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Psychology of a Crisis

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Module Summary

- Common negative feelings and behaviors for people during a crisis
- How communication differs in a crisis
- Risk communication principles for emergencies

Psychology of a Crisis

Common human emotions—
left without mitigating response—
may lead to negative behaviors
that hamper recovery or cause
more harm.

Negative Behaviors

- Demands for unneeded treatment
- Reliance on special relationships
- Unreasonable trade and travel restrictions
- MUPS—Multiple Unexplained Physical Symptoms

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

- Denial
- Fear and avoidance
- Hopelessness or helplessness
- Vicarious rehearsal
- Seldom panic

What Is Vicarious Rehearsal?

- The communication age gives national audiences the experience of local crises. These armchair victims mentally rehearse recommended courses of actions.
- Recommendations are easier to reject the farther removed the audience is from real threat.
- The worried well can heavily tax response and recovery.

What's Different During a Crisis?

Communicating in a Crisis Is Different

When in “fight or flight” moments of an emergency,
more information leads to decreased anxiety.

Decisionmaking in a Crisis Is Different

- People simplify
- Cling to current beliefs
- We remember what we see or previously experience (first messages carry more weight)

So How Do We Initially Communicate in a Crisis?

Simply

Timely

Accurately

Repeatedly

Credibly

Consistently

How Do We Communicate About 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 children vs. affecting adults



Be Careful With Risk Comparisons

- Are they similarly accepted based on
 - high/low hazard
 - high/low outrage

A. High hazard	B. High outrage
C. Low hazard	D. Low outrage

- Give examples
- Cornerstone of risk acceptance



Risk Acceptance Examples

- Dying by falling coconut or dying by shark
 - Natural vs. manmade
 - Fairly vs. unfairly distributed
 - Familiar vs. exotic
 - Controlled by self vs. outside control of self

Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

Don't overreassure

- Considered controversial by some.
- A high estimate of harm modified downward is much more acceptable to the public than a low estimate of harm modified upward.



Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

**State continued concern before stating
reassuring updates**

“Although we’re not out of the woods yet, we have seen a declining number of cases each day this week.”



Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

Confidence vs. uncertainty

Instead of making promises about outcomes, express the uncertainty of the situation and a confident belief in the “process” to fix the problem and address public safety concerns.



Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

Give people things to do - Anxiety is reduced by action and a restored sense of control

- Symbolic behaviors (e.g., going to a candlelight vigil)
- Preparatory behaviors (e.g., buying water and batteries)
- Contingent “if, then” behaviors (e.g., creating an emergency family communication plan)



Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

Give people things to do - Anxiety is reduced by action and a restored sense of control

- Single most important action for self-protection
- Recommend a 3-part action plan
 - You must do X
 - You should do Y
 - You can do Z



Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

Allow people the right to feel fear

- Don't pretend they're not afraid, and don't tell them they shouldn't be.
- Acknowledge the fear, and give contextual information.



Crisis Communication Lifecycle



- Prepare
- Foster alliances
- Develop consensus recommendations
- Test message
- Evaluate plans

- Express empathy
- Provide simple risk explanations
- Establish credibility
- Recommend actions
- Commit to stakeholders

- Further explain risk by population groups
- Provide more background
- Gain support for response
- Empower risk/benefit decisionmaking
- Capture feedback for analysis

- Educate a primed public for future crises
- Examine problems
- Gain support for policy and resources
- Promote your organization's role

- Capture lessons learned
- Develop an event SWOT
- Improve plan
- Return to precrisis planning



Precrisis Phase

- Prepare
- Foster alliances
- Develop consensus recommendations
- Test message
- Evaluate plans

Initial Phase

- Express empathy
- Provide simple risk explanations
- Establish credibility
- Recommend actions
- Commit to stakeholders

Maintenance

- Further explain risk by population groups
- Provide more background
- Gain support for response
- Empower risk/benefit decisionmaking
- Capture feedback for analysis

Resolution

- Educate “primed” public for future crises
- Examine problems
- Gain support for policy and resources
- Promote your organization’s role

Evaluation

- Capture lessons learned
- Develop an event SWOT
- Improve plan
- Return to precrisis planning



Messages and Audiences

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Module Summary

- How people evaluate messages in a crisis
- Ways to build trust through your messages
- Tips for crafting your initial messages
- Dealing with rumors and social pressures to build consensus

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

Audience Relationship to Event



List Audience Concerns

Are they ranked differently depending on their relationship to the incident?

