



1

What are our goals and objectives for this class

Understand some key functions of effective communication

Expand upon techniques/skills to effectively communicate across many platforms to inform multiple groups of people complex and changing information

Understand the importance of crisis communication

Be aware of what resources are available to help

2

My background

- ▶ 18 years law enforcement
 - ▶ 9 as County Sheriff
- ▶ Emergency Management 6 years
 - ▶ Emergency Operations Center Manager 6 years

3

Key Functions

Public information during an incident serves many important functions. It can:

- ▶ Save lives and reduce injury. Knowing the proper protective actions to take enables people to reduce their risk.
- ▶ Protect property and the environment. Understanding how to mitigate risk to property and the environment may lessen the damage inflicted by disasters.
- ▶ Facilitate the tactical response by calming fears and managing expectations. People who know what to expect are more likely to follow instructions and allow responders to do their jobs.
- ▶ Educate, inform, and change behavior or attitudes. An educated public is more likely to prepare for emergencies and be ready when they occur.

4

Key Functions

Emergency public information can also:

- ▶ Seek the public's cooperation. Whether the need is for volunteers to help with sandbagging, citizens to cooperate with investigators, or residents to evacuate their homes, public information is an instrument that can help make it happen.
- ▶ Instill public confidence. Providing timely, accurate, and understandable information builds confidence in emergency management's competence.
- ▶ Provide information to help families reunite. Public information about shelter message boards, hotlines, survivor registries, and other linkages can help reunite families and enable them to move forward with their recovery.

5

What is communication?

- ▶ Effective communication is a two way process, Crisis communication doesn't always allow for this...
- ▶ Active listening
- ▶ Non verbal communication
- ▶ Emergency Communication Characteristics

6

Two way Communication

- ▶ Project conviction and passion for subject matter.
- ▶ Have credibility.
- ▶ Make even a large audience feel a personal connection.
- ▶ Seem poised and confident.
- ▶ Are well prepared and organized.
- ▶ Use clear and concise language.
- ▶ Use nonverbal gestures that draw attention while not being distracting.
- ▶ Vary the pace and know when to pause to make a point.
- ▶ Energize the listeners with a call to action.
- ▶ Maintain a professional demeanor.

7

Two way Communication

Barriers to effective listening can be external or internal. External roadblocks can include multitasking distracters such as text messages, email, social media, or a setting with too many distractions. Try to be aware of external roadblocks and offset them if possible.

- ▶ Internal roadblocks include conditions or reactions within the speaker or audience, such as:
 - Emotional interference or defensiveness.
 - Hearing only facts and not feelings.
 - Hearing what is expected instead of what is said.
 - Not seeking clarification.
 - Stereotyping.
- ▶ Resistance to change or automatic dismissal (e.g., "We've never done it that way before.").

8

Active Listening

When listening, always:

- Listen to understand rather than respond.
- Be an active listener (give feedback)
- Keep an open mind.
- Maintain eye contact and show interest.
- Listen for the central themes.
- Consider the speaker's nonverbal behaviors and tone of voice.

While listening, you should avoid:

- Being judgmental.
- Interrupting the speaker.
- Formulating a rebuttal.
- Distorting the message based on your own beliefs.
- Falling into traps (such as confirmation bias)

9

Non Verbal Communication

Nonverbal Communication

- ▶ While non-verbal communication is a crucial part of the process, their importance has been greatly exaggerated. Rolling your eyes, crossing your arms, the tone of your voice, and your facial expressions all contribute to shaping the message that is decoded and interpreted by the receiver. Does your body language match your intended message?
- ▶ As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Your actions speak so loud I cannot hear what you are saying.”

10

Emergency Communication Characteristics

Emergency communications differ from routine communications in several ways:

Barriers

It is more difficult for people to hear messages during an emergency. Stress, change of routine, and lack of sleep all can be hurdles to overcome when communicating during emergencies.

Timeliness

If official answers are not available, rumor and speculation quickly fill the information vacuum. Then, not only must you disseminate correct information, but you also need to counter any misinformation that circulated. To use media in a timely fashion, learn local media news cycles and deadlines. For example, if news occurs at 4:00 p.m., you can most likely get it on the radio immediately, on television in time for the evening report, and into the next morning's edition of the local paper. Online news outlets can be updated at any time.

Required Response

Emergency warnings differ from other kinds of messages because their purpose is to elicit a specific response from the public, rather than merely raise awareness or provide knowledge.

11

Whole Community Communication tools

- ▶ Print-based materials
- ▶ Web-based content
- ▶ Broadcast media (television and radio)
- ▶ Telephone and face to face interaction with individuals
- ▶ Public meetings
- ▶ Social Media
- ▶ Alerting tools

12

Action #1: Ensure Message Content Is Clear and Understandable

As a baseline, all communications should be clear, user-friendly, and age appropriate.

- ▶ Be clear. Using plain language benefits most people. Avoid jargon and acronyms, passive voice, and complex structures.
- ▶ When presenting information orally, apply the basic communication skills related to listening, nonverbal cues, voice, and engaging the audience.
- ▶ Identify your audience, and make sure your presentation is age and education-level appropriate. Materials and presentations for children will not be the same as those for adults.
- ▶ Make sure the format is user-friendly, with an easy-to-follow format. Using symbols and graphics can add clarity and eliminate extra verbiage.

