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## Principles and Best Practices

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# Principles and Best Practices

Timothy L. Sellnow

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Beijing, China, August 2012



# Goals of risk and crisis communication

- Tailor communication so it takes into account the **emotional response** to an event.
- Empowers audience to make **informed decision-making**.
- **Prevent negative behavior** and/or **encourage constructive responses** to crisis or danger.

# Identifying Best Practices

- What communication behaviors top your list of best practices?

# Best Practices of Risk and Crisis Communication

## Continuously Evaluate and Update Crisis Plans

### PLAN AHEAD

Plan Ahead for a Prompt Response

Establish a Crisis Communication Network

Accept Uncertainty

### COMMUNICATE RESPONSIBLY

Form Partnerships with the Public

Acknowledge Public Concern

Be Open and Honest

### MINIMIZE HARM

Be Accessible to the Media

Communicate Compassion

Provide Suggestions for Self-Protection

## Acknowledge and Account for Cultural Differences

图一：不断地评价和更新危机计划

## 不断地评价和更新危机计划

### 预防性计划

快速反应的预防性计划

建立危机交流网络

接受不确定性

### 可信性交流

形成合作伙伴

承认公众的担忧

态度公开而诚实

### 最大程度减少危害

向媒体公开

怀有同情心地交流

提供自我保护的建议

接受和解释文化的差异性

# I. Plan Ahead

- Have a crisis plan
- Establish communication networks in advance
- Accept uncertainty



# II. Communicate Responsibly

- Form partnerships with the public
- Acknowledge public concern
- Be open and honest





# III. Minimize Harm

- Be accessible to the media
- Communicate compassion
- Provide suggestions for self-protection



# IV. All Stages

- Continuously evaluate and update crisis plans
- Acknowledge and account for cultural differences



<http://www.drjohnmurphy.com/cultural.htm>

图一：不断地评价和更新危机计划

## 不断地评价和更新危机计划

### 预防性计划

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# Developing a Communications' Guide to Improve Public Understanding: Part 2

Timothy L. Sellnow



# One-Minute Essay



- 1) During a crisis event, where do you go for information and why do you go to that source?
- 2) What information are you seeking and why? What are you attempting to learn? What is the most important thing you want to learn?
- 3) If you yourself are not in harm's way directly, does your answer to #2 change? If so, why and how? If not, why not?

# The Key Objective

- Creating messages that **CONNECT** with audiences . . .
- Boils down to 3 C's:
  1. **Content**
  2. **Credibility**
  3. **Channel**



# 1. Content

## Opportunity

- To tailor our messages to best *connect* with audiences
- To achieve appropriate *action*

## Challenge

- Our “partiality for particulars” (bias toward explanation)
- Information  $\neq$  Instruction



# Message Design & Testing

- **Goal: Design and deliver effective instructional messages during the acute phase of a crisis**
- **Learning:**
  - **Comprehension (Cognitive) +**
  - **Retention (Affective) +**
  - **Application (Behavioral)**

# Message Testing

- Television is the most common and most important channel for communicating in times of crisis, threat, and disaster (Heath & O'Hair, 2009, Larson, 2010)



# Instructional Message Content Conclusions (based on multiple studies)

- Significantly higher **knowledge and confidence** scores from those exposed to instructions for **self-protection**
- Messages without recommending actions for self-protection actually **reduce confidence** and heighten **fear!**



# The Best Messages

- The best messages answer three questions
  - **Internalize: Am I affected?**
  - **Understand: WHAT is happening and WHY?**
  - **Actions for self-protection: What should I do to PROTECT myself?**

# One-minute essay

- In what ways might social media be used in positive ways during a crisis event?
- What are potential risks/harms?
- What role do you think social media does play during a crisis event?
- What role do you think it should play?

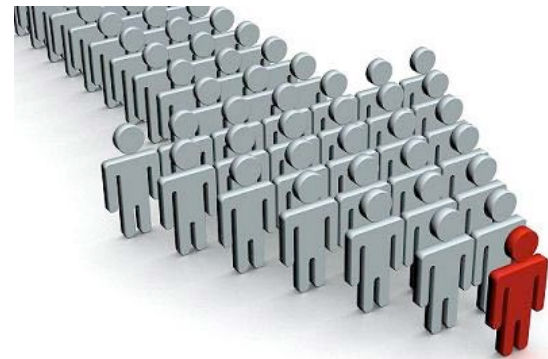
# 3. Channel: Emerging Options

## Opportunity

- **Social media allows us to share messages spontaneously with pre-selected audiences.**

## Challenge

- **Accuracy, Accuracy, Accuracy**



# Conclusions from the National Academy of Science Study

## ➤ **The Nature of Networks**

- Two-step flow (originates with press releases and traditional media. Going viral can be a good thing.)

## ➤ **Multiple Sources**

- When multiple sources share consistent information, the message is highly convincing.

## ➤ **Source Ethos**

- Organizations perceived as competent, credible, and of good character prior to the crisis are most believable during the crisis.