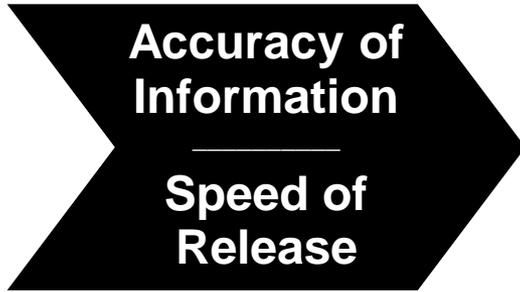
Judging the Message

- Speed counts
- Facts
- Trusted source

Key Elements To Build Trust

- Expressed empathy
- Competence
- Honesty
- Commitment
- Accountability





CREDIBILITY



+
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



Working With the Media

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Module Summary

- How response officials should and should not deal with the media
- Ways in which the media are affected by crises
- Pros and cons of different tools you can use to reach the media (e.g., press conferences)
- Writing for the media during a crisis
- Dealing with media errors

Disasters Are Media Events

- We need the media to be there.
- There is no national emergency broadcast system.
- Give important protective actions for the public.
- Know how to reach their audiences and what their audiences need.

Response Officials Should

- Understand that their job is not the media's job
- Know that they can't dismiss media when they're inconvenient
- Acknowledge that the media are an excellent vehicle to get to the public quickly
- Accept that the media will be involved in the response, and plan accordingly



Response Officials Should

- Attempt to provide all media equal access
- Use technology to fairly distribute information
- Plan to precredential media for access to EOC/JOC or JIC
- Think consistent messages



Response Officials Should Not

- Hold grudges
- Discount local media
- Tell the media what to do



How To Work With Reporters

- Reporters want a front seat to the action and all information NOW.
- Preparation will save relationships.
- If you don't have the facts, tell them the process.
- Reality Check: 70,000 media outlets in U.S.
Media cover the news 24/7.

Media, Too, Are Affected by Crises

- Verification
- Adversarial role
- National dominance
- Lack of scientific expertise



Diminished Information Verification

- Initially, expect errors. “If you have expertise in an area, you will find errors.”
- 73% of adults have become more skeptical about news accuracy.

Media and Crisis Coverage

- A Fox poll found 56% believed news outlets “over-hyped” anthrax.
- 77% said that the coverage frightened them.
- 92% were saddened.
- 42% were tired out.

Media and Crisis Coverage

- Evidence strongly suggests that coverage is more factual when reporters have more information. They become more interpretative when they have less information.
- What should we conclude?

Adversarial Role

- Diminished adversarial role in the initial phase of a crisis.
- Media have genuine concern.

National Dominance

- Expect the national media to dominate in major crises.
- That means messages meant for local audiences may have to compete with national coverage.
- Plan ahead.

Inadequate Scientific Expertise

- Inadequate scientific expertise can be a problem.
- Prepare to “fill in the blanks.”

Command Post

- Media will expect a command post. Official channels that work well will discourage reliance on nonofficial channels. Be media-friendly at the command post—prepare for them to be on site.
- Name reasons it may be good for media to be at the command post.
- Name reasons it may be bad.

Tools To Reach the Public Through the Media

- Press conferences
- Satellite media tours
- Telephone news conferences
- E-mail listservs and broadcast fax
- Web sites/video streaming
- Response to media calls



Press Conferences

- Plus: Consistent messages; save time
- Minus: Media may not be able to attend; pack mentality

Satellite Media Tours

- Plus: Give local slant to interviews from national level
- Minus: Expensive

Telephone News Conferences

- Plus: Reach far more media than press conference; great flexibility
- Minus: No interesting visuals for TV/Web

E-mail Listservs and Broadcast Fax

- Plus: Great for updates that don't need explanation
- Minus: Difficult to keep addresses up-to-date

Web Sites/Video Streaming

- Plus: Transparent to public and media at same time
- Minus: Require a Webmaster

Response to Media Calls

- Plus: Media can give you information too
- Minus: Time-consuming

Writing for the Media During a Crisis

- The pressure will be tremendous from all quarters.
- It must be fast and accurate.
- It's like cooking a turkey when people are starving.
- If information isn't finalized, explain the process.



