

THE EFFECTS OF NEW MEDIA FOR EMERGENCY TORNADO NOTIFICATION ON THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the possible continued existence of a digital divide as it related to how residents in two disperse communities received notification of late season tornado events in 2013. The theoretical perspective of the Diffusion of Innovations, Knowledge Gap and Structuration theories were used to examine how notifications were received based on socioeconomic indicators of total household income and education affected the ability for respondents to be notified of the impending danger.

Results varied for the communities surveyed, both supporting and negating how specific socioeconomic factors influence how respondents received notifications and the behavior they took after the message was received. Findings of the study indicate that higher total household income and higher education are often times associated with how respondents receive warnings of tornadoes in their area, but associations are not always consistent. Findings of this study show differences in how each community receives and reacts to tornado warnings.