

Abstract

As evidenced by our 24-hour news cycle, as well as the proliferation of reality television, the depiction of severe weather, particularly the devastation caused by tornadoes, and its effects on local communities has been of increasing popularity over the past decade. This coverage, in many instances, has acted as a catalyst for individuals to reflect on whether or not certain areas, or communities, are prepared for such events to occur. Communities themselves inherently exhibit particular social and economic characteristics such as *age*, population, density, poverty, and housing condition based on the individuals or infrastructure that resides within. The degree to which these socioeconomic conditions are present may impact that community's ability to be physically and financially resilient to the occurrence of severe weather. Understanding how severe weather events affect society and how communities are able to prepare for, respond to, and recover from such an event is an important factor in developing equipped and knowledgeable citizens. This paper proposes and analyzes various socio-economic factors that could increase a community's vulnerability to severe weather and where, geographically, they are most prevalent. Through the creation of a socio-economic vulnerability index, this paper analyzes what communities appear to be at an increased level of risk during a severe weather event and how these communities were impacted during one of the most historic tornado outbreaks across the state of Alabama.

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