

Public Relations Tactics – Publications
Know Your Zone Campaign
2018 PRSA Hampton Roads Pinnacle Awards

Executive Summary

On June 1, 2017, the Commonwealth of Virginia unveiled new hurricane evacuation zones for coastal Virginia and mandated each locality to implement strategic marketing and communications best suited for their specific locality. Being that the program was brand new, City of Norfolk staff got creative in developing a marketing tactic that would ensure residents knew their zone and embarked on a 45-day city-wide canvas campaign hand placing designated zone stickers on over 40,000 trash cans, effectively reaching more than 60,000 households.

Research: Primary – Informal

Marketing & Communications staff monitored and interviewed other neighboring localities who already started using various tactics to inform their residents. We reviewed the Commonwealth's social media campaigns, public transit and gas station advertising to get a better understanding of what was done, what was working and what wouldn't work.

Planning:

Target Audience: 245,000 City of Norfolk residents

Goal: To increase the number of residents who could identify their evacuation zone

Objective: Within 45 days of implementation, staff will reach 70% of Norfolk households and those residents will know their evacuation zone

Strategies:

Create less traditional and more personalized evacuation zone awareness tactic
Partner with various City departments to help inform residents
Use city-owned platforms to supplement the evacuation zone effort

Tactics:

Create durable Zone A, B, C stickers that would adhere to a trash can
Create #KnowYourZone hashtag
Create social media posts with pictures of the canvassing effort
Engage media and invite reporters to tag along on neighborhood canvass
Digital boards with Know Your Zone messaging
Partner with City partner agencies

Implementation:

We began by testing the durability of the stickers by placing them on 3 different types of trash cans to experiment with placement, determine if they would even stick, and if they would be weather resistant. Once we were confident the stickers would stay in place, we brought each department together to determine how many residents lived in each zone by overlaying the GIS zone maps from Emergency Operations with Waste Management's neighborhood refuse collection maps. We concluded that canvassing on resident's designated collection day would be most effective. If residents' cans weren't out to be collected, we simply wouldn't be able to get to them.



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Then, we pilot tested our sticker canvas over a four-day period in several small neighborhoods to ensure our plan was feasible. Several City staff and Community Emergency Response Volunteers broke into two teams of four to canvas the neighborhood. By the end of our pilot we were confident we could successfully canvass the entire city.

We began our *Know Your Zone* Campaign on September 7, 2017 by pushing out a press release notifying residents' we would be canvassing their trash cans; launched our social media campaign pushing out weekly content reinforcing state messaging on what each zone meant and what residents in Norfolk should do in the event of an emergency. We also released our 'How to Know Your Zone' video, sent out e-blasts to partnering City departments and organizations, and displayed messaging on video boards throughout the city. Our canvassing campaign started on September 18 and ran through November 30, 2017.

Budget: Everyone who worked on the campaign were city employees working in their respective departments or were Community Emergency Response volunteers. The Commonwealth provided 60,000 stickers.

Challenges: A few challenges we faced included: 1) capturing resident's attention in an oversaturated market; 2) our departments had a history of working in silos, so crafting an engagement plan was a huge opportunity for us to change company culture because it required us all to work together and effectively communicate to implement this tactic; 3) maintaining high employee and volunteer moral; providing breakfast and lunch, offering volunteer hours, vocalizing staff appreciation for our employees and volunteers helped to keep everyone on board.

Evaluation:

In 45 days, City staff and volunteers completed the citywide canvass, successfully distributing 49,762 stickers to residential homes and approximately 6,000 doorhangers to rental units/property managers. There are 25,324 households in Zone A, 26,413 households in Zone B and 37,042 households in Zone C. Of the 88,779 households in Norfolk, 60,000 of them were reached and all of Norfolk's civic leagues and neighborhoods were canvassed. We measured the campaign by the number of trash cans we canvassed during the campaign and the total number of social media impressions we received on city platforms. The campaign was picked up by [Wavy TV](#), [Alt Daily](#), [13 News Now](#) and [City News Line](#). The 'How To' video garnered over 9,500 views, we reached 23,913 people on NextDoor, 17,504 people on Facebook and 1,562 people on Instagram. By this metric, the campaign achieved its primary goal of raising awareness and canvassing over 60% of resident's trash cans.

Lessons Learned: If we were to replicate this campaign again, we would start it during the summer so that messaging and implementation would already be in place before the start of hurricane season, we would recruit volunteers more heavily and we would leave marketing materials encouraging residents to register for Norfolk Alert along with each Zone Sticker.

Know Your Zone Video Link

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scY-luEtv_c