



Crisis and Emergency Risk Communications (CERC)  
2017 Training Presentation

# Introductions



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# Training Goals

- ▶ Define crisis and emergency risk communications principles
- ▶ Explore the psychology of a public response
- ▶ Define our audiences
- ▶ Crisis lifecycle
- ▶ Communicating effectively
- ▶ Executing a crisis communications response
- ▶ Working with the media
- ▶ Tips for the spokesperson
- ▶ Social media
- ▶ CDC resources

# What defines a crisis or emergency?

## ▶ Crisis

- ▶ An event that occurs - can be expected or unexpected.
- ▶ Something outside of the control of your organization.
- ▶ Requires an immediate response.
- ▶ May cause harm to your organization's reputation.



## ▶ Emergency

- ▶ Requires a response by local, state and/or federal agencies.
- ▶ May involve FEMA and U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- ▶ May directly or indirectly impact the public.



# CERC Principles of Communication

# Six Principles of Crisis and Emergency Risk Communications (CERC)

- ▶ Be first.
- ▶ Be right.
- ▶ Be credible.
- ▶ Express empathy.
- ▶ Promote action.
- ▶ Show respect.



# The Psychology of a Crisis

# Why is communicating in a crisis different?

- ▶ We simplify the messages.
  - ▶ We may not fully hear the details of a response because we are juggling multiple facts and sources.
  - ▶ We may be too stressed to remember information that we normally could.
  - ▶ We may misinterpret information given to us.
- ▶ We hold onto our current beliefs.
  - ▶ We tend to avoid evidence or information that contradicts what we already believe.
  - ▶ We seek out and hold onto small details that support our beliefs.





# Why is communicating in a crisis different?

- ▶ We look for additional information and opinions.
  - ▶ We change the channel until the message we hear agrees with us.
  - ▶ We seek the input of family and friends.
  - ▶ We seek information on social media.
- ▶ We believe the first message.
  - ▶ Even if the first source of information isn't the official source, we believe it is accurate.



# Psychological Concerns During Public Communications

- ▶ During a crisis or emergency, members of the public may feel:
  - ▶ Uncertain;
  - ▶ Fear, anxiety and dread;
  - ▶ Hopelessness and helplessness; or
  - ▶ Denial.
- ▶ Some members of the public may exhibit potentially harmful behaviors during a crisis, including:
  - ▶ Seeking special treatment,
  - ▶ Negative vicarious rehearsal (spectators acting on individual plans to respond), or
  - ▶ Stigmatization of a particular group that members of the public blame for the crisis.

# Defining Audiences

# Audiences

- ▶ Public
- ▶ Media
- ▶ Other Agencies and Responders
- ▶ Your Organization- Leadership Team, Board of Directors, Co-workers
- ▶ Your Partner Organizations
- ▶ Other Stakeholders



# Include Vulnerable Populations

- ▶ Vulnerable populations
  - ▶ Groups whose needs are not fully addressed by the traditional service providers
  - ▶ Also includes groups that may feel they cannot comfortably or safely access and use the standard resources offered in disaster preparedness, response and recovery
  - ▶ Examples of vulnerable populations: elderly, homeless, immigrants, hearing or visually impaired, mentally ill, children
- ▶ Special Considerations
  - ▶ We need to understand the demographics and characteristics of these groups in order to best meet the needs of all the citizens of Louisiana
  - ▶ You may have to alter your traditional communication channels to reach vulnerable populations
  - ▶ Vulnerable populations are less likely to prepare for a disaster

# Crisis Lifecycle

# Crisis Lifecycle



# Crisis Lifecycle

## ▶ Pre-Crisis

- ▶ Planning and practice.
- ▶ Anticipate questions.
- ▶ Draft initial communications.
- ▶ Identify spokespersons.
- ▶ Build partnerships.
- ▶ Establish regular communication channels.





# Crisis Lifecycle

## ▶ Initial

- ▶ Learn the facts.
- ▶ Determine your organizations role and response.
- ▶ Initiate your plan.
- ▶ Be first, right, and credible.
- ▶ Express empathy.
- ▶ Acknowledge uncertainty.
- ▶ Commit to continued communication.



