

Risk Communication Course



Risk Communication Course

- Introductions
 - Instructors
 - Course objectives and overview
 - Participant introductions



Risk Communication Course

- Participant introductions
 - Name, organization and routine duties
 - Understanding of and goals for the course
 - Concerns and challenges communicating Safe Drinking Water Act information



Risk Communication Course

- Course objectives and overview
 - Recognize importance and place for risk communication skill
 - Apply risk communication principles to message, messenger and medium
 - Hands-on and interactive class participation

- There are precise circumstances for using risk communication skills, specifically high concern, low trust situations.
- These skills involve the appropriate use of scientifically proven techniques that apply to what you say, who presents the message, and the forum in which the information is presented.
- This is your class and you are encouraged to ask lots of questions, inject your real-world issues and concerns, and gain skills through class work group sessions.

Risk Communication Principles



Risk Communication Principles

- Risk communication definition
- “A science-based approach for communicating effectively in:
 - High concern and low trust situations
 - Sensitive or controversial situations”

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- Risk communication is recognized by the National Academy of Sciences as a science.
- More than twenty years of peer reviewed and published research in communications, behavioral science, epidemiology, and public health is available to hone your skills.
- See the bibliography at the back of this manual for suggested readings.
- Factors causing high concern or low trust involves a sense by the audience member of control over the situation, and experience of the audience member with the messenger, the organization of the messenger and familiarity with the issue.
- Some situations and issues, if miscommunicated could create high concern, low trust and outrage within a stakeholder group.

Risk Communication Principles

- Risk communication further defined
 - Any purposeful exchange of information about risk or perceptions about risk
 - Any public or private communication that informs individuals about the existence, nature, form, severity, or acceptability of risk
 - The probability of losing something of value, such as health, safety, job security, self-esteem, wealth, natural resources or community

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- Merely communicating technical or risk information is not the use of scientifically proven risk communication principles.
- Expert knowledge does not equal risk communication skill.
- The enabling link between risk analysis and risk management is communication.
- Recent research now shows that risk communication events require the use of graphic aids.
- Risk communication involves a two part process:
 - Explaining risks, data, and quantitative information; and
 - Addressing values.
- Until you address the values, people are resistant to listening to and understanding the numbers.

Risk Communication Principles

- Practical concepts of risk communication
 - Perception = Reality
 - Communication = Skill
 - Goal = Trust + Credibility

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- Perception = reality. What people believe to be real **is** real to them in their consequence.
- In discussing risk, you need to address three components:
 - Hazards: What can go wrong?
 - Probability: How likely is it to go wrong?
 - Consequence: What are the consequences?
- There are six key considerations in formulating a message, knowing:
 - What to say;
 - Who to say it to;
 - Why to say it;
 - Where to say it;
 - When to say it; and
 - How to say it.

Risk Communication Principles

- Practical concepts of risk communication
 - Disciplined and sustained use of risk communication principles and skills
 - Consistent application among all stakeholders and in all formats
 - General public Elected officials News media
 - Presentations Phone calls Written correspondence
 - Incorporate situational and cultural awareness

- There are six key considerations in formulating a message, knowing:
 - What to say;
 - Who to say it to;
 - Why to say it;
 - Where to say it;
 - When to say it; and
 - How to say it.

Risk Communication Principles

- Risk communication goals
 - Create a communications environment based on trust and credibility
 - Produce an informed audience that is involved, interested, reasonable, thoughtful, solution-oriented, and collaborative
 - Build confidence in your agency's professionalism, commitment and expertise

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- There are three major goals in risk communication:
 - **Advocacy**: Being able to create an environment based on trust and credibility that persuades the audience to follow the best scientific information.
 - **Education**: To produce an informed audience; i.e., to give people enough information so they can make better and more informed decisions about risk-reducing behaviors.
 - **Decisionmaking**: To involve the audience in the process.

Risk Communication Principles

- The foundation of risk communication principles and techniques...
 - Risk perception theory
 - Mental noise theory
 - Negative dominance theory
 - Trust determination theory

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- These four theories represent the communication challenges that must be appropriately addressed to effectively build understanding along with trust and credibility among all stakeholders.
- Recognizing these elements in the communications environment is critical for communication success.