Emergency Press Releases

- One page with attached factsheet (can clear quicker)
- Think of them as press updates, and prime media when to expect them
- Should answer 5Ws and H for the time it covers



Emergency Press Releases

- Reality check: Requires concessions to your journalistic tastes—so pick your battles
- Keep your eye on the prize—fast, accurate releases to the media and public

Press Statements Are Not Press Releases

- They are the official position.
- May be used to counter a contrary view.
- Not used for peer-review debate.
- Offer encouragement to the public and responders.

Factsheets and Backgrounders

- They carry the facts and history.

Video News Releases and B-roll

- Get your message on tape.
- B-roll is easier than VNRs to produce.
- Don't raise subjects in b-roll that you do not want to promote during an emergency.

Successful Emergency Press Conferences

- Where to hold it?
- Who to invite?
- How and when to invite the media?
- Handouts?

Media Errors—Now What?

“Declaring war on the press, tempting as it may sound, is a game you can’t win.”

—Stratford Sherman, in *Fortune* magazine

Calm Down

Don't let it be personal—everyone has a job to do.

Analyze the Situation

- What is your relationship with this reporter and the media?
- Did the piece report both sides?
- Was it inaccurate or simply the facts with a negative slant?

Know What To Ask For

- Decide on your ideal as well as your minimal solution.
- Retraction or correction?
- Another piece that offers your perspective?
- An apology?
- Correction for permanent record?
- Letter to editor printed?

Know Whom To Contact

- Don't go to the top first. Contact the reporter.
- If you have doubts about the integrity of the outlet, consider an alternate media outlet.
- Reach the public through channels other than the media.

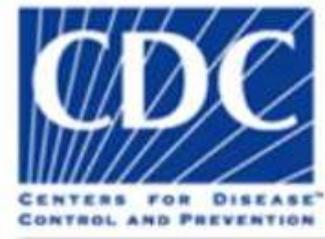
Know What You Want To Communicate

- “Speak with one voice.”
- Frame the message in a positive way.
- It may include a call to action.
- Focus on your audience.
- Include no anger in the message.

Before Releasing Information to the Media, Consider

- Ability—Do you have the right information?
- Competency—Are you qualified to discuss the topic?
- Authority—Who has jurisdiction over the issue?
- Security—Is the information classified?
- Accuracy—Have you verified the information?
- Propriety—Does it display sensitivity and dignity?
- Policy—Is it permitted to release this information?





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

Pre-crisis Phase

- Be prepared
- Foster alliances
- Develop consensus recommendations
- Test messages

All the planning, most of the work

Initial Phase

- Express empathy
- Simply inform public about risks
- Establish organization/spokesperson credibility
- Provide emergency courses of action
- Commit to communicate with the public and stakeholders

Reputations are made or broken here

Crisis Maintenance Phase

- Help public understand their own risks
- More encompassing information needed by some
- Gain support for recovery plans
- Explain and make a case for public health recommendations
- Get and respond to public/stakeholder feedback
- Empower risk/benefit decisionmaking
- Requires ongoing assessment of event

Crisis Resolution Phase

- Provide educational opportunities
- Examine problems and mishaps
- Gain support for new policies or resource allocation
- Promote the organization's capabilities

Evaluation Phase

- Ongoing in various ways during all phases
- Integrate results into precrisis planning activities

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.
- Do community relations so 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 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
- Planning needs



