**Assignment 9: Crisis communications**

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Introduction

Communication during a crisis is a broad science and an imperfect art. The reasons that organizations must integrate effective emergency risk and crisis communication planning and resources into overall emergency operational planning at the community, state, and federal levels. The issues management communication is similar to crisis communication; however, the organization has the luxury of foreknowledge of the impending crisis and the opportunity, to some extent, to choose the timing of its revelation to stakeholders and the public and reveal the organization’s plan to resolve the issue. Again, the organization is central to the event. Risk communication is a field that has flourished in the area of environmental health. Through risk communication, the communicator hopes to provide the receiver with information about the expected type (good or bad) and magnitude (weak or strong) of an outcome from a behavior or exposure.

Crisis and emergency risk communication encompasses the urgency of disaster communication with the need to communicate risks and benefits to stakeholders and the public. Crisis and emergency risk communication differs from crisis communication in that the communicator is not perceived as a participant in the crisis or disaster, except as an agent to resolve the crisis or emergency. Crisis and emergency risk communication is the effort by experts to provide information to allow an individual, stakeholder, or an entire community to make the best possible decisions about their well-being within nearly impossible time constraints and help people ultimately to accept the imperfect nature of choices during the crisis. Thougout of this presentation, we are going to talk about: Illustration of process communication; what about difference contrast communication in an emergency situation and normal situation; the importance of communication in crisis; the trust and credibility core tenets of effective communication in an emergency; and thr result based management in regard to monitoring in Humanitarian setting.

# Illustrate the process of Communication

The communication process for what are we talking about is focus on communication during a crisis. Communication theorists today are apt to slice and dice their definitions quite finely. A simple definition of crisis communication separates the judgment or reputation factors in the communication and deals primarily with factual communication by an involved organization to its stakeholders and the public. Crisis communication could simply be the effort by community leaders to inform the public that, by law, they must evacuate in advance of a hurricane. In this definition, the organization is not being overtly judged as a possible participant in the creation of the disaster, and the information is empirically sound, so the individual can judge its veracity without the help of an expert.

Understanding the pattern of a crisis can help communicators anticipate problems and respond effectively. For communicators, it is vital to know that every emergency, disaster, or crisis evolves in phases and that the communication must evolve in tandem. By dividing the crisis into the following phases, the communicator can anticipate the information needs of the media, stakeholders, and the public. Each phase has its unique informational requirements.

The process of communication is represented in lifecycle showing as follow:

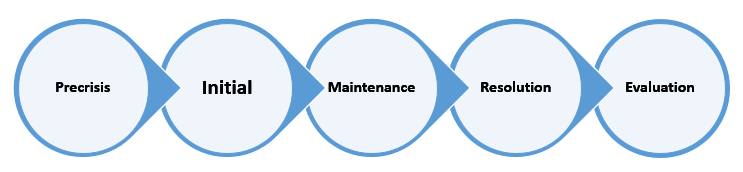


Figure 1: Crisis communications Process

1. **Precrisis**

The communication objectives during the precrisis phase are as follows: *be prepared; forster alliances; develop consensus recommendations; and test messages.*

1. **Initial**

The communication objectives during the Initial phase are as follows: *Acknowledge the event with empathy; explain and inform the public, in simplest forms about the risk; Establish agency/Spokes-person credibility; Provide emergency courses of action (how/where tp get more information); commit to stakeholders and public to continued communication.*

1. **Maintenance**

The communication objectives during the maintenance phase are as follows: *Help public more accurately understand its own risk; provide background and encompassing information to those who need it; gain understand in and support for response and recovery plans; listen to stakeholder and audience feedback and correct misinformation; explain emergency recommendations; empower risk/benefit decision-making.*

1. **Resolution**

The communication objectives during the Resolution phase are as follows: *Improve appropriate public response in future similar emergencies through education; honestly examine problems and mishaps, and then reinforce what worked in the recovery and response efforts; persuade the public to support policy, and resource allocation to the problem; and promote the activities and capabilities of the agency.*

1. **Evaluation**

The communication objectives during the Evaluation phase are as follows: *Evaluate communication plan performance; document lessons learned; and determine specific actions to improve crisis systems or the crisis plan*

# Compare and contrast communication in an emergency and normal situation

The public must feel empowered to take action in the event of a crisis to reduce the likelihood of victimization and fear. Physical and mental preparation will relieve anxiety despite the expectation of potential injury or death. An “action message” can provide people with the feeling that they can take steps to improve a situation and not become passive victims of the threat.

How people absorb or act on information they receive during an emergency may be different from non-emergency situations. Research provides some clues about the receiver of information during an emergency. While it can be expected that normal communication psychology principles apply during a crisis, research has shown that in a dire emergency, people or groups may exaggerate their communication responses as they revert to more rudimentary or instinctual “flight or fight” reasoning, caused in part by the increase of adrenaline and cortisol in the blood system.

Studies show that the amount of media coverage of a traumatic event directly affects audience response. In some instances, information can hurt. The media affects segments of the population differently. The effects of television coverage of disasters on children can be especially troubling because the context of the disaster may not be understood.

# Supporting your answers with relevant examples, what the importance of communication in crisis

A volatile risk comparison can work if it is clear that you are trying to inform the public’s judgment, not coerce it. If you were trying to inform the public about a risk, the natural thing to do would be to bracket the risk: bigger than X, smaller than Y. If you report only that it is smaller than Y, your audience can tell they are being coerced.

*Research indicates that, in Hawaii, a person is 10 times more likely to be killed by brain damage from a falling coconut than to be killed by a shark. In this case, the risks are both natural in origin, fairly distributed, exotic, and outside the control of the individual. Although being killed by a shark may cause greater terror or emotion, its comparison to being killed by a coconut helps the individual to see that he or she may be perceiving the risk as greater than it is. Most people have never considered their risk of dying by coconut*.

If an emergency event is catastrophic, unexpected, dreaded, unfamiliar, in someone else control, morally repugnant, and memorable, expect high outrage. Reassurance can backfire. Tell people how scary the situation is, even though the actual numbers are small, and watch them get calmer.

You should, of course, give people reassuring information. But do not emphasize it. Especially do not emphasize that it is reassuring, or you will trigger your audience’s ambivalence. One very good approach is to put the good news in subordinate clauses, with the more alarmist side of the situation in the main clause. “It’s too soon to say we’re out of the woods, even though we haven’t seen a new anthrax case in X days.” The main clause indicates that you are taking the situation seriously, how aggressively you are responding to every false alarm. Make sure that people have the data they need to put the risk in context and to judge how unlikely they are to get anthrax, but never put yourself in the position of minimizing the risk or urging them not to worry. If you have to amend the estimate of damage or victims, it is better to amend it down, not up.

# Why are trust and credibility core tenets of effective communication in an emergency? Explain using relevant examples

Consider your audiences he receiver of your communication will be judging the content of the message, the messenger, and the method of delivery. Each of these aspects must be considered in planning for crisis and emergency risk communication. The public’s awareness of government is heightened during a crisis. A lack of continuity, control, adequate resources, or full knowledge of the event can invoke fear and threaten social unity. Your audience’s needs can be judged three ways: (1) their relationship to the incident, (2) their psychological differences, and (3) their demographic differences.

Possible audiences for your crisis and emergency risk communication:

1. Public within the circle of disaster or emergency for whom action messages are intended

**Concerns**: Personal safety, family safety, pet safety, stigmatization, property protection

1. Public immediately outside circle of disaster or emergency for whom action messages are not intended

**Concerns**: Personal safety, family safety, pet safety, interruption of normal life activities

1. Emergency response and recovery workers, law enforcement involved in their response **Concerns**: Resources to accomplish response and recovery, personal safety, family safety, pet safety
2. Public health and medical professionals involved in the disaster response

**Concerns**: Resources adequate to respond, personal safety, family safety, pet safety

1. Family members of victims and response workers

**Concerns**: Personal safety, safety of victims and response workers

1. Health care professionals outside the response effort

**Concerns**: Vicarious rehearsal of treatment recommendations, ability to respond to patients with appropriate information, access to treatment supplies if needed/wanted

1. Civic leaders, local, state, and national
2. Congress

**Concerns**: Informing constituents, review of statutes and laws for adequacy and adjustment needs, opportunities for expressions of concern

1. Trade and industry

**Concerns**: Business issues (loss of revenue, liability, business interruption) and protection of employees

1. National community

**Concerns**: Vicarious rehearsal, readiness efforts started

1. International neighbors

**Concerns**: Vicarious rehearsal, readiness efforts started

1. International community

Concerns: Vicarious rehearsal, exploration of readiness

1. Stakeholders and partners specific to the emergency (discussed in a separate module)

**Concerns**: Included in decision making and access to information

1. Media

**Concerns**: Personal safety, access to information and spokespersons, deadlines

Each of these audiences will be looking for a specific message. Prioritize the development of messages for each audience based on their involvement. Remember the basics when creating your messages. Audience segmentation and demographics are still relevant during a crisis. Always consider the following:

* Education
* Current subject knowledge and experience
* Age
* Language spoken/read

The elements of Successful Communication are:

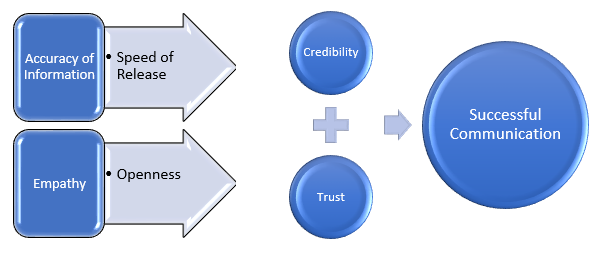


Figure 2: Elements of Successful crisis communications

# Discuss Result Based Management in regard to Monitoring in Humanitarian setting

Planning, monitoring and evaluation come together as Result Based Management (RBM). RBM is defined as “a broad management strategy aimed at achieving improved performance and demonstrable results,” and has been adopted by many multilateral development organizations, bilateral development agencies and public administrations throughout the world.

Good RBM is an ongoing process. This means that there is constant feedback, learning and improving. Existing plans are regularly modified based on the lessons learned through monitoring and evaluation, and future plans are developed based on these lessons.

Monitoring is also an ongoing process. The lessons from monitoring are discussed periodically and used to inform actions and decisions. Evaluations should be done for programmatic improvements while the programme is still ongoing and also inform the planning of new programmes.

The main objectives of good planning, monitoring and evaluation are to:

* Support substantive accountability to governments, beneficiaries, donors, other partners and stakeholders.
* Prompt corrective action
* Ensure informed decision making
* Promote risk management
* Enhance organization and individual learning

Monitoring and evaluation should be part of your planning process. It is very difficult to go back and set up monitoring and evaluation systems once things have begun to happen. You need to begin gathering information about performance and in relation to targets from the word go. The first information gathering should, in fact, take place when you do your needs assessment. This will give you the information you need against which to assess improvements over time.

Conclusion

Illustrate the process of Communication will map the way to good crisis and emergency risk communication and help your organization reserve limited resources, fulfil its mission, and maintain public trust. The principles of emergency risk communication should be considered during each phase of a crisis. These tenets are grouped below according to their importance during the pre-crisis, initial, maintenance, and resolution phases of the crisis. And, when you design a monitoring system, you are taking a formative view point and establishing a system that will provide useful information on an ongoing basis so that you can improve what you do and how you do it.

# Bibliography

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