

## **Inclusive language in emergency situations**

**2/27/24**

900,000 Coloradoans speak language other than English at home

250,000 are considered limited English proficient

500,000 have visual or auditory disability

Research methods: Review of literature, survey of emergency response professionals, partner meetings, public comment in 3 languages

5 report findings:

- 1) CO has patchwork of alerting systems - inconsistent process, system, management, software; only 53% have ability to send multilingual alerts, only 41% can send to folks w disabilities
- 2) Rely on opt-in, low numbers of participation - majority below 40% ; Wireless Emergency Alerts System works thru cell towers and can be done at local level - mostly not used, systems work by opt-in
- 3) Resource constraints limit alerting - multilingual options may not align with best practices, such as using online translation systems that are largely inaccurate; templates
- 4) There is interest in making alerts more inclusive, but need guidance, funding and personnel to do so. Funding is a primary need.
- 5) Tech limitations compound the issues - very complicated

Status quo creates unequal access to lifesaving information

CO has the opportunity to be an emerging leader

Recs:

- 1) hire state-level language access personnel
- 2) develop relationships w impacted communities
- 3) Develop standardized central alerting system - we live across jurisdictions, who may all have different systems
- 4) Create and distribute language and disability access resources - officials want guidance
- 5) Funding for alerts - unfunded mandates are unpopular and won't address the issues
- 6) Fund research - there are so many outstanding questions that weren't part of the bill