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

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



Signed Endorsement From Director

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

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

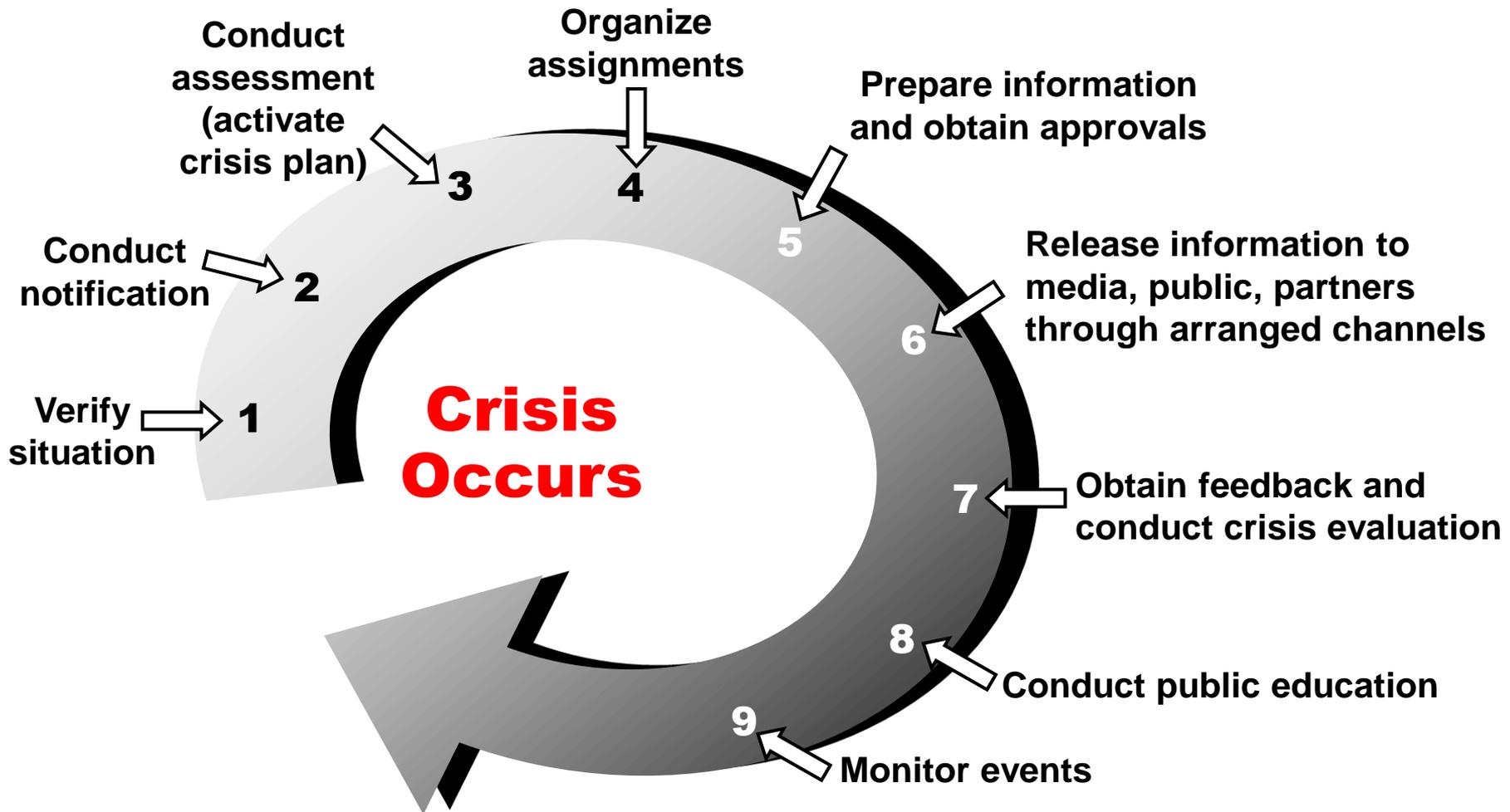
Partner Agreements (Like Joining the Local EOC's JIC)

- 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



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:

Simply

Timely

Accurately

Repeatedly

Credibly

Consistently

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?



Media Beating on Your Door

- Alternatives to “no comment” that give you breathing room:
 - “We’ve just learned about this and are trying to get more information.”
 - “I’m not the authority on this, let me have XXXX call you right back.”
 - “We’re preparing a statement on that now. Can I fax it to you in about 2 hours?”



Need More Breathing Room?

Try this for an initial press statement

Response to Inquiries (you are authorized to give out the following information)

Date: _____ Time: _____ Approved by: _____

This is an evolving emergency and I know that, just like we do, you want as much information as possible right now. While we work to get your questions answered as quickly as possible, I want to tell you what we can confirm right now:

At approximately, _____ (time), a (brief description of what happened) _____

_____.

At this point, we do not know the number of (persons ill, persons exposed, injuries, deaths, etc.).

We have a system (plan, procedure, operation) in place for just such an emergency and we are being assisted by (police, FBI, EOC) as part of that plan.

The situation is (under)(not yet under) control, and we are working with (local, State, Federal) authorities to (e.g., contain this situation, determine how this happened, determine what actions may be needed by individuals and the community to prevent this from happening again).

