

Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication



The objective of this training is to provide participants a simple understanding of how to effectively apply Crisis & Emergency Risk Communication in an emergency.

Communicating in a crisis is different

- In a serious crisis, all affected people . . .
 - Take in information differently
 - Process information differently
 - Act on information differently
- In a catastrophic event: communication is different
- Be first, be right, be credible

What the public seeks from your communication

5 public concerns. . .

1. Gain wanted facts
2. Empower decision making
3. Involved as a participant, not spectator
4. Provide watchguard over resource allocation
5. Recover or preserve well-being and normalcy

Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication impacts

5 organizational concerns -- you need to. . .

1. Execute response and recovery efforts
2. Decrease illness, injury, and deaths
3. Avoid misallocation of limited resources
4. Reduce rumors surrounding recovery
5. Avoid wasting resources

5 communication failures that kill operational success

1. Mixed messages from multiple experts
2. Information released late
3. Paternalistic attitudes
4. Not countering rumors and myths in real-time
5. Public power struggles and confusion

5 communication steps that boost operational success

1. Execute a solid communication plan
2. Be the first source for information
3. Express empathy early
4. Show competence and expertise
5. Remain honest and open

The STARCC Principle

Your public messages in a crisis must be:

Simple
Timely
Accurate
Relevant
Credible
Consistent

Psychology of a Crisis

What Do People Feel Inside When a Disaster Looms or Occurs?

Psychological barriers:

1. Fear, anxiety, confusion, dread
2. Hopelessness or helplessness
3. Seldom panic
4. Fight or flight
5. Vicarious rehearsal

Communicating in a Crisis Is Different

- Uncertainty is greatest concern for most
- Reduce anxiety-Give people things to do
- Public seeks restored self-control
- Public must feel empowered – reduce fear and victimization

Messages and Audiences

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?

5 Key Elements To Build Trust

1. Expressed empathy
2. Competence
3. Honesty
4. Commitment
5. Accountability

Initial Message

Must

- Be short
- Be relevant
- Give positive action steps
- Be repeated (at least 3 times)

Initial Message

Must *Not*

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

At the conclusion of this program participants also viewed a video provided by University of Albany- School of Public Health, Center for Public Health Preparedness. The video, Risk Communication & Psycho-Social Issues in Radiation Events, provided guidance to better prepare emergency personnel to manage psychosocial reactions of communities and individuals and to communicate effectively during radiological emergencies. This video is located on the websites webcast archives at

<http://www.ualbanycphp.org/GRS/eventpast.cfm?id=96>