Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication

Satellite Conference
Part 2 of 6
November 19, 2002
1:00-3:00 p.m., Central Time

Produced by
Video Communications
Alabama Department of Public Health

Messages and Audiences

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Module Summary

- How people evaluate messages in a crisis
- Identifying audiences in a crisis and their specific concerns
- Ways to build trust through your messages
- Tips for crafting your initial messages

Messages

The public will judge your message by its content, messenger, and method of delivery.

Audiences

Name possible distinct audiences
- Based on their demographics
- Based on their relationship to the incident
- Based on their psychographics

Match Audiences and Concerns

Audiences
- Victims and their families
- Politicians
- First responders
- Trade and industry
- Community far outside disaster
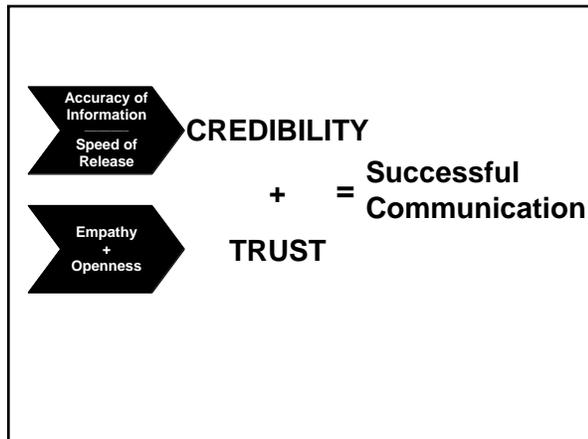- Media

Concerns
- Opportunity to express concern
- Personal safety
- Resources for response
- Loss of revenue/liability
- Speed of information flow
- Anticipatory guidance
- Family's safety

Judging the Message

- Speed counts – marker for preparedness
- Facts – consistency is vital
- Trusted source – can't fake these

Key Elements To Build Trust

- Expressed empathy
- Competence
- Honesty
- Commitment
- Accountability

Accuracy of Information

Speed of Release

CREDIBILITY

Empathy + Openness

TRUST

+

= **Successful Communication**

Initial Message

Must
- Be short
- Be relevant
- Give positive action steps
- Be repeated

Initial Message

Must *Not*
- Use jargon
- Be judgmental
- Make promises that can't be kept
- Include humor

Dealing With Rumors

- Rebut it without really repeating it.
- Limit rebuttal to places where the rumor exists.

Sources of Social Pressure

- What will I gain?
- What will it cost me?
- What do those important to me want me to do?
- Can I actually carry it out?

Building Consensus for Action

- Increase expected gains
- Decrease expected costs
- Increase social pressure
- Improve ease of action
- Decrease value of competitive alternatives

Messages and Audiences: Summary

- Understand audience concerns when forming messages
- No substitute for speed, accuracy, and credibility
- Crisis communication demands expressions of empathy
- Plan to get audience feedback fast

CDC

Crisis Communication Plan

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Module Summary

- In-depth discussion of the phases of a crisis
- Gaining acceptance for the role of communication
- Elements of your plan
- Nine steps of crisis response
- Surviving the first 48 hours
- Exercise: Consequences of an incomplete plan

Precrisis Phase

- Be prepared – Needs assessment checklist
- Foster alliances
- Develop consensus recommendations
- Test messages

All the planning, most of the work

Getting a Seat at the Decisionmaking Table

- Have a solid communication plan (linear thinkers want to see it on paper)
- Have that signed endorsement from the director at the front of your plan
- Enlist third-party validators to make your case

Seat at the Table

In the precrisis phase (don't wait for an event to make your case):
- Explain the benefits and risks of not including communicators
- Show your expertise by training leadership
- Ensure partners and stakeholders have an expectation of your involvement

Seat at the Table

- While developing your communication plan, meet with other parts of your emergency response team in the organization and appeal for their help.
- Get agreements on paper.

When Training Leadership About Communication

- Teach the organizational focus
- Teach the mistakes and successes of past events
- Teach emergency risk principles

Developing Your Plan

- Start with a needs assessment
- Human resources
- Technological support
- Training
- Space
- Supplies
- Travel
- Funding mechanisms

Your Plan Should Be

- The "go to" place for the "must have" information during a crisis
- The bones of your work—not a step-by-step "how to"
- Dynamic

Elements of a Complete Crisis Communication Plan

- Signed endorsement from director
- Designated staff responsibilities
- Information verification and clearance/release procedures
- Agreements on information release authorities
- Media contact list
- Procedures to coordinate with public health organization response teams
- Designated spokespersons
- Emergency response team after-hours contact numbers
- Emergency response information partner contact numbers
- Partner agreements (like joining the local EOC's JIC)
- Procedures/plans on how to get resources you'll need
- Pre-identified vehicles of information dissemination

Signed Endorsement From Director

- A must—signed and dated
- Provides accountability
- Integrates plan into overall EOC plans

Communication Staff Responsibilities

- Command and control – need a leader with clout
- Media response
- Public information
- Partner/stakeholder relations
- Content/message development

Designate Staff Responsibilities

Command and control
- Directs release of public information
- Coordinates with partners
- Advises the director
- Knows incident-specific policy, science, and situation

Designate Staff Responsibilities

Direct media response
- Triage response
- Support spokesperson
- Produces and distributes materials
- Media monitoring
- JIC member

Designate Staff Responsibilities

Direct public information
- Manages public information delivery
- Manages Web site and links to others

Designate Staff Responsibilities

Direct partner/stakeholder information
- Manages prearranged information agreements
- Solicits feedback and monitors systems
- Organizes official meetings
- Maintains response contact list