# Crisis Lifecycle

- ▶ Maintenance
  - ▶ Acknowledge fears.
  - ▶ Give people things to do.
  - ▶ Continue sharing your message with all audiences.
  - ▶ Consider and plan for ongoing media interest.



# Crisis Lifecycle

- ▶ Resolution
  - ▶ Return to normal.
  - ▶ Wind down crisis related messages.
  - ▶ Consider public education campaign if necessary.
  - ▶ Update website.

# Crisis Lifecycle

- ▶ Evaluation
  - ▶ Honestly examine the event.
  - ▶ What worked well?
  - ▶ What are opportunities for improvement?
  - ▶ Include representatives from across the organization in evaluation discussion.
  - ▶ Document lessons learned.
  - ▶ Practice again.



# Communicating Effectively

# Five Steps to Communication Success

- ▶ Execute a plan.
- ▶ Be the first source for information.
- ▶ Express empathy early.
- ▶ Show competence and expertise.
- ▶ Remain honest and open.



# Failure in communication

- ▶ Mixed messages.
- ▶ Late information.
- ▶ Not showing empathy.
- ▶ Not countering rumors or myths as they happen
- ▶ Public confusion



# Nine steps to a crisis response

- ▶ Step One: Verify the Situation
  - ▶ Get the facts and identify your sources.
- ▶ Step Two: Conduct Notifications
  - ▶ Notify your chain of command.
- ▶ Step Three: Conduct a Crisis Assessment/Activate Crisis Plan
  - ▶ Monitor media.
  - ▶ Work with agency experts and individuals in charge.
  - ▶ Compile relevant information about the response.
  - ▶ Develop the plan for sharing information with the public.
- ▶ Step Four: Organize Assignments Quickly
  - ▶ Identify personnel and make assignments.
- ▶ Step Five: Prepare Information and Obtain Approvals
  - ▶ Prep information based on audiences.
  - ▶ Seek and obtain approvals from within your organization before sharing information.



# Nine steps to a crisis response

- ▶ Step Six: Release Information Through Prearranged Channels
  - ▶ Release facts and do not speculate.
- ▶ Step Seven: Obtain Feedback and Conduct Crisis Evaluation
  - ▶ As soon as is possible, evaluate how you can improve ongoing communications efforts.
- ▶ Step Eight: Conduct Public Education
  - ▶ Educate the public about related health issues and correct any misconceptions.
- ▶ Step Nine: Monitor Events
  - ▶ Monitor media for information related to the event and provide corrections as needed.

# Working with the Media

# Working with the Media

- ▶ Work within the structure of your communications plan.
  - ▶ If the Joint Information Center is the designated lead on working with media, all requests for press should go through the JIC.
- ▶ Communicate early and often.
  - ▶ If you aren't first to release information, the media will seek sources to go on the record.
- ▶ Respect and be responsive of the media.
  - ▶ This helps facilitate positive relationships that are essential to ongoing coverage.
- ▶ Anticipate the needs of the media
  - ▶ Use press releases, maps, relevant numbers, photos and access to subject-matter experts.
- ▶ Provide updates to the media throughout the event.
  - ▶ Provide updates to all press at the same time to avoid favoritism.
- ▶ Monitor and review media stories and videos as they are posted.
  - ▶ Correct and update any information if errors appear in the stories.

# Facilitating Positive Media Relationships

- ▶ Distribute messages that are essential. Avoid spam.
- ▶ Consider teleconferencing or media conference calls for those who cannot attend briefings.
- ▶ Give journalists a reasonable timeframe. Be sensitive to deadlines.
- ▶ Establish a schedule for regular updates.
- ▶ Treat all media equally. Don't ignore local media in favor of national media.



# What do Reporters Want

- ▶ What happened?
- ▶ When did it happen?
- ▶ Where did it happen?
- ▶ How did it happen?
- ▶ Why did it happen?
- ▶ Who is in charge?
- ▶ Is it over or has it been contained?
- ▶ Are victims being helped and, if so, how?
- ▶ What should we expect from the government?
- ▶ What should we do now?
- ▶ Could this have been prevented?