Risk Communication Principles

- Risk perception factors
 - Perception equals reality
 - What is perceived as real, is real in its consequences

Factor	Weight
Trust.....	2000
Benefit.....	1000
Control (voluntary).....	1000
Fairness (share).....	500

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

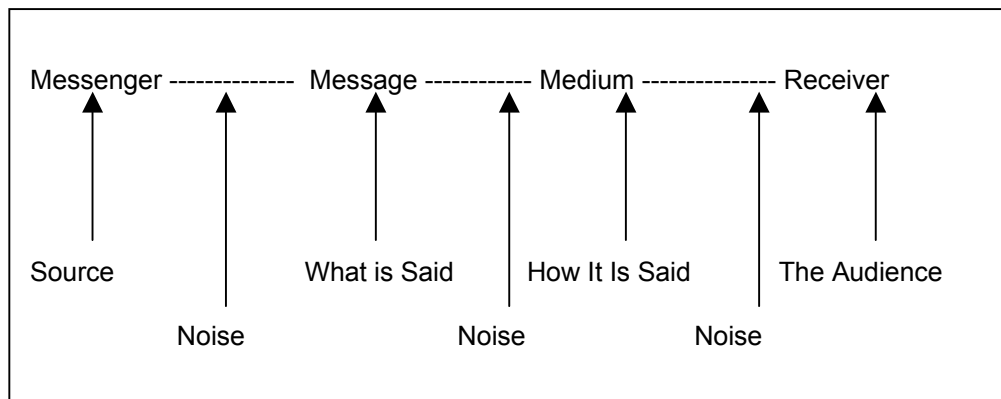
- Perceptions about trustworthiness, self-benefit, voluntary control, and equity of exposure directly influence the reaction to risk information.
- Note that trust in the information and its source is the most important determinant for perception of risk.
- Perceptions must be addressed before audience members can deal with facts.
- Risk is a very personal experience reflected in two different approaches to thinking about risk.
 - The scientific community is interested in presenting information in an objective manner: quantitative, macro, and population based.
 - The public looks at risk from a subjective, qualitative, micro, and individual basis.
- Recognizing this difference helps you to consider how information you present will be perceived by the audience.

Risk Communication Principles

- Mental noise factors
 - People who are upset have difficulty hearing and processing information
 - Mental noise can reduce ability to process communication by as much as 80 percent
 - Reasons for mental noise
 - Denial of issue
 - Trauma from issue
 - Competing agenda
 - Emotional arousal

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- Think about how values and other factors are driving the audience perception.
- There is also communications in noise.



- Noise can come from many sources such as political influences, activists, litigation, the media, cultural factors, industry, and fairness and equity issues.
- In planning communications, be aware of potential sources of “noise.”

Risk Communication Principles

- Implications of mental noise factors
 - Limited number of messages
 - Time limitations of communication
 - Repetition of message

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- To transcend mental noise barriers the messenger and the message must keep information simple and concise.
- People generally have short attention spans and are primarily able to retain only three key messages.
 - Keep presentations and media interviews to no more than 15 minutes. Less is better still.
 - Keep each key message and its supporting facts to a 15 to 45 second statement.

Risk Communication Principles

- Negative dominance factors
 - People who are upset tend to think negatively
 - One negative = three positives
 - Repetition of a negative reinforces and reaffirms the negative
 - Avoid using negatives such as **NO**, **NOT**, **CAN'T**, **DON'T**, **NEVER**, **NOTHING**, **NONE**

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- Repetition of a negative usually occurs in responding to a negatively phrased questions or statement.
- For example, did you enjoy beating your dog yesterday? No, I did not beat my dog yesterday. Responding with denial or repeating the negative phrase reinforces the negative.
- A proper response would be: I love my dog and have several pets that I enjoy taking very good care of.

Risk Communication Principles

- Trust determination factors



Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- The public considers whether it can trust:
 - You as an individual;
 - Your agency;
 - The process; and
 - The ultimate outcome.
- Demonstrating empathy and caring is a three-step process:
 - Statement of personal concern;
 - Statement of organizational or agency concern; and
 - Statement of action; i.e., what you will be doing.

Risk Communication Principles



Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- The goal is to make your communications glass full for each message and communication event.
- Empathy and caring is the first and most important information that you can communicate in a high concern, low trust environment.
 - People need to know that you care, before they will care what you know.
 - Men must emphasize upfront caring and empathy and spend less time making competence and expertise statements.
 - Women automatically gain all caring and empathy points and must emphasize competence and expertise up front.

Risk Communication Principles

- Trust determination factors
 - Credibility transference
 - “A lower credibility source takes on the credibility of the highest credible source that agrees with its position on an issue.”

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- It's a good practice to know what credible third party experts and/or organizations think about your position and results. Know your audience and who they believe to be credible sources.

Risk Communication Principles

- Trust determination factors
 - Credibility reversal
 - “The only information source that can effectively attack the credibility of another source is one of equal or higher credibility.”

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- It's a best management practice simply never to get into an attack mode.
- Stay positive and focus on credible third party experts and organizations that agree with your position. Be very careful about being perceived as attacking an individual; dispute the information, not with the individual.

Risk Communication Principles

- Trust determination factors
 - Credibility reversal continued
 - “When a lower credibility source attacks the credibility of a higher credibility source, the lower credibility source loses further credibility.”

