

# Best Practices in Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication

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# Crisis Communication and the Psychology of Crisis

- “Terrorism is the ability to disrupt numerous aspects of individual and community functioning. Attending to the psychological needs of the population is a crucial part of the recovery from a terrorism event, and preparedness and response present a challenge to the nation.”

Source: The National Institute of Medicine, 2003.

# Crisis Communication and The Impact of Crisis

- “Public confidence in the safety of agriculture and food processing and packaging systems represents a key part of sustaining the economic viability of these sectors.”

Mel Bernstein, DHS, 2005

# Crisis and Risk Communication Impact

- One essential way to address this challenge is with effective crisis communication.
- Proper communication can help mitigate individual and collective trauma.
- Ineffective communication can exacerbate and accelerate the psychological harm and the economic impact.

# Assumptions of Best Practices Approach

- Contributing to Process Improvement
- Standardized Principles
- Research Based
- Expert Panel
- Dynamic Nature of Crisis

# Risk communication + Crisis Communication = CERC

- Risk Communication

- Planned/Tested
- Strategic
- Multiple Sources
- Proactive
- Pre-Event
- Certain

**National Center for Food Protection and  
Defense - Communication Best Practices**

# Risk communication + Crisis Communication = CERC

- Crisis Communication
  - Spontaneous
  - Reactive
  - Single Source
  - Post-Event
  - Equivocal

# 1

# Communication and the Policy Process

- Communication as substance
- Communication as sales and show

# #2

## Pre-Event Planning

- Identification of Risk Factors
- Reduction of Uncertainty
- Pre-Established Decisions
- General Principles and Guidelines

#3

# Partnerships with the Public

- Legitimacy of Public Concerns
- Importance of Public Cooperation
- Myth of Public Panic

# #4

## Listen to Public Concerns

- The Importance of Feedback
- Dynamic Nature of Public Perception
- Reservoir of Good Will

#5

# Honesty, Openness, Frankness

- Honesty and Credibility
- Risk Sharing
- Uncertain Contexts and Equivocal Responses

#6

# Collaborate and Coordinate with Credible Source

- Consensus among experts
- Leveraging Resources
- Multiple Subject Matter Experts

#7

# Meet the Needs of the Media and Remain Accessible

- Media as a channel to the public
- Accessibility as expression of concern
- Media Training

#8

# Compassion, Concern and Empathy

- Natural Tendency of Technical Experts
- Meta-Messages and the Expression of Empathy
- Humanizing the Response

#9

# Accept Uncertainty and Ambiguity

- Inherent Uncertainty of Crisis and Risk
- Information Vacuum
- “We do not yet have all the facts.”

# #10

## Messages of Self-Efficacy

- Reasserting Personal Control
- The importance of meaningful actions
- “Must, Can, Might also..”