# RISK COMMUNICATION
# FLASH CARDS

Quiz your knowledge
and learn the basics

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# TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Planning Strategically for Risk Communication
- Communicating with Verbal and Nonverbal Cues
- Communicating with Difficult People
- Training for Media Interaction
- Developing Key Messages
- Deciding Which Risk Communication Tool to Use
- Evaluating Your Success

# What is the definition of risk communication?

Planning Strategically for Risk Communication

Risk communication is the planning and execution of communications with any stakeholder, internal or external, on any issue that can impact your mission. This includes crisis and non-crisis situations.

# What are the three goals of risk communication?

Planning Strategically for Risk Communication

1. Increase mutual knowledge and understanding
2. Enhance trust and credibility
3. Resolve conflict

# What are the three arenas of risk communication?

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1. Emotions – anger and fear
2. Agendas – political, personal, cultural, economic, historical and social
3. Perception of risk

# What is the definition of a stakeholder?

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A stakeholder is anyone interested or impacted by the issue. Stakeholders can be identified as internal or external, and in most situations, stakeholders can be divided into groups beyond just the "general public."

# Which of the three proofs of rhetoric did Aristotle say is most important?

A. Logic

B. Emotion

C. Credibility



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**C.** Aristotle believed that credibility was the most important. A messenger who is trustworthy and attentive to the audience can communicate more effectively.

# What are the three key factors for improving stakeholders' perception of risk?

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1. Familiarity – Have they seen, read or discussed what is imposing risk on them?
2. Control – Do they feel like they have some control over the risk or decisions related to it?
3. Benefits – Is there anything that could be seen as a direct benefit or trade-off for the risk?

# Which of the following are risk communication traps to avoid?

A. Humor

B. Listening

C. Taking it personally

D. Jargon

**A, C and D.** Avoid using humor and jargon, and do not take it personally when someone is upset. Humor can come across as insensitive or informal, and jargon can be too technical for the general public to understand.

A good communicator should listen to what is being said. Not listening is a trap to avoid.

# Which requirements must be taken into consideration in a risk assessment and management process?

A. Federal

B. State

C. Local

D. All of the above

**D.** Federal, state and local requirements must be considered. Each regulation may require its own risk communication activities. Risk communication strategy must consider all appropriate policies, laws and regulations in order to be truly comprehensive and effective.

# True or False?
# It is best to use a "cookie cutter" approach for risk communication in order to maintain consistency.

**False.** Each situation is different and requires a carefully thought-out communication strategy.

# What is one key factor to remember in risk communication?

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Winning feels different.
In situations where conflict exists, don't expect stakeholders to "like" your position, rather work to ensure they understand your position and perhaps "accept" your position.

# Put the following five fundamental components in the order in which they should be completed:

- Develop messages
- Assess effectiveness
- Identify and prioritize stakeholders
- Prepare messenger(s)
- Select delivery method(s)

The five fundamental components should be done in the following order:

1. Identify and prioritize stakeholders
2. Develop messages
3. Select delivery method(s)
4. Prepare messenger(s)
5. Assess effectiveness

# What are the six questions you should be prepared to answer when interacting with stakeholders or the media?

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1. What is the problem?
2. How did it happen?
3. Who is responsible?
4. How am I affected?
5. What is being done about it?
6. What should I do to reduce my risk?

# What is the definition of empathy?

Empathy is the ability to understand another person's feelings and demonstrate to them that you do.

# What is the definition of sympathy?

Sympathy is the tendency to feel sorry for another person's suffering.

# True or False? Verbal communication is more memorable than nonverbal communication.



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**False.** Nonverbal communication is more memorable, more noticeable and more credible.

# Which is a more effective way to convey emotions and feelings – Verbal or nonverbal communication?

Nonverbal communication conveys emotions. Verbal communication conveys facts, data and science.

# True or False? No single gesture stands alone.

**True.** Clusters and context of gestures should be taken into consideration.

# Name three examples of nonverbal communication cues.

Answers could include:

- Body language, including facial expressions, eye contact, hands and arm gestures, posture, movements and space
- Dress
- Physical barriers
- Active listening

# Name three examples of verbal cues that are also nonverbal cues.

Answers could include:

- Changes in voice, such as hesitation, pitch, um's and ah's, pace, tone variation and specific word emphasis
- Emotion behind words

# True or False?
# If someone is showing negative emotions toward you, the best way to respond is by ignoring the emotion and giving factual information.

**False.** Nonverbal communication would be a much more effective way to communicate with someone who is expressing negative emotions. An emotional person is not typically receptive to facts.

# When communicating with an angry person, in which order should you conduct the following responses?

- Ask open-ended questions
- Share facts
- Show empathy

- First, begin with showing empathy
- Second, once the person is more receptive, based on your nonverbal observation, ask open-ended questions to gather information
- Third, move to sharing facts if the person appears to be ready to discuss them

**True or False?**
**It can be helpful to ask a clarifying question about a question or statement if it seems unclear.**

**True.** It is better to ask a clarifying question than to assume you understand the point of the person's question. Understanding the question can help you provide a more complete and accurate answer and demonstrates your desire to understand them.

# What is one way you can deal with a rude stakeholder?

Answers could include the following:

- Do not take it personally
- Plan ahead to identify what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behavior
- Acknowledge they are upset

# True or False?
# When confronted with negative allegations that are not true, push back and reinforce the negative allegation by saying, “We didn’t lie.”

**False.** Emphasize the positive reversal by telling the truth and being open. An example response is, "Actually, we told the truth about that."

# True or False? When confronted with negative allegations that are true, avoid using defensiveness and denial in your response.

**True.** Acknowledge the correct information, emphasize corrective action and lessons learned, and look ahead to next steps.

