



CRISIS AND EMERGENCY RISK COMMUNICATION

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10th Annual National Tribal Public Health Summit

National Indian Health Board

Albuquerque, NM, WA

May 13, 2019



The **right** message at the **right** time from the **right** person
can save lives...

Safeguarding America from Health Threats

CDC Public Health Responses

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Marburg Virus;	Mumps;	XDR/MDR TB;	Satellite Intercept;	Salmonella typhimurium Outbreak;	NH Anthrax;	Japan Earthquake and Tsunami;	Polio;	Avian Influenza H7N9 Response;	MERS-CoV;	DoD Sample Investigation;	Ebola Response;	Zika Virus Response;
Hurricanes: Katrina, Rita, and Wilma	Tropical Storm Ernesto;	Hurricane Dean	Salmonella and E. Coli Outbreaks;	H1N1 Influenza;	Haiti Earthquake;	Hurricane Irene;	Multistate Meningitis Outbreak;	Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV);	Un-Accompanied Minors;	Ebola Response;	Zika Virus Response	Polio;
	E. Coli Spinach/ Botulism Carrot Juice;		Hurricanes: Dolly, Gustav, Hanna, and Ike, Tropical Storm Edouard	Biowatch;	Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill;	Polio Eradication Response (Polio)		Multistate Cyclospora Outbreak;	Ebola Response;	Polio	Flint, Michigan Water Contamination Response;	Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria
	E. coli;			Operation Earthquake;	Haiti Cholera Outbreak			Polio			Polio	
	Rhode Island Mycoplasma			Presidential Inauguration								



CERC Purpose

1. Help people cope, make risk/benefit decisions, and begin to return their lives to normal
2. Provide the public with information to make the best possible decisions within nearly impossible time constraints and to accept the imperfect nature of choice
3. Support organizational credibility

What the public seeks from your communication

Five public concerns. . .

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



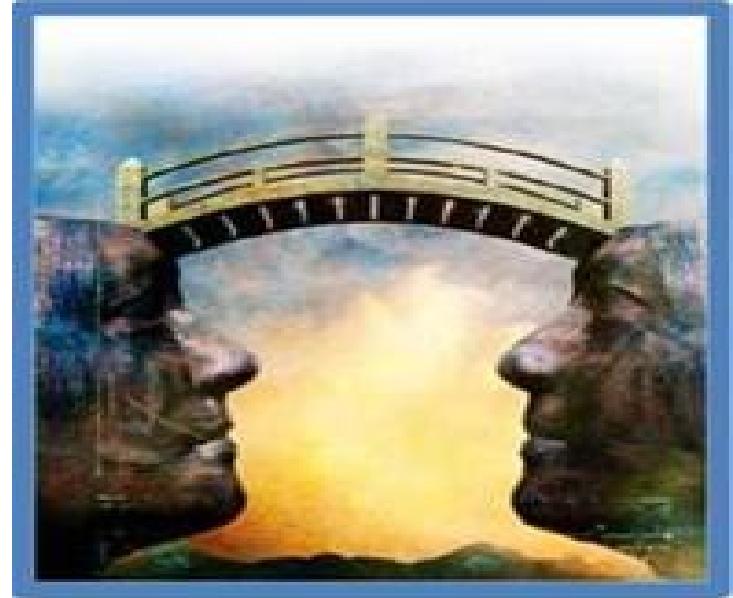
Five communication failures that kill operational success

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



Five 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



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



Psychological barriers:

- Denial
- Fear, anxiety, confusion, dread
- Hopelessness or helplessness

Won't we scare them? Fear & Anxiety

Both anxiety and fear are alert signals that warn of danger

FEAR	ANXIETY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• realistic, adaptive, and time-limited response	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• less realistic, less adaptive, not time-specific;
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• usually not anticipated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• anticipated
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• triggers freeze, fight or flight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• primes freeze, fight or flight, but doesn't engage it



What's Different During a Crisis?

Communicating in a Crisis Is Different

- Public must feel empowered – reduce fear and victimization
- Mental preparation reduces anxiety
- Taking action reduces anxiety
- Uncertainty is the greatest concern for most – must be addressed



Decision Making in a Crisis Is Different

- People simplify
- Cling to current beliefs
- We remember what we see or previously experience (first messages carry more weight)
- People limit intake of new information (3-7 bits)



How do we measure the magnitude of a crisis or emergency?

- Harm to people (dead, injured, sickened)
- Harm to property (monetary and geographic spread)



Another Approach to Measure Risk in an Emergency

All risks are not accepted equally

- Voluntary vs. involuntary
- Controlled personally vs. controlled by others
- Familiar vs. exotic
- Natural vs. manmade
- Reversible vs. permanent
- Statistical vs. anecdotal
- Fairly vs. unfairly distributed
- Affecting adults vs. affecting children



Six Principles of CERC

Be First: If the information is yours to provide by organizational authority, do so as soon as possible. If you can't, explain how you are working to get it.

Be Right: Give facts in increments. Tell people what you know when you know it, tell them what you don't know, and tell them *if* you will know relevant information later.

Be Credible: Tell the truth. Do not withhold to avoid embarrassment or the possible “panic” that seldom happens. Uncertainty is worse than not knowing—rumors are more damaging than hard truths.

Express Empathy: Acknowledge in words what people are feeling—it builds trust.

Promote Action: Give people things to do. It calms anxiety and helps restore order.

Show Respect: Treat people the way you want to be treated: the way you want your loved ones treated, always... even when hard decisions must be communicated.



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 Next

- 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?



Initial Message

Must

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



**YOUR
ATTENTION
PLEASE!
WE HAVE
A CRISIS
SITUATION**



Must Not...

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



Additional CERC Resources

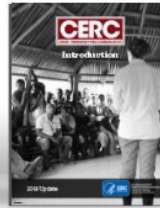
- CDC offers many resources for jurisdictions interested in learning more about CERC at <https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/>



TRAINING

The CERC program offers in-person and online trainings on Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication.

[More >](#)



MANUAL AND TOOLS

The CERC Manual describes core crisis and emergency risk communication principles and how they apply to each phase of a crisis. Tools are available to prepare communication plans or use during a crisis.

[More >](#)



PRESENTATIONS

The CERC program offers archived presentations on specific CERC topics and how CERC applies in different emergencies.

[More >](#)

CERC Corners are based on content from [CDC's CERC Manual](#) and bring CERC to life. Read about different CERC topics and how others are using CERC to communicate about emergencies.

Introduction to CERC



Psychology Of A Crisis



Messages And Audiences



Crisis Communication Plans



Spokesperson



Community Engagement



Media, Social Media & Mobile Media Devices



Thank You!

For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
TTY: 1-888-232-6348 www.cdc.gov

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