We will continue to gather information and release it to you as soon as possible. I will be back to you within (amount of time, 2 hours or less) to give you an update. As soon as we have more confirmed information, it will be provided. We ask for your patience as we respond to this emergency.



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

How Would You Triage Media Response?

Incident Media Call Triage Sheet

Deadline ___ 2 hours, ___ today a.m., ___ today p.m. ___ ASAP, ___ other

Media outlet: _____

National ___TV, ___Daily/Wire, ___Radio, ___Magazine, ___Other
 Local
 International

Caller's name (print first and last) _____
 Caller contact information: phone(s) _____
 Fax _____
 Email _____

<p>Request:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> SME* questions <input type="checkbox"/> Interview (by name request? _____) <input type="checkbox"/> Background/b-roll <input type="checkbox"/> Fact check <input type="checkbox"/> Update <input type="checkbox"/> Return call to press officer</p>	<p>Topic:</p> <p>Numbers _____ Response/Investigation _____ Health/disease issue/ Treatment _____ Hot issue 1 _____ Hot issue 2 _____</p>
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Action needed:

Return call expected from press officer
 Return call expected from SME

Comments: _____

PA suggested triage priority:

Level A
 Level B
 Level C

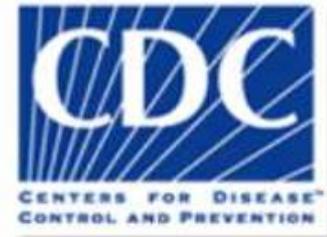
No action needed; call closed by:

PA* answered question
 PA referred to Internet
 PA referred to CIO
 PA referred to outside CDC
 PA other _____

Taken By: _____ ***subject matter expert**
Time: am _____ pm _____ ***press assistant**
Date: S M T W T F S _____

Next Media Response Step

- Get out cleared facts ASAP
- Include a statement of empathy and commit to “seeing it through”



Terrorism and Bioterrorism Communication Challenges

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Module Summary

- Working with new partners
- How terrorist events are different than other public health emergencies
- Issues specific to bioterrorism preparation, detection, and response
- How to tell the difference between a regular epidemic and bioterrorism
- Sample responses to the media
- Healthy responses to bioterrorism

What Is Terrorism?

- U.S. regards terrorism as a potential threat to national security and a violent criminal act.

New Partners

- Public health communicators will have new communication partners in a terrorist response.
- Many people worked with new partners during state and local responses to hoaxes or the October 2001 anthrax event.
- The FBI has the final say about information release during a criminal investigation.
- The DOJ/FBI will NOT slow the release of public safety information from health officials. ★

Federal Response Plan

- FBI leads on information release in crisis management
- FEMA leads on information release in consequence management
- Transfer from the FBI to FEMA by Attorney General
- Core federal response:

DOJ/FBI	DOE	FEMA
DOD	EPA	HHS

HHS Provides:

- Technical support, personnel, and equipment
- Disease detectives
- Agent identification and collection and testing of samples
- Medical management (NDMS)
- Medical supplies, drugs, and vaccinations (NPS)
- Regulatory followup (e.g., FDA)
- Outbreak/disease threat assessment
- Onsite safety
- Mass fatality management

What's Different in a Terrorism Response?

- Stronger reaction from the public
- Multiple events occur
- Incident location is a crime scene
- Incident expands geometrically
- Overload of specialized response possible
- Detection is delayed
- Responders are at higher risk
- Facilities are contaminated
- Response assets are targets



Apply Risk Communication Principles

- Outside control of individual or community
- Unfairly distributed
- From untrusted source
- Man-made
- Exotic
- Catastrophic

Terrorism and Public Information

- The FBI leads information to White House, Congress, and other federal officials.

Joint Information Center

- FBI public information officer and staff
- FEMA public information officer and staff
- Other federal agencies' PI staff
- State and local PIOs

Bioterrorism Is Different

- Medical and public health systems are usually the first to detect bioterrorism.
- A delay is likely between the release of the agent and the knowledge that the occurrence is a bioterrorist act.
- A short window of opportunity exists between the first cases and the second wave.
- Public health officials must determine that an attack occurred, identify the organism, and prevent more casualties.