13

Action #2: Tailor Message Delivery to Specific Needs

Segments of the population often have specific needs that, when met, enable them to participate fully in the exchange of information.

- ▶ Let's look, for example, at communicating with people who have:
 - ▶ Sensory disabilities.
 - ▶ Language or literacy requirements.
 - ▶ Cultural factors that affect communication.

Alternate Formats whether information is print-based, oral, or Web-based, appropriate media should be used to ensure information is communicated in alternate formats. Examples include:

- ▶ •Sign language interpretation of spoken presentations.
- ▶ •Video captioning.
- ▶ •Downloadable large-print versions of materials.
- ▶ •Braille versions of materials.
- ▶ •Web content with screen reader capability.
- ▶ •Recorded narrations describing visual materials.

14

Action #3: Identify Alternate Avenues for Communication

- ▶ When selecting how to communicate with and educate your community, it is wise to use multiple formats and media to reach the widest possible audience.
- ▶ You should also identify distribution methods that will ensure everyone in the community gets the message. When conducting communication and education activities, include:
 - ▶ Social, cultural, and religious groups.
 - ▶ Advocacy groups.
 - ▶ Ethnic radio and television stations that broadcast in their native languages.
 - ▶ Children, to educate their parents.
- ▶ And when disseminating information through public forums, be sure the facilities are accessible by those who use wheelchairs or other assistive devices.

15

Action #4: Communicate With Respect (1 of 2)

Practice basic etiquette when meeting people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. For example:

- Do not shout at a person with a hearing disability unless asked to do so. Speak in a normal tone but make sure your lips are visible. The same holds true for people with limited English proficiency.
- When meeting someone with a visual disability, identify yourself and others with you (e.g., “Jane is on my left and Jack is on my right.”). Continue to identify the person with whom you are speaking.
- If the person’s speech is difficult to understand, do not hesitate to ask him or her to repeat what was said. Never pretend to understand when you do not.

16

Action #4: Communicate With Respect (2 of 2)

- ▶ Find a place to sit and talk if a person has decreased physical stamina and endurance, which is preferable to standing during the entire interaction.
- ▶ Place yourself at eye level with the person when conversing. Some ways to accomplish this without drawing attention to yourself are sitting on a chair or standing a little farther away to reduce the steep angle of the sightline. This is effective when interacting with all people who are sitting as well as persons with short stature.
- ▶ Talk directly to the person with the disability, not to a person who accompanies them. Doing otherwise implies that you doubt their ability to understand.

17

Factors that Affect Response

- ▶ **Individual characteristics**—Age, education, language, access and functional needs, family composition, and length of residency, among others.
- ▶ **Perceptions**—Previous experience with a hazard and perceptions of proximity and risk.
- ▶ **Message source**—Who issues the warning, credibility of the warning source, and the level of trust in that source.
- ▶ **The message itself**—Accuracy, clarity, timeliness, consistency, and specificity of the message, and focus on immediate needs.

18

Factors that Affect Response Cont.

Picking the right Medium and the Message

- ▶ Who is the Audience
 - ▶ Select the media that has the greatest likelihood of reaching the intended audience
- ▶ What is the Urgency
 - ▶ Match the speed and frequency of the media to how quickly and often your audience needs
- ▶ Reliability
 - ▶ Ensure that your message is pulling accurate data
 - ▶ Consistency

19

Creating Effective Emergency Communications

All emergency communications—regardless of the medium—should conform to general principles of effective communication.

In a crisis, clarity, specificity, and consistency are vitally important. Be sure to:

- ▶ Present the information in sequence. Present the reason for the message, the supporting information, and the conclusion.
- ▶ Word the message precisely, making every word count.
- ▶ Avoid jargon, codes, and acronyms.
- ▶ Use common terminology for all personnel and facilities.
- ▶ Omit unnecessary details.
- ▶ Speak in sync with other related authorities.
- ▶ Keep messages consistent across various media.

20

Creating Effective Emergency Communications Cont.

Motivational Presentations

- ▶ Motivational presentations are delivered in a different manner than informational presentations. A common approach is to:
 - ▶ 1. Open with an attention-getting introduction.
 - ▶ 2. Create tension or a need for the message in the audience.
 - ▶ 3. Demonstrate that your message can satisfy the need you identified.
 - ▶ 4. Use visualization to magnify the appeal.
 - ▶ 5. Provide the action step that you want the audience to take.

Tips:

- ▶ Use the introduction to establish your credibility by demonstrating your familiarity with the topic.
- ▶ Use a vivid illustration to highlight the importance of the need or problem to the listeners.
- ▶ Create a need for your solution or idea by highlighting one or two benefits, rather than providing a laundry list.
- ▶ Show how your specific ideas will resolve the problem or meet the need you've identified.
- ▶ Tell the audience how, when, why, and what it can do to carry out your proposal.

21

Available resources

- ▶ Idaho Public Information Emergency Response (PIER) team
 - ▶ Comprised of state agency PIO's by executive order of the Governor to help with messaging
 - ▶ Joint information system (JIS) Joint information Center (JIC)
 - ▶ Requested through IOEