Risk Communication
Preparing for Catastrophic Foodborne Illness
IFT
Food Protection & Defense Research Conference
Risk & Crisis Communication

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Risk Communications
Overall Objectives

- Core function – Develop a transdisciplinary, multi-institutional team of risk communication experts for advice and support
- Aim #1 - Identify best practices, key messages and metamessaging strategies, and subject matter experts for different scenarios
- Aim #2 – Develop curriculum, training materials and train risk communicators across the food system in key practices for potentially catastrophic, intentional foodborne illness
Risk Communication Approach

- Partner with public & private sector leaders to ensure utility of the tools/curriculum and for implementation
- Develop capabilities for real time risk communication support in the case of an actual event
National Center for Food Protection and Defense
Risk Communication Team

K. Boone          W. Hueston          D. Schmidt
C. Bryant         D. Klingborg        M. Seeger
L. Briezno        D. Moore           T. Sellnow
P. DeVito         D. Ropeik          T. Tavantzis
F. Farah          P. Sandman         R. Ulmer
A. Flood          D. Schaffner       S. Venette
Risk Communication Team
Factors Associated with Increased Public Concern

- Catastrophic potential
- Unfamiliar
- Decision processes not understood
- Lack of personal control
- Involuntary exposure
- Delayed effects
- Children at risk
- Risk to future generations
- Lack of trust in institutions
- Much media attention
- Previous history
- Unclear benefits
- Potentially irreversible effects
- Origins caused by human actions (vs. acts of nature)

Covello, 1989
What is Risk & Crisis Communication?
What we do know about risk communication…

- Not a single discipline
- Differences of opinion on approaches
- Multiple tools and strategies available
- Little literature or training on risk communication in the context of food
- Poor examples outnumber good ones
Risk communication focuses on crisis communications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Danger (Hazard)</th>
<th>Fear (Outrage)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outrage Management</td>
<td>Ignore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis Communication</td>
<td>Precaution Advocacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Risk = danger (hazard) + fear (outrage)

Scientists focus on danger, consumers on fear
No Silver Bullets, But . . .

“There is no single overriding problem and thus no simple way of making risk communication easy. . . .

But even though good risk communication cannot always be expected to improve a situation, poor risk communication will nearly always make it worse.”

Intentional contamination will have major implications for public...

- Threaten a cherished paradigm (safe food)
- Create fear related to a basic need (food)
- Unleash a media feeding frenzy... what happened, who did it, why weren’t we prepared, who will pay... as well as very poignant human interest stories

Peoples’ perceptions are the true terrorism target
Risk and Crisis Communication

What does this mean for you?

✓ Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)
✓ Business leaders
✓ Quality assurance managers
✓ Professional communication staff
✓ Federal, state & local agency officials

Internal risk communications are also important
Risk and crisis Communication

- The Psychological Consequences of Disasters and Terrorism
  - Dr. Paul De Vito
  - St. Joseph’s University

- Best Practices in Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication
  - Dr. Matthew Seeger
  - Wayne State University
The End