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- Have some self-awareness about how your organization’s credibility is perceived and, therefore, how you agree with or dispute information from other sources.
- Many employees of an organization have a false sense of their actual perceived credibility among various stakeholders on specific issues.

Risk Communication Principles

- Trust determination factors
 - G4 or critical mass theory of government credibility transfer
 - “The sum total of the credibility of any four government agencies is substantially greater than the sum total of the credibility of the individual agencies.”
 - “Regulatory oversight based on a government system of checks and balances is perceived to be more credible.”

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- If multiple agencies or organizations are involved, it's important that they all communicate the same messages.

Risk Communication Principles

- Trust determination factors
 - Active listening skills
 - Paraphrasing
 - Active feedback
 - Control of non-verbal cues

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- People need to know that they are being heard.
- Paraphrasing simply demonstrates to the audience that the question or statement has registered with you.
- Body language always overrides verbal messages. Avoid crossed arms, fig leaves, hands behind the back, poor eye contact, turning your back to the audience, and closing in on personal space.

Risk Communication Principles

- Trust determination factors
 - Non-verbal communication
 - Provides up to 50-75 percent of message content
 - Noticed intensely by audience
 - Interpreted negatively
 - Overrides verbal communication

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

Risk Communication Principles

Risk Communication Summary

Theory

Mental noise

Trust determination

Risk perception

Negative dominance

Effect

Blocks communication

Enhances or detracts from message

Frustration and outrage

Distorts communication

Solution

Use clear, concise messages and active listening

Show that you care

Recognize and respond to RP factors

Develop positive messages

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- The “theory” represents barriers and challenges to effective communication, trust and credibility for the messenger (individual and organization), the message, and the medium for communication.
- The “effect” describes exactly how the theory is applied to communication as a barrier and challenge to effective communication and attaining the goal of trust and credibility.
- The “solution” describes the action steps necessary to eliminate, minimize or overcome barriers and challenges to effective communication and the establishment of trust and credibility.

Risk Communication Principles

- Seven Cardinal Rules of Risk Communication
 - Accept and involve the public as a legitimate partner
 - Plan carefully and evaluate efforts
 - Listen to the public's specific concerns
 - Be honest, frank, and open
 - Coordinate and collaborate with other credible sources
 - Meet the needs of the media
 - Speak clearly and with compassion

Source: Dr. Covello, Director
Center for Risk Communication

- These rules were developed by Dr. Vincent Covello and Frederick W. Allen for EPA.
- See course book for detailed explanations for each rule.

SDWA Risk Concepts and Program Communication Challenges



- **Video segment:** Dr. Peter Sandman

What is risk and how is it perceived? What is the *language* of risk?

What Will Be Covered?

- Key risk terms
- Communicating risk in specific situations
 - When there are source water concerns
 - When regulatory decisions are questioned
 - When there is reduced consumer confidence

- SOCO – single overriding communications objective.
- The point of intersection between what we think the public needs to know and what they want to know.

Acute – The Public Perception . . .

- Refers to something small, precise and controlled
- Doesn't sound threatening
- Easily dealt with
- Toxicity overshadows acute



- Acute - occurring over a short period of time; used to describe brief exposures and effects that appear promptly after exposure. Can be one-time exposures, or repeated exposures in less than a day. The reaction is immediate; you see the effects within a week.
- Acute exposure contrasts with chronic exposure, which would occur over time, even several years. Similarly, acute toxicity describes reactions that occur soon after brief contact, while chronic toxicity describes effects that follow repeat contact over time.
- “Acute” sounds harmless, people generally think of small, precise, controlled. Toxicity by itself sounds scary, it overshadows “acute.” Use the timetable, and contrast it with chronic, to help people understand acute risks.
- Key to communication is helping people understand the differences between acute, chronic and lifetime risks.

Chronic – The Public Perception . . .

- Refers to something persistent and unending
- Connotes a negative medical condition
- Exposure associated with cold weather and hypothermia
- Chronic toxicity is a terrifying term that evokes fatality and inevitability



Risk Assessment – The Public Perception . . .

- Associated with cost-benefit analysis
- Risks involved with possible decisions
- Dose response associated with medicine or animal testing
- Hazard evaluation considers hazards posed by a situation



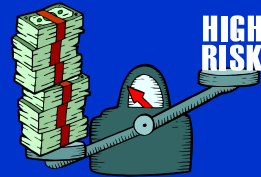
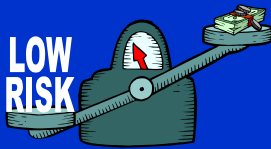
Ecological Risk – The Public Perception . . .

- Considered a threat to ecosystem
- Subtle way of suggesting the likelihood of ecosystem damage
- “Cumulative ecological risk” is too cumbersome a term and concept for most people to understand



Risk Management – The Public Perception . . .