Designate Staff Responsibilities

Content and material development
- Translates EOC situation reports into public/media materials
- Works with experts to create situation-specific materials
- Tests messages and materials for cultural appropriateness

Information Verification and Clearance/Release Procedures (In-house)

- Who MUST review for final approval (include higher authority)
- Need to know vs. want to know
- Three people—director, communication officer, subject matter expert
- Clear simultaneously and in person
- Get agreement from key staff before the crisis
- Coordination and courtesy copies should not slow down clearance
- Preventing the clearance headache: *No release is worse than an incomplete release*

Agreements on Information Release Authorities

- Who "owns" the information—scope of responsibility
- Get agreements on paper
- Remain flexible and work collaboratively
- Reality check: Preagreements may be thrown out the window, but they are a place to start

Media Contact List

- Critically important
- Nonduty contacts too
- No scraps of paper, please
- E-mails, fax numbers, and backdoor entries
- Fail rate, if not tested, can be astronomical

Designate Spokespersons

- Name them in an annex of the plan and designate backups
- Ensure that your organization agrees and plans for their absence from other duties
- Teach them emergency risk principles
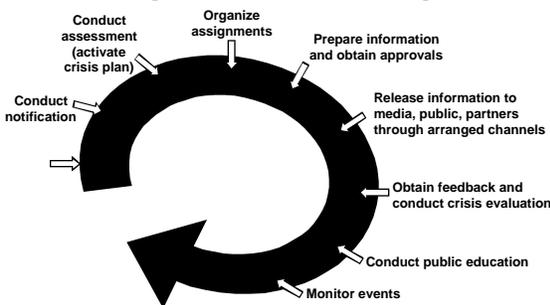- Practice media and public meetings

Partner Agreements (Like Joining the Local EOC's JIC)

- Who will be involved in what emergencies?
- What will your organization give back to partners?
- How many people from your organization will be committed to partner support?

Plan What You'll Need and How To Get More

- Include procedures to secure emergency resources
- Explore and set up contracts
- JICs may provide much of the support
- Work with savvy parts of organization for resources NOW
- Use results from needs assessment for justification

Nine Steps of Crisis Response

Conduct assessment (activate crisis plan)

Organize assignments

Prepare information and obtain approvals

Conduct notification

Release information to media, public, partners through arranged channels

Obtain feedback and conduct crisis evaluation

Conduct public education

Monitor events

Verify Situation

- Get the facts.
- Judge validity based on source of information.
- Clarify plausibility through subject matter expert.
- Attempt to discern the magnitude of the event.

Notification and Coordination

- Notification is the official chain of command
- Coordination is with response peers and partners
- Procedures will vary at State, local, Federal levels and by event

Conduct Crisis Assessment and Activate Communication Plan

- Assess impact on communication operations and staffing
- Determine your organization's role in the event
- Activate media and Internet monitoring
- Identify affected populations and their initial communication needs

Organize Assignments
(Constantly Reassess These Steps)

- Who's in charge of overall EOC response?
- Make assignments for communication teams.
- Assess resource needs and hours of operations.
- Ask ongoing organizational issues questions.
- Initiate partner involvement.

Prepare Information and Obtain Approvals

- Develop message.
- Identify audiences.
- What do media want to know?
- Show empathy.
- What is the organization's response?
- Identify action steps for public.
- Execute the approval process from the plan.

Public Information Release

Select the appropriate channels of communication and apply them:

- **S**imply
- **T**imely
- **A**ccurately
- **R**epeatedly
- **C**redibly
- **C**onsistently

Public Information Release

- Continue to monitor for feedback
- Execute planned steps with stakeholders
- Reassess these elements throughout the event

Obtain Feedback and Conduct Crisis Evaluation

- Conduct response evaluation
- Analyze feedback from customers
- Analyze media coverage
- Conduct a hot wash
- Develop a SWOT
- Share with leadership
- Revise crisis plans

Conduct Public Education (Post-event)

- Highlight related public health issues
- Consider audiences not directly involved in the crisis
- Institutionalize crisis materials

Monitor Events (Ongoing Throughout the Crisis)

- Conduct media and Internet monitoring
- Exchange information with response partners
- Monitor public opinions

Surviving the First 48 Hours

- Requires quick assessment
- Collection of facts
- Actions to secure resources
- Media and public response
- Rehearsal
- Alert key partners, as appropriate

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Sounds like a plan . . .

What the Public Will Ask First

- Are my family and I safe?
- What have you found that may affect me?
- What can I do to protect myself and my family?
- Who caused this?
- Can you fix it?

What the Media Will Ask First

- What happened?
- Who is in charge?
- Has this been contained?
- Are victims being helped?
- What can we expect?
- What should we do?
- Why did this happen?
- Did you have forewarning?

Assessing the Response

- Doing enough? Doing too much?
- Are we, should we be, involved?
- Is the department that should respond, able to respond?
- Who is managing the technical/scientific side?
- Risk matrix analysis helps with this assessment.

Assessment Helps Answer

- Hours of operations for public/media information
- Days of operation
- Staff expected to travel
- Release jurisdiction shared

First 48 Hours - Tools

- Critical first steps checklist
- Message template for news release
- Press availability at site template
- Public call tracking sheet
- Media call triage sheet
- Risk assessment for communication

How Would You Triage Media Response?

Crisis Communication Plan: Summary

- Short, dynamic plan
- Director must endorse
- Plan will help get you a "seat at the table"
- Train the plan
- Plan for all phases of a crisis
- Share successes and best practices

Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication

Satellite Conference Series
November 26, 2002
December 3, 2002
December 10, 2002
December 17, 2002

1:00-3:00 p.m., Central Time