



Hazard Reduction & Recovery Center

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“Siting Potentially Hazardous Facilities: What Factors Impact Perceived & Acceptable Risk?”

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Community attitudes are important factors in planning and locating possible facilities. A common sign of poor attitudes toward public programs dealing with hazardous waste is strong public disapproval. Since hazardous waste exists, the way people see risk at current waste locations or the locations connected with moving waste are important in geographic choices. Community sensitivity to hazardous waste facilities is an important part of the conflicts about location that usually surround existing and suggested hazardous waste facilities.

Findings

This paper examines six different technologies and eight separate conditions of acceptability based on public perception and acceptability of risk. The technologies represent many attributes suggested to be important in literature to the perception and acceptability of risk. The paper aims to better understand the complicated societal processes beneath perceived and reasonable risk connected with possibly hazardous facilities. The economic conditions, like needing jobs, unemployment, and recession, were mentioned most often by respondents as the most important problem facing people in their community. More than 50% suggested that the economy was the most important problem, followed by crime and/or drugs and health and safety with just over 8% each. Both the chronic and acute risks associated with the generation of electricity in wind farms are rated below the other posited technological risks. Giving authority to local residents with changes in operation activities for increased safety is less preferred than requiring emergency plans and community advisory boards.

Implications

The conditions of acceptance are more important than the technology when it comes to their acceptability by community members. This emphasizes the circumstances that the risk is accepted in, not the characteristics of the risk itself. Very well-liked emergency preparedness plans indicate that people need safety, so any parts that provide even more safety will be preferred. One way to assure the people that their concerns matter is to let their concerns shape how and what actions are taken at the facility. Community emergency plans are only as effective as the public's response to them and should share the responsibility for successful emergency response.