evacuation Warnings** Keep the message consistent. • Local media should repeat the same evacuation message and information. • Inconsistent messages neutralize the public's perception of threat.
Visual 5.20 	**Effective Evacuation Warnings** Present a precise message. • Confusing statements about the location, timing and/or magnitude of the event will decrease the perception of the threat.
Visual 5.21 	**Effective Evacuation Warnings** Repeat the message. • If the media repeats the same message multiple times, people will be stirred to action.
Visual 5.22 	**Effective Evacuation Warnings** Provide sources for confirming the evacuation warning. • People will try to obtain confirmation of warnings from different sources before evacuating. • A hot line or other point of contact will be useful, but may become overwhelmed if unprepared for heavy call volume.

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Visual 5.23 	**Delivering the Message** The best method for delivering the evacuation warning message will vary with several factors: • Type of hazard • Amount of warning time (remember to allow ample time to evacuate before weather conditions restrict evacuation methods). • Size and demographics of the at-risk population • Capabilities of the local, tribal, and territorial authorities.
Visual 5.24 	**Delivering the Message** • Evacuation warnings should not depend on any one method of communication. • Neither cable nor broadcast television may be a reliable mode of communication with the public during a hurricane. • The VHF and cable stations in the impact areas maybe out of service hours before the eye of the storm arrived.
Visual 5.25 	**Delivering the Message** • Most residents were without power to operate televisions anyway. • Most of the radio and television stations in the Emergency Alert System were damaged or lost power and were unable to transmit for several days.

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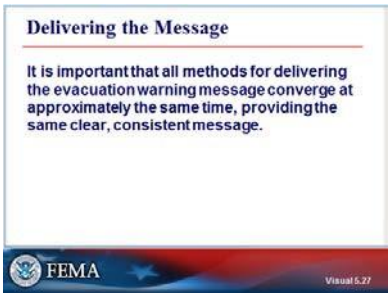
Visual 5.26 	**Delivering the Message** Other methods for delivery of the warning message include: • Door-to-door notification by emergency responders • Travel through neighborhoods using public address systems.
Visual 5.27 	**Delivering the Message** It is important that all methods for delivering the evacuation warning message converge at approximately the same time, providing the same clear, consistent message.
Visual 5.28 	**Communicating with Divergent Populations** Unit Two focused on the identification of risk areas and risk area populations as part of the evacuation and re-entry planning process. Communicating with special populations in institutions such as hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, jails and group homes is not likely to be a problem unless phone service and power are lost.

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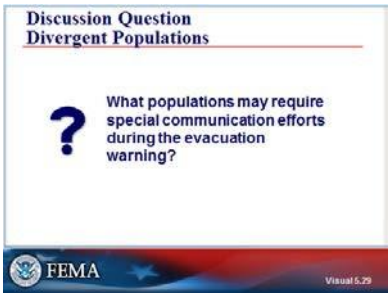
Visual 5.29 	**Discussion Question** **Recalling our conversation in Unit Two, what populations may require special communication efforts during the evacuation warning?** Notes:
Visual 5.30 	**Communicating with Divergent Populations** What types of special communication activity may be needed? • Door-to-door notification • Depending upon the warning time available, written communications to hotel or resort guests
Visual 5.31 	**Communicating with Divergent Populations** What types of special communication activity may be needed? • Instructing hotel, motel and resort operators to conduct door-to-door or other notification of guests • Use of emergency vehicles to make public address announcements to homeless and other transient populations that do not have access to media

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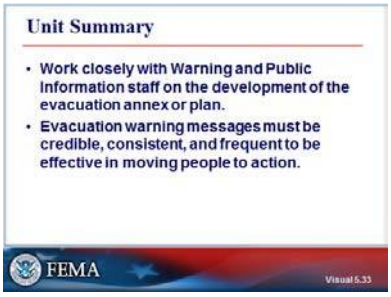
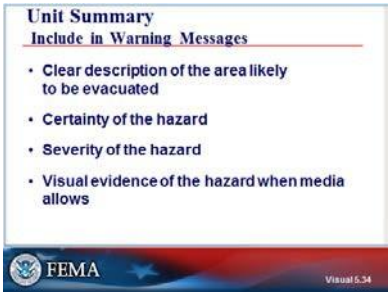
Visual 5.32 	**Communicating with Divergent Populations** What types of special communication activity may be needed? • Announcements in several different languages, as appropriate to the community • If the community is multi-lingual, evacuation planners have to determine the languages in which emergency information will be issued. - Contact Social Services agencies. - Review census data. • Contact churches and other outreach groups that are involved with non-English-speaking populations
Visual 5.33  	**Unit Summary** • Evacuation planners should work closely with Warning and Public Information staff on the development of the evacuation annex or plan. • Evacuation warning messages must be credible, consistent, and frequent to be effective in moving people to action.
Visual 5.34  	**Unit Summary** **Include in Warning Messages** What can you do in your jurisdiction to ensure that evacuation warning messages are effective? • Clear description of the area likely to be evacuated • Certainty of the hazard • Severity of the hazard • Visual evidence of the hazard when media allows

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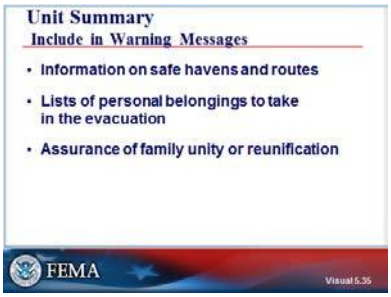
Visual 5.35  	**Unit Summary** **Include in Warning Messages** What can you do in your jurisdiction to ensure that evacuation warning messages are effective? • Information on safe havens and routes • Lists of personal belongings to take in the evacuation • Assurance of family unity or reunification The decision on who to deliver the evacuation message through the media must be made before an event is pending. That fact reinforces the necessity for regular coordination with the local media.
Visual 5.36 	And: • Repeat the message often. • Isolate the message from routine information.