Best Practices in Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication

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Topics for Review

- Communication in Public Health
- Conditions of Crisis
- Crisis Types
- CERC Developmental model
- CERC2 Update
- Engaging in Social Media
- Best Practices
Communication in Public Health

- Traditional Emphasis on Risk Communication
  - Slow (Campaign)
  - Health Promotion (Smoking, HIV, Drug Use)
  - Persuasion
  - Science Based
Crisis Communication

- Information Exchange
- Immediate (Response)
- Contextually Bound (The Event)
- Dynamic (Adaptive)
  - Channels
  - Audiences
  - Topics
Public Health as First Responder/First Communicator

- Avian Flu (Hong Kong - 1999)
- 9/11
- Anthrax
- SARS
- Hurricane Katrina
- H1N1
- BP
- Maple Leaf Foods
- Peanut Corporation of America
- Listeria Outbreak, Cantaloupe
Conditions of Crisis

- **Surprise**
  - Unanticipated
  - High Uncertainty/Lack of Information
  - Outside normal comfort zone

- **Perceived Threat**
  - High priority goal (Reputation)
  - Probability of loss X value of loss

- **Short Response Time**
  - Slow Response, Increased harm
  - Inadequate information for a response
## Crisis Types

- Hazards under CDC Emergency Preparedness and Response – Bioterrorism, Chemical Emergencies, Mass Casualties, Natural Disasters & Severe Weather, Radiation Emergencies, Other Public Outbreaks & Incidents (updated)

- National Response Framework Incident Categorization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Incident</th>
<th>Biological Incident</th>
<th>Cyber Incident</th>
<th>Food and Agricultural Incident</th>
<th>Natural Disaster</th>
<th>Nuclear/ Radiological Incident</th>
<th>Oil and Hazardous Materials Incident</th>
<th>Terrorism Incident</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
<td>Naturally occurring biological diseases (communicable and non-communicable) in humans as well as terrorist events.</td>
<td>Any incident of national significance with cyber-related issues.</td>
<td>One that threatens public health, animal health, food production, aquaculture, livestock production, wildlife, soils, rangelands, and agricultural water supplies, as well as have cascading effects, including economic impact.</td>
<td>Release of radioactive material that poses an actual or perceived hazard to public health, safety, national security, and/or the environment.</td>
<td>A threat to public health, welfare, or the environment caused by actual or potential oil and hazardous materials incidents.</td>
<td>Response to a threatened or actual terrorist incident within the United States.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Examples</strong></td>
<td>Anthrax, Botulism, H1N1 flu, Ricin, Smallpox</td>
<td>Significant cyber threats, Cyber attacks against Internet, Cyber attacks against critical infrastructure information systems, Technological</td>
<td>E. Coli, Mad Cow Disease, Melamine, Salmonella</td>
<td>Earthquakes, Floods, Hurricanes, Landslides/mudslides, Tornadoes, Wildfires, Winter weather</td>
<td>Dirty bomb, Nuclear accident, Nuclear blast, Transportation accident</td>
<td>Chemical spill, Ground water contamination, Oil spill, Transportation accident</td>
<td>Explosions, Biological threats, Chemical threats, Nuclear blast, Radiological dispersion device</td>
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Crisis Stages/Phases

- Developmental circumstances
  - Anticipate issues
  - Clarifies communication activities/Responsibilities
  - Facilitates Planning
What is CERC?

- Developed by US CDC following 9/11 and anthrax events
- Comprehensive integrated crisis/risk communication framework
- Focus on public health PIO functions
- Includes tools, templates, checklists
- Trained broadly domestically, internationally
CERC Five Stages of Crisis

1. Pre-Crisis: Before event erupts
2. Initial Event: Trigger event
3. Maintenance: Initial intensity has dissipated
4. Resolution: Crisis is contained/No new harm
5. Evaluation: Assessment/ Learning/ Critique
Five Stages of Crisis

- Pre-Crisis
- Evaluation
- Initial Event
- Resolution
- Maintenance
1. Communication & Pre-Crisis

- Monitoring/Recognition of Risks/Threats
- Promote stakeholder understanding of risks
- Preparation for adverse events
- Changes in behavior to reduce likelihood of harm
- Monitor for warning messages/Signs
- Alliances and cooperation with agencies, organizations, and groups
- Development of consensual response strategies
2. Initial Event

- Designated spokespersons, channels, methods
- Empathy, reassurance, reduction in emotional turmoil, crisis related uncertainty
- Promote understanding of crisis circumstances, consequences, & anticipated outcomes
- Cooperation with agencies, organizations, & stakeholder groups: Media, Agencies
- Promote understanding of crisis responses (What we are doing; Why we are doing it).
- Questions of responsibility, accountability, blame
3. Communication and Maintenance

- Accurate public/stakeholder understandings of the crisis (evolving)
- Background factors and issues
- Accurate public/stakeholder understandings of recovery/solicitation of support where appropriate
- Broad based/ongoing support, cooperation and alliances with stakeholders, agencies, organizations, and outside agencies
- Feedback from affected publics/correction of any misunderstandings/rumors
- Develop corporate identity and image restoration strategy
4. Communication & Resolution

- Inform and persuade stakeholders about ongoing response, recovery and rebuilding
- Facilitate broad-based, honest, open discussion of cause, blame, responsibility, and adequacy of response
- Improve/create public understanding of new activities, policies and procedures
- Reestablish/repair relationships with stakeholders and restore corporate identity and image
5. Communication & Evaluation