- Understood as a program to monitor and reduce negative situation outcomes
- Skeptics believe the term implies a cover-up or scam
- Also viewed as sophisticated method to say nothing is being done



Communicating Risk in Specific Situations

- When there are source water concerns
- When regulatory decisions are questioned
- When there is reduced consumer confidence

- Class discussion on experiences and challenges of communicating with stakeholders and peers on these issues.

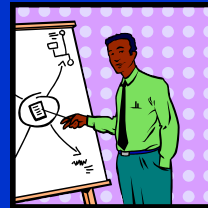
Communicating Results of a Source Water Assessment

- Make information understandable
- Present information concisely
- Explain the scope of the assessment
 - Who uses the water?
 - What land uses affect the supply?

- Key elements in communicating results of a sources water assessment:
 - Present information so that is can be understood by the public;
 - Present the key findings; and
 - Provide context for the results.

Communicating Results of a Source Water Assessment

- Identify possible contamination sources
- Identify priorities
- Explore uses of the results



- Additional key elements in a communicating results of a source water assessment:
 - In identifying possible contamination sources, use this as an opportunity to highlight everyday activities that pose a risk to drinking water. Emphasize practices such as the disposal of household chemicals, use of pesticides and fertilizers, and other practices that are practiced by a majority of the population.
 - Present concrete conclusions. Is the drinking water contaminated? Is it at risk? Have any contamination sources been identified?
 - Explain actions that will be taken. What will the community do with these results? Discuss different ways the community can use these results: new regulations; new zoning rules; education programs and events that focus on recycling used oil, limiting pesticide use, or other prevention activities; watershed cleanup activities.

Communicating Risk in Regulatory Decisions

- Articulate risk clearly
- Collect public comment
- Develop announcement strategy



- Consider the elements of risk communication we've discussed before, and craft a message articulating the given risk, always emphasizing public safety as the priority.
- As we've discussed, the best risk management decisions account for the range of social, technical and economic variables. Collecting public comments will help you identify and avoid pitfalls. When appropriate, request comment on whether the information available supports your proposed regulation.
- By collecting public comment, you will be able to gauge stakeholder reactions and can develop an announcement strategy. Depending on audiences, messages, and expected responses, you may plan a paper release; a targeted news outlet to break the story; public meetings; advance briefings with business leaders or environmental advocates highly interested in the rule; or other communications tactics.

Communicating Risk in Regulatory Decisions

- How to communicate new standards when old standards implied safety
- When to tell people about new standards
 - Old standards seem intrusive, too
- How to explain the risk range

- There is a key need to identify new technologies and the ongoing effort to improve water quality standards and make water supplies ever safer.
- Communicate these technologies and changes as early as possible, in order to help to shape expectations and understanding.
- Never compare voluntary risks with involuntary risks.

Communicating Risk in Consumer Confidence Reports

- Consider the audience
- Emphasize safety
- Provide context
- Reach the audience

The logo for Consumer Confidence Reports (CCR) is displayed in a large, bold, light blue font. The letters 'C', 'C', and 'R' are stacked vertically, with the 'C's on top and the 'R' on the bottom.

- The rationale for Consumer Confidence Reports is that consumers have the right to know what's in their drinking water and where that water comes from. Educated consumers can make informed choices that affect their families' health. They are also more likely to help protect their drinking water sources and understand the true costs of safe drinking water.
- Water system customers are the primary audience for Consumer Confidence Reports. Most reports will fit on a few sheets of paper and should be easy to read. Too much information or a report full of technical jargon could discourage consumers from learning about their drinking water.
- Customers are most interested in a clear statement of whether or not their drinking water meets all EPA and state standards. Be cautious in using the word "safe" since water that meets standards and is safe for most people might not be safe for infants, chemotherapy patients or people with HIV/AIDS.
- Communicating context is important for any violations or contaminants that pose a risk in your community. Make sure customers understand any other potential means of exposure, and consider a comparison to another well-known risk to help explain.
- Different sized water systems share their Consumer Confidence Reports differently. Tailor your strategy for your community. If you have a large proportion of non-English speaking residents include appropriate alternatives.

Communicating Risk in Consumer Confidence Reports

- How to discuss contaminants listed in the CCR
- To date, minimal questions from public
- CCRs raise internal questions about completing the report
 - Use of other agency templates

- Mention that your testing is so sophisticated that you are able to detect very low concentrations of potential contaminants in the water.
- Identify the elements that are naturally occurring.
- Concisely explain safety standards of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Tools for Success



Tools for Success

- Class discussion
 - Who are the audiences for your information?
 - How, when and where do they receive your information?
 - How do you know if they understand your information?
 - What problems have you encountered communicating your information?