# Getting Emergency Information to the Media

- ▶ Press releases.
- ▶ Press conferences.
- ▶ Teleconferences.
- ▶ Email distribution.
- ▶ Website.
- ▶ Video streaming or webinars.
- ▶ Responses to media requests.
- ▶ Remain calm.
- ▶ Correct misinformation.



# Writing for the Media

- ▶ Limit emergency press release to one page.
- ▶ Remember to avoid using jargon.
- ▶ Consider using more than one method to reach the media.
- ▶ Provide additional background in a separate document.
- ▶ Point media toward helpful resources.



# The Spokesperson



# Your Role as the Spokesperson

- ▶ Clarify your role with your agency before assuming you are the spokesperson.
  - ▶ Certain events may require intra- or interagency coordination.
- ▶ Use verbal and nonverbal skills to convey strength:
  - ▶ Maintain eye contact and be aware of facial expressions.
  - ▶ Maintain good posture.
  - ▶ Speak in a relaxed tone.
  - ▶ Express emotions, but avoid extremes.
- ▶ Skilled spokespersons will:
  - ▶ Appear pleasant on camera,
  - ▶ Answer questions effectively,
  - ▶ Present information clearly,
  - ▶ Handle difficult questions,
  - ▶ Establish credibility, and
  - ▶ Improve over time.

# Spokesperson pitfalls

- ▶ Limit jargon.
- ▶ Use messages that are easy to understand.
- ▶ If necessary refute allegations, but do so without repeating them.
- ▶ Stay on message.
- ▶ Be okay with silence.
- ▶ Gather feedback and practice to improve.



## **CRISIS EMERGENCY RISK COMMUNICATION**

### **Build Trust and Credibility by Expressing:**

- Empathy and caring
- Competence and expertise
- Honesty and openness
- Commitment and dedication

### **Top Tips**

- Don't over reassure.
- Acknowledge uncertainty.
- Express wishes ("I wish I had answers").
- Explain the process in place to find answers.
- Acknowledge people's fear.
- Give people things to do.
- Ask more of people (share risk).

### **As a Spokesman**

- Know your organization's policies.
- Stay within the scope of responsibilities.
- Tell the truth. Be transparent.
- Embody your agency's identity.

**CONSISTENT MESSAGES ARE VITAL**

### **Prepare to Answer These Questions:**

- Are my family and I safe?
- What can I do to protect myself and my family?
- Who is in charge here?
- What can we expect?
- Why did this happen?
- Were you forewarned?
- Why wasn't this prevented?
- What else can go wrong?
- When did you begin working on this?
- What does this information mean?

### **Stay on Message**

- "What's important is to remember..."
- "I can't answer that question, but I can tell you..."
- "Before I forget, I want to tell your viewers..."
- "Let me put that in perspective.."