- Evaluate and assess responses, including communication effectiveness
- Document, formalize, and communicate lessons learned
- Determine actions to improve crisis communication and response capability
- Create linkages to pre-crisis activities
Strategic Crisis Response

- Concern for victims (Empathy)
- Spokesperson/CEO
- Speed of Response
- Information & Persuasion
- Meaningful actions
- Honesty
- Accessibility
CERC Revisions

- Since original CERC published in 2002, significant developments in the area of crisis and risk communication.
  - Emergency communications and operations expanded within CDC
  - New forms of communication, including social media and mobile media devices
  - Expanded range of threats
  - New federal agencies, systems more active in crisis management and response (DHS / NIMS)
  - Research and practice more robust
Objectives of CERC2 Project

• **Principles for revising material**
  • Keep general tone, focus & structure of original iconic CERC
  • Materials must be grounded in research literature
  • Materials are developed and presented in practical, applications-oriented framework

• **What’s New**
  • New case examples – Hurricane Katrina, H1N1 pandemic, BP/Deep Water Horizon oil spill, Japanese earthquake and tsunami
  • Revised/updated tools, templates, checklists
  • Social Media module
Engaging in Social Media and Using Mobile Media Devices

CERC Module 9 Learning Objectives

- Social media and its relationship with traditional media
- Social media forums, attributes, and users
- The role of social media before a crisis and during a crisis
- Mobile devices and mobile communication during a crisis
- Responding to social media errors, myths, and misperceptions
Understanding Social Media in Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication

- Disasters are increasingly social media events because social media and traditional media are converging.
- Major public health emergencies will instantaneously engage those who use social media, especially if they are exotic, catastrophic, or the first event of their kind.
- Social media and mobile media device users are now a constant presence and play a critical role in informing the public and creating content during any crisis or emergency, often providing the first user-generated material.
Using Social Media

Pluses of Using Social Media

- Very immediate and interactive
- Can create rapid connection and build relationships with local publics
- Can help build and maintain dynamic relationships with the media
- Helps dispel rumors by filling in the informational need immediately
- Can easily incorporate website links where media can get more information
- Can work in support of a broader media strategy
Using Social Media

Minuses of Using Social Media

- Some people are unfamiliar with and may not trust social media as credible sources
- Requires both personnel and technological resources to maintain and monitor
- Limitations on how much information can be included. Twitter, for example, has a 140-character limit
- Follow-ups and continual monitoring of social media are usually required to update information and dispel rumors and encourage people to return to the social media venue
Social Media Attributes

- Participation
- Openness
- Conversation
- Communities
- Connectedness
- Reach
- Accessibility
- Usability
- Immediacy
- Permanence
- Education and Entertainment
Using Social Media for Risk Communication

An organization needs to regularly use social media prior to a crisis event, which helps establish relationships and trust before an event.

Best Practices

- Determine social media engagement as part of the risk and crisis management policies and approaches.
- Incorporate social media tools in environmental scanning to listen to audience concerns.
- Engage social media users in daily communication activities.
- Follow and share messages with credible sources.
Using Social Media During a Crisis

In early stages of crisis, microblogging (Twitter) and social media (Facebook) will be prevalent and used through mobile communication devices. But these can be leveraged by communicators for situational awareness and broadcast hazard and risk warnings.

Best Practices

- Join the conversation, help manage rumors by responding to misinformation, and determine best channels to reach segmented publics.
- Check all information for accuracy and respond honestly to questions.
- Recognize the media is already using social media.
- Remember social media is interpersonal communication.
- Use social media as the primary tool for updates.
- Ask for help and provide direction.
- Social media is not a panacea.
Social Media Tips for Communicators

▪ Writing for social media during a crisis – Principles of “Be first, Be right, Be credible” still applies to social media.

▪ Providing links to other key information sources - Link to own organization for further information or other credible sources of information.

▪ Processing social media information during a crisis – Not unique to social media, but more immediate and disseminated more widely. Can get help by outsourcing monitoring and processing functions or outsource to social media crisis communication specialists.

▪ Social media can be used for internal communications during a crisis – But social media policy should be developed before a crisis and must be updated during a crisis.
Mobile Media Role During Crises

- Include mobile phones, smartphones, PDAs, wireless tablets, and mobile collaboration devices.

- Used for information sharing, real-time coverage of events, dissemination of information to family / friends, location and safety updates of family members and others, directions away from certain natural or manmade disasters, includes voice, photos, video, texts, GPS, and social media, enhances backpack journalism.

- Benefits - Communicators can utilize to gain real-time situational awareness and communicate warning and risk messages.

- Issues – Can catch responders behaving badly, could communicate false information, reduces official control of information.
Responding to Errors, Myths, Misperceptions

- Social media information is unfiltered and can bypass information gatekeepers in agencies and traditional media.
- False information can travel quicker and more widely through social media (“going viral”).
- Can self-correct, but sometimes not fast enough.
- Communicators should:
  - Build an online community and mobile communications where organization can engage with stakeholders. (Precrisis)
  - Be proactive instead of reactive in communication. (Crisis)
  - Monitor information and correct instead of control or defend. (Crisis)
  - Provide consistent information that reduces uncertainty and receive necessary help without feeling overloaded. (Crisis)
Best Practices in Crisis and Risk Communication

1). Process and policy participation
2). Pre-event planning
3). Form partnerships with the public
4). Listen to the public’s concerns
5). Be honest, frank and open
6). Collaborate and coordinate
Best Practices in Risk Communication

7. Meet the needs of media and remain accessible
8. Communicate with compassion, concern and empathy
9. Provide self-efficacy: Advise the public on how to protect themselves
10. Accept uncertainty and ambiguity
Some References