Tools for Success

- Class discussion
 - Proactive
 - Team work
 - Preparation



- Direct your communication efforts, do not follow your information or let it chase you!
- Do not try to go it alone; subject matter experts and communications staff need to work together in preparing information and responding to issues raised by stakeholders.
- The quality of external communication is a function of the quality of internal communication; e.g., between technical and public affairs staffs or between staff and management.
- Key messages about preparation:
 - Think ahead! Anticipate potential issues and how they affect your audience. Be prepared to address them;
 - Identify messages, forum, and communications materials; and
 - Practice, test your messages, and revise accordingly.

Tools for Success

- Trust and credibility building blocks



- All four building blocks are crucial for risk communication success in environments involving low trust and high concern.
- “Empathy and caring” is the most important building block and must be established within the first 30 seconds of communication.

Tools for Success

- Trust and credibility on environmental issues top third 1996 results
 - Local citizens and /or citizen advisory panels who are perceived to be neutral, respected, and well-informed about the issue
 - Non-management employees
 - Nurses, physicians, and other health professionals



- Determine who are the credible people in the community and involve them in the process.

Tools for Success

Building trust and credibility

- Caring and empathy
 - State why this issue is important to you on a personal level
 - Acknowledge importance of the issue for all stakeholders
 - Relate how the issue also affects your life and sense of community

- The audience needs to know that the messenger cares and understands. Try to personalize the issue so that you are perceived to be as affected as the audience.

Tools for Success

Building trust and credibility

- Openness and honesty
 - Tell them what you do know and do not use hedging information that could be revealed later
 - Admit it if you do not know the answer to their question
 - Always respond as if there is no such thing as a bad or unimportant question

- Bring the audience inside your operations. Give them contact information and explain your decision process. Don't have a hidden agenda.
- Explain openly and honestly what you know. Don't hedge or caveat the information you are providing.
 - It's fine to admit that you don't know, but very important to follow up and provide the answer.
- Be patient and explain your responses so that everyone can understand. Don't be condescending.

Tools for Success

Building trust and credibility

- Competence and expertise
 - State your academic preparation and practical experience with the specific subject matter
 - Do not lord your expertise over stakeholders, use it to help them understand at their level
 - Show high level of organization in handling information
 - Limit use of notes

- Establish your qualifications to speak on an issue, but don't act superior or pedantic. Use your information to help people, not to make them feel small.

Tools for Success

Building trust and credibility

- Dedication and commitment
 - Arrive early and stay late for meetings
 - Reveal level of resources directed toward the issue
 - Let them know you will stay on task until the issue is resolved
 - Offer follow-up, keep the promise and stay on schedule

- Greet people when they arrive and stay until the last person is gone.
- Follow up and always keep your promises.
- Give people a direct telephone number or home number.

Tools For Success

- Traps and pitfalls
- Perception vs. reality
 - Perception is reality
 - *Deal with the consequences*
 - Base communications on knowledge and experience
 - *Communicate in the language of your audience*
 - Perceptions form quickly, beliefs slowly

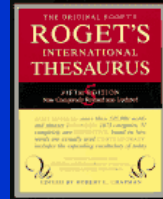


- Dealing with the consequences means to simply explain why the perception of an outcome won't happen.
- Never speculate or make statements that cannot be supported by facts. Know the difference between facts and opinion.
- Do not expect stakeholders to attain or have your level of expertise, so do not talk to them as your peer or your professor.
 - Bring your information down to understandable levels for them to consume;
 - Be patient as your audience tries to understand and accept your information; and
 - Remember they may be working through several communication barriers.

Tools For Success

Traps and pitfalls

- Use of jargon
 - Exceeds a standard
 - Below a standard
 - Ground water
 - Toxicologist

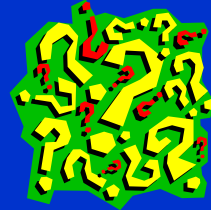


- Terms and words that could be misunderstood will be misunderstood. Use language that laymen can understand.

Tools For Success

Traps and pitfalls

- Use of negative words and phrases
 - Contamination
 - Dangerous
 - Pollution
 - Concern
- Use of hedging words
 - Maybe
 - Possibly
 - Depending
 - Perhaps



- Remember that for every negative word or phrase you must counter this negative dominance with three positives. Negative words are vague and can cause fear and uncertainty. If you know what's in the water, say so, rather than using vague, general terms.
- Hedging words imply that you are less than open or honest and that you may be lacking in competence and expertise. To avoid hedging, tell people:
 - What you know;
 - What you don't know;
 - What you will know and when you will know it; and
 - What you may never know.

Tools For Success

Traps and pitfalls

- Humor
- Guarantees
- Personal beliefs
- Attacks
- Risk comparisons
- Worst case speculation
- Risk numbers



- In high concern, low trust situations all of these attributes of communication are serious traps and pitfalls.
- Humor will backfire. It leaves the perception that you do not take the issue seriously.
- Only guarantee what you can personally do. To make up for guarantees you can't make in science, you can make guarantees for the process.
- Don't inject personal beliefs that run counter to the message or organizational position. If you don't believe in the message, you should not be the messenger.
- Don't take attacks personally. Never retaliate on a personal basis; always stick to the issues.
- Using comparisons can be problematic. People may not be able to understand quantitative comparison (see handout). Of probabilities, concentrations, or quantities, people are best able to understand quantities.

Tools For Success

Messengers

- Expertise does not equal communication skill
- Preparation is paramount
- Non-verbal communication also makes the messenger
- Be honest with yourselves and select your messenger wisely



- Do a good assessment of who is the right person to send into each situation.

Tools For Success

Messages

- Organize around 3s
 - 3 key messages
 - 2 supporting facts for each message
- Concise statements spoken within 15 to 45 seconds
- Use visual information that demystifies
- Preparation is paramount



- Boil all information down to the bottom line – and back it up with two supporting facts.
- Television sound bites are generally seven to nine seconds, but in a public meeting or speaking situation, you can take slightly longer – 15 to 45 seconds.
- Communications research shows that graphics should accompany the message. The graphic should make the issue clearer; i.e., demystify it.

Tools For Success

Mediums

- Always use risk communication principles for all message delivery forums and vehicles
 - Fact sheets
 - Reports
 - News releases and media interviews
 - Public forums and meeting displays
 - Choose format and sites carefully
- Preparation is paramount
- You can control most communication environments

- There is simply no viable reason why you cannot implement best management communication practices into all mediums.
- Always plan for open house style meeting format.
- If you are prepared and work as a team, you can control a large amount of each communication environment.
- **Video Segment:** presentation at a meeting on a Superfund site

Tools For Success

Community relations and public forums

- Continuous awareness and outreach
- Bring community leaders and opinion leaders “inside” routinely
- Bring displays and interactive materials to the public at schools and other forums
- Open house forums are the best way to facilitate risk communication principles and two-way communication

- Proactive communication is always better than reacting. Don’t wait until there’s an issue.
 - Invite school groups, homeowner groups, politicians, and other key community groups to visit and tour your facility.
 - Join a speakers’ bureau.
 - Actively cultivate relationships with local reporters.
- Work with credible third party influencers.

Tools For Success

Know your audience

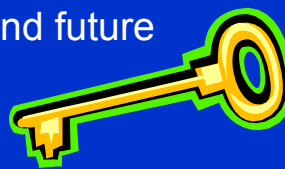
- What area of the community or special issue or interest do they represent?
- What history do you have with these and other stakeholders?
- Are there any cultural or environmental justice issues associated with your audience?
 - Have you met their communication needs such as interpreters?

Developing Key Messages



Developing Key Messages

- Case studies and scenarios
- Model statements and responses
 - Caring and empathy statement
 - Key message
 - Supporting facts
 - Organizational commitment and future action
 - Future action statement
 - Restatement of key message



- Read the scenario at the end of this section and work with your group to develop key messages.
- You must boil your presentation down to three key messages because that is all that most audiences will be able to retain.
- Seriously evaluate what is the most important information your audience must know.
 - The key message, along with its two supporting facts, should be stated in 30 to 45 seconds.
- Do not use technical jargon, or long words or phrases.
- Your total presentation for this exercise should not exceed five minutes. In general, a presentation must not exceed 20 minutes, otherwise your key messages and points will be lost. That time limit does not preclude question and answer sessions and follow-on discussion.

Remember: Key Messages

- 5-20 words in length
- No technical words, jargon, or long words
- Backed with two supporting facts
- Restated exactly the same way



Remember:

Supporting Facts

- At least two supporting facts
 - Strengthens message
 - Should be reinforced through at least one of the following:
 - Analogy
 - Personal story
 - Credible third-party endorsement

Remember: Caring and Empathy Statements

- Will Rogers quote: “People want to know that you care before they care what you know.”
- Must be up front
 - Caring determined within first 30 seconds

- Risk communication research shows that men and women need to approach caring and empathy differently.
- The public perceives that women are more naturally caring and empathetic. Men have a more difficult time establishing their empathy.
- The public perceives women to be less competent than men.
- Therefore, women need to be more conscious of establishing technical competence and men need to be more conscious of establishing that they care about the audience and the issues.

Remember: Organizational Commitment Statement

- Use organization in terms of a force for positive action, not as an excuse for inaction
- Establish yourself first and bring the organization in with you
- State organizational values and goals

- Make sure your organization takes on individual, human characteristics and values.
- Do not blame anything on “the system” or say “that’s just the way it is.”
- You always have to establish your personal credibility. Do not assume that your organization will give you credibility with an audience in a communication environment requiring risk communication principles and skill.