What We Need To Prepare for Bioterrorism

- More trained epidemiologists to speed detection
- Increased laboratory capacity
- Health Alert Network
- Medical professionals “back to school”
- National Pharmaceutical Stockpile

Natural Emerging Infectious Disease or Bioterrorism? No Assumptions

- Encephalitis
- Hemorrhagic mediastinitis
- Hemorrhagic fever
- Pneumonia with abnormal liver function
- Papulopustular rash (e.g., smallpox)
- Descending paralysis
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea

Horses or Zebras?

- Outbreak of rare disease
- Seasonal disease at wrong time
- Unusual age distribution
- Unusual clinical symptoms
- Unusual epidemiologic features
- Outbreak in region normally not seen

Learning Caution From the Past

- 30 years, 30 outbreaks, 20 matched criteria for possible bioterrorism (none were bioterrorism)
- Legionnaires—Philadelphia, 1976, pneumonia of unknown origin
- Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome—U.S., 1993, pneumonia of unknown origin in healthy adults
- Ebola—Zaire, 1995, 99 percent genetic match to 1976 outbreak

Mother Nature or Bioterrorism?

West Nile Virus, New York City, 1999

- First time in Western Hemisphere.
- Encephalitis and paralysis of lower limbs.
- Iraq is known to possess strain.
- Virus genetic match is nearly identical to the 1998 outbreak in Israel.
- The introduction route is unknown.

Lesson Learned?

- Plan your policy now.
- Partner closely with the local FBI.
- Undeclared bioterrorism and emerging infectious diseases are a public health issue first, then a criminal investigation.
- FBI and public health officials will seek the same information for different purposes.
- The release of information and privacy rights must be carefully considered.



Lesson Learned?

- Internal controls in public health departments protect FBI investigations.
- Saying “no” sets a precedent for the future which may be hard to maintain (i.e., media will speculate if you can’t say “no bioterrorism” while investigating)



Media Are Sure To Ask:

- Is this bioterrorism?
- Could this be bioterrorism?
- Are you investigating this situation as possible bioterrorism?
- Is the FBI involved in this investigation?
- When will you be able to tell us whether or not this situation is bioterrorism?



Is It an Emerging Disease or Undeclared Bioterrorism?

A possible response to media from public health officials is:

“We’re all understandably concerned about the uncertainty surrounding this outbreak, and we wish we could easily answer that question today.”

Is It an Emerging Disease or Undeclared Bioterrorism?

“For the sake of those who are ill or may become ill, our medical epidemiologists (professional disease detectives) are going to first try to answer the following critical questions: (1) Who is becoming ill? (2) What organism is causing the illness? (3) How should it be treated? (4) How can it be controlled to stop the spread?”

Is It an Emerging Disease or Undeclared Bioterrorism?

- One question that disease investigators routinely ask is, “Could this outbreak have been caused intentionally?”
- Possible response: “[Your organization name] must keep an open mind as data in this investigation are collected and analyzed.”

Is It an Emerging Disease or Undeclared Bioterrorism?

“With public safety in mind, we should not speculate on the organism’s route of introduction until we have enough data to put forward a theory. We must consider that we may never have the data to answer this important question, based on epidemiology alone.”

Is It an Emerging Disease or Undeclared Bioterrorism?

“Any specific questions about the FBI’s involvement regarding this outbreak investigation should be referred to them. However, the FBI and [your organization] have a strong partnership regarding the investigation of unusual disease outbreaks and have worked comfortably together in the past in our parallel investigations.”

(Don’t forget to coordinate this answer with the FBI—regardless of their current involvement or noninvolvement.)

Healthy Psychological Responses to Terrorism

What communicators can help with

1. Never lose sight of the fact that a terrorist aims to cause feelings of uncertainty and fear.
2. Our response can serve to support the terrorist's aim or to oppose it.
3. Psychological resiliency training before the fact can help.
4. Information combats destructive rumors.
5. Do whatever is needed to restore a sense of physical safety—widely publicize these efforts.★

Healthy Psychological Responses to Terrorism

6. Enlist community leaders (political, educational, medical, religious, business) to calm fears.
7. Reestablish normal routines quickly.
8. Display of symbols can help reestablish community cohesion.
9. Honor survivors, rescuers, and the dead, including carrying on with life.
10. Don't offer psychological support prematurely. ★