# What should you do when confronted with a request for a guarantee? Example: “Promise me this will never happen again.”

Avoid making commitments on the spot, particularly if you have no way of guaranteeing you can keep the commitments. Instead, emphasize commitment to what is being done. Respond with a statement like, "We are making progress" or "We learned a lot from that, and this is what we are changing."

**True or False?**
**When confronted with a fairness question, like "Do you think it's fair that I have to drink this water," you should always be open about your plans, even if the news is bad.**

**True.** Do not be evasive or defensive, and be willing to pursue their point if there may be common ground.

# What is a setup question, and how should you respond to one?

A setup question is meant to solicit a certain response. Provide the information requested and show empathy.

# True or False? You should never admit to not knowing the answer to a question from a stakeholder or the media. Speculation is preferred when you don't know an answer.

**False.** If you do not know the answer to the question, admit it, and tell the person you will find out the answer to his or her question. Never speculate on the information.

# When is the "bridging" technique commonly used?

Bridging is used in interviews to bring the subject back to key messages. Examples include phrases such as:

- “Let me add…”
- “Our number one priority is…”
- “On the other hand…”

# True or False?
# It is usually a good idea to provide the media with highly technical information and use acronyms whenever possible.

**False.** Information must be understandable to the general public. Technical details and jargon should be avoided.

# True or False? When talking to the media, comparing a risk to other risks is an effective way to facilitate understanding of the risk level.

**False.** Never engage in risk comparisons with the media or stakeholders.

# Is it ok to speak off the record with a reporter?

Training for Media Interaction

**No.** Information shared with a reporter can never truly be considered "off the record." Speaking off the record can lead to sharing too much information and getting too comfortable with a reporter.

# True or False? Guarantees and promises should never be offered to the media.

**True.** Guarantees and promises will hold you to something that may be unrealistic or out of your control.

# True or False?
# It is better to speak for a higher authority or third party than to not provide an answer.

**False.** Never speak for a higher authority or third party.

# True or False? It is ok to say “no comment” if you do not know or want to provide an answer.

**False.** Never say "no comment." Offer to get information you do not have or a reason why you cannot discuss a subject.

# What are the three basic questions in determining appropriate messages?

When developing a risk communication strategy, there are three basic questions in determining the appropriate messages.

1. What do you want to tell your stakeholders?
2. What do your stakeholders want to know?
3. What is likely to be misunderstood?

# True or False? You should keep messages between a sixth and eighth grade reading level.

**True.** A sixth to eighth grade reading level is the average reading level of the general public and will usually reach the majority of stakeholders.

# What is the purpose of layering information, and how is it done?

Developing Key Messages

The purpose of layering information is to convey written and verbal information to stakeholders. Provide the simplest explanation first, followed by additional supporting facts.

# True or False? Technical information is perfect for inclusion in key messages.

**False.** Technical facts and figures do not belong in primary key messages. Messages should highlight conclusions that can be drawn from facts and figures, as well as actions to fix the problem.

# How many key messages should you develop?

A. Three to four

B. Six to eight

C. Eight to 10

D. 12 to 15

**A.** Typically, a list of key messages should include three or four points. These messages should be short, concise and easy to understand.

# True or False? Meeting with the public in person is a good tool when the level of interest or concern within the public is high or there is a need to share information between you and your stakeholders.

**True.** As long as an appropriate format is used, meeting with the public can provide opportunities for dialogue and two-way, constructive information sharing. However, not all public meetings are created equal, and each type of meeting has its pros and cons.

# What is the difference between the format of a town hall meeting and the format of an open house meeting?

A town hall meeting typically starts with a brief presentation, followed by a question, answer and comment session. An open house meeting is less formal than a town hall meeting and includes informational exhibits. An open house meeting also provides the opportunity for one-on-one interaction.

# True or False?
# A town hall meeting is much more effective in educating or informing the public in a setting with high stress and high controversy.

**False.** An open house meeting is more effective in educating the public under these conditions because it allows for individual discussions and two-way communication to help alleviate concerns.

# What are the advantages of an open house meeting?

Answers could include:

- Provides an opportunity for one-on-one interaction
- Encourages two-way communication
- Allows individuals to access information at their own pace
- Provides a way to share a variety of layered information that meets individual information needs
- Allows for many conversations to take place simultaneously

# True or False? You can never hold a town hall meeting in conjunction with an open house meeting.

**False.** The open house meeting can be used as a replacement for the traditional town hall meeting, but it can also be used as a supplement to a scheduled town hall meeting.

# What are some evaluation questions that can be used to assess the effectiveness of your communication strategy?

Questions could include:

- Were primary messages conveyed?
- Did stakeholders get the information they needed?
- Did stakeholders understand the messages?
- How can the program, strategy and communication be improved?
- What lessons are there to be learned?
- With whom should those lessons be shared?

# True or False? You should never measure success based on whether you understand the stakeholders' points of view.

**False.** Success should be measured based on whether you reach your stakeholders and whether you understand each other's points of view.

# True or False? The only time you need to assess the effectiveness of risk communication efforts is at the end of a project.

**False.** A good risk communication process allows for a feedback loop, where input from stakeholders and project staff can be used to fine-tune the message and method of delivery. Assessments should be conducted throughout the risk communication process.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

or to schedule a risk communication training course, please contact:

Paul Gillooly, Ph.D., CAPT, MSC, USN (Ret)
Environmental Programs
Navy and Marine Corps
Public Health Center
620 John Paul Jones Circle,
Suite 1100
Portsmouth, VA 23708

757-953-0664

paul.gillooly@med.navy.mil

http://www.nmcphc.med.navy.mil/