Remember: Future Action Statements

- Support idea of commitment
- Provide specific next steps
- Provide a point of contact and number where people can get additional information
- Identify a Web site or other source for more detailed information

- Do something the audience seldom expects from government officials...Keep your word and do what you say you are going to do, when you say you will do it.
- People want to know where the issue is in space and time. Outline a process they can follow and follow it yourself!
- Make sure you're accessible.
- Give them leads to where they can find information on their own.

REMEMBER!!!

- Six step model is useful for communication with all stakeholders and audiences
- Apply risk communication principles and skills to all forums and methods of communication

- Successful risk communication requires disciplined and sustained use of risk communication principles and skills. They should be applied consistently among all stakeholders (general public, elected officials, news media) and in all communications situations (presentations, telephone calls, written correspondence).
- Incorporate situational and cultural awareness in your communications activities.
- Remember that there are six key considerations in formulating a message, knowing:
 - What to say;
 - Who to say it to;
 - Why to say it;
 - Where to say it;
 - When to say it; and
 - How to say it.

Holding Public Meetings



Open House Forum

Logistics

- Schedule for four to six hour duration
- Present information in three exhibits, consistent with key messages
- Have supplemental detailed handouts
- Invite opposing views to have additional displays
- Don't cluster displays

- An open house forum facilitates a purposeful and meaningful exchange of information.
- The open house format requires good planning and is labor intensive. Recognize that all exhibits must be staffed with appropriate people. Back-ups are a good idea, so people can take breaks.
- Organize exhibits around key messages. Head each exhibit with a large title summarizing the key message. Use smaller fonts (still visible) to present supporting facts. Also use graphics to illustrate and clarify concepts.
 - Using successively smaller fonts to present supporting information draws people into the exhibit and gives them the opportunity to talk to the experts.
- Handouts should also focus on key messages.

Open House Forum

Logistics

- Allow for traffic flow to discourage clusters
- Have trained presenters and subject matter experts at each station
- Invite third party independent experts



Open House Forum

Logistics

- Provide method to leave formal comments
- Have hosts to provide assistance
- Serve refreshments
- Provide assistance for people with special needs
- Invite opinion leaders to attend



- Always provide a method to record public comments. Options include:
 - Stenographer to take comments;
 - Written comment areas;
 - Voice recorders to take spoken comments (to be transcribed later); and
 - Computer station to type comments.
- Plan for accommodating any special needs, for example, interpreters or accessibility.

Traditional Meeting Forum

- Seek neutral facility and moderator
- Eliminate physical and psychological barriers
 - Do not use podiums, tables, stages
- Have chart or other graphic central focal point
- Keep presentation brief
- Handle the tough questions using risk communication principles

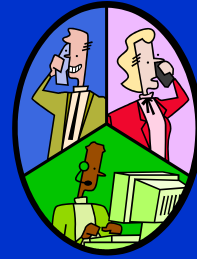
- Try to hold public meetings at schools or other neutral sites. Local neutral moderators are best, such as The League of Women Voters, local clergy, college professors, separate government moderators.
- If you must present in a traditional format, keep these points in mind:
 - Don't turn your back to the audience.
 - Stand to the side, rather than at the center, of the room.
 - Put flip chart or graphics in the center. It becomes the target, rather than you.
 - Keep your presentation professional, consistent with risk communication principles.
 - Take questions from hostile questioners, but respond to the entire audience rather than directly to that person. Try to identify the underlying issue and address that rather than respond to personal invective. Don't become defensive.
 - Be sure to give everyone an opportunity to speak.
 - If you are asked multiple questions or a multi-part question, respond to the one you have the best answer to (that gets you back to a key message). If you must respond to all, restate the issues and take them one at a time.
- If a traditional public meeting format is required, you may be able to use a dual format (i.e., traditional combined with an open house). This provides an opportunity for those who want to make public statements as well as an opportunity for the community to talk one-on-one with experts in the forum.

Crisis and Emergency Response



Crisis and Emergency Response

- Planning process is critical
- Keep internal audience informed
- Timely and honest external communications is key
- Exercise plan
- Evaluate plan



Planning Process is Critical

- Develop key messages and Qs and As ahead of time
- Identify potential spokespeople
- Ensure top leadership understands the process

- People need to know what roles they will play in communicating issues, both internally and externally.
- If the emergency is a situation for which you are responsible, step up and take responsibility.

Keep Internal Audience Informed

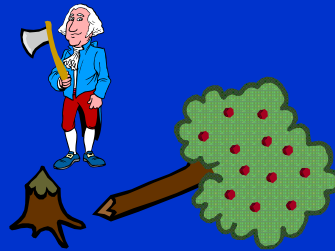
- Keep leadership informed
- Everyone becomes a spokesperson
 - Key message reinforcement
- Rumors and speculation will fill an information void



- Make sure leaders know the issues and are prepared to respond truthfully and accurately. Do not hide the truth from your managers.
- Let people know what is being done, even if all the answers are not currently available.

Timely and Honest External Communications Are Key

- Maximum disclosure, minimum delay
- Bad news isn't like wine
- Never lie



- Put your best foot forward, but never lie or try to obfuscate the truth.

Exercise Plan

- Ensure key people know their roles
 - Have alternates been identified?
- Update plan when changes occur
 - New people
 - Organizational change
 - New equipment or area of operations



Evaluate Plan

- Is it understandable?
 - Is organization familiar with it?
- Are key messages clear?
- Are the questions up-to-date?
- Are the tough questions addressed?



- Regularly evaluate the plan. Make sure that new employees are familiar with the plan.
- Revise the plan based on experience. Incorporate lessons learned in your plan.

Communicating During an Emergency

- Maximum disclosure, minimum delay
 - Know what legal restraints necessary to protect privacy
 - Release anything relevant to the situation that does not need to be withheld
- Risk Communication 101
 - Let people know first that you care
 - Use key messages with supporting facts
- Focus on what is being done to prevent further problems



News Media Relations



News Media Relations

- Understanding the stakeholder
 - Background of news media professionals
 - The business of the news
 - Where do people get their news?
 - On the record
 - Challenging the news media



- Most journalists have very weak academic preparation or desire to deal with complex scientific, health and environmental issues. It is to your benefit to patiently help them understand the issues.
- Be aware that business considerations do affect the content and placement of information in the newspaper. Your relationship with reporters can help influence the accuracy of their stories and their willingness to correct mistakes.
- Fifty percent of the public's news information is received from television, followed by 25 percent from newspapers.
- Remember when you talk to reporters, you are always on the record! Do not say anything you would not want to appear in the newspaper.
- Don't argue with people who buy ink by the barrel or have their own towers.

News Media Relations

- Meeting the needs of the media
 - Do not ever lie
 - Avoid stonewalling and piecemeal information
 - If you cannot provide information explain exactly why and when you will be able to
 - Help them meet their deadlines
 - Be succinct in your answers
 - Be patient and help them to understand

- Lies will come back to haunt you. ***Never Lie!*** If you don't know the answer, say so.

News Media Interview

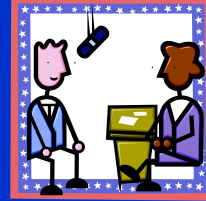
- Choosing the correct medium
 - TV = sound bites
 - Print = more background
 - Newspaper more timely
 - Magazines more in depth



- The print media will give you more time, but still organize your thoughts around your key messages.
- Don't let the interviewer badger you into giving the pre-determined answer he or she is looking for.
- Interviews in the field are better than those in the office. They show that you're "on the job."

News Media Interview

- The interview
 - Preparing for an interview
 - During the interview
 - After the interview



- Use teamwork. Anticipate tough questions and practice answering them with your team. Videotape yourself for the team to critique.
- Establish ground rules for the interview and stick to them.
- Remember that you are always on the record from the moment the news media enters your area until the moment the news media leaves your area.

News Media Environment

- Deadlines
- Instant experts
- Competing for time – background noise
 - Must be sensational to get attention
 - Victims make good headlines
 - “If it bleeds, it leads”
 - Officials – affix blame
 - 1 PPB or 1 second in 32 years



- Your story will be competing with other stories, so make sure you make your points.

News Media Environment

- Preparation
 - Qs & As
 - Choosing the proper spokesperson
 - Caring and empathy
 - Key messages
 - Position of authority – speaks for the organization
 - Ground rules



- Again, be prepared!
- As with meetings, make informed choices about who is the best spokesperson.
- Take your time to respond thoughtfully. There is no reason to rush to respond.
- Other ground rules:
 - If this is not an interview you want, limit the time. Have someone who can call you aside when the time is up.

News Media Interview

- **ALWAYS** on the record
- Stay on message
- Bridge back to key messages
- Speak to reporter, but realize true audience is the public and the interview is just a way to get information to them
- End with summary of key messages



- **Video segment:** The nightmare interview

News Media Interview

- Still on the record until reporter leaves
 - Off-handed remarks after the formal interview have ended more than one career
- Ensure and offer a way to provide follow-up information
- If possible, reinforce key messages



Small Group Exercise



- With your group, determine the three most difficult questions you could be asked regarding your assigned scenario and then prepare a key message response to each question.
- Responses will be recorded on-camera and played back for the group to evaluate.