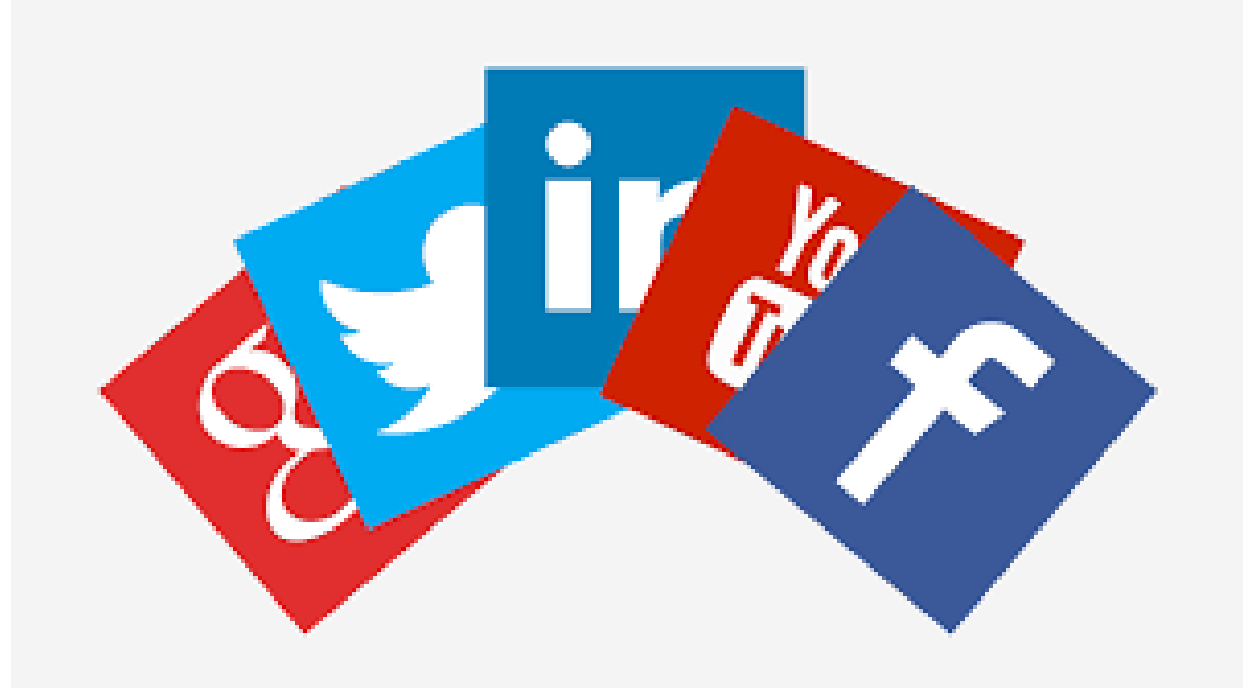
**BE FIRST. BE RIGHT. BE CREDIBLE.**



# Social Media

# Social Media

- ▶ Social Networks
- ▶ Blogs
- ▶ Twitter
- ▶ Wikis
- ▶ Podcasts
- ▶ Online discussion groups
- ▶ Share sites
- ▶ Aggregators



# Social Media

- ▶ Social media can both help and hinder dissemination of accurate, timely information during a crisis or emergency.
- ▶ Official Social Media Accounts
  - ▶ The Governor's Office; LDH and the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) utilize social media to share current, accurate information during a crisis and emergency.
    - ▶ @louisianagov
    - ▶ @ladepthealth
    - ▶ @GOHSEP
- ▶ Individuals involved in the response should not post information regarding the response to their personal accounts, unless to share an official post.
- ▶ Information can quickly be distorted and manipulated on social media.
  - ▶ Monitor social media accounts for rumors and address them as needed.

# Social Media

## *Best Practices Before a Crisis*

- ▶ Determine and understand your organization's social media goals.
- ▶ Use social media daily.
  - ▶ This includes initiating or joining conversations and listening.
- ▶ Follow and share messages from credible sources.



# Social Media

## *Best Practices During a Crisis*

- ▶ Join the conversation.
- ▶ Determine and use the best channels to reach various audiences.
- ▶ Help manage rumors.
- ▶ Check for accuracy.
- ▶ Recognize that the media are using social media as a source.
- ▶ Social media is a tool and resource but not the only way to communicate.





# Summary

- ▶ Execute a solid communications plan before the crisis ever occurs.
- ▶ Be the first source of information for the public and the media.
- ▶ Express sincere empathy as soon as possible.
- ▶ Demonstrate the competence and expertise of your responding agency.
- ▶ Update media regularly.
- ▶ Listen - monitor media and correct misinformation.
- ▶ Always remain open and honest.

# Resources

<http://ldh.la.gov/cerc>

- ▶ Anticipated Questions Worksheet
- ▶ First 48 Hours Checklist
- ▶ CERC Assessment Tool
- ▶ Crisis Emergency Risk Communication Checklist
- ▶ CERC Immediate Response Checklist
- ▶ Message Template for the First Minutes of All Emergencies
- ▶ Crisis Emergency Risk Communication Plan Checklist
- ▶ CERC Core Principles Rubric
- ▶ Sample Message Planning
- ▶ Staffing Planning Worksheet
- ▶ Special Populations Assessment Tool
- ▶ Event Response Matrix and Assessment Worksheet
- ▶ CERC Wallet Card

# Reminders

- ▶ Webinar credit

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- ▶ Survey

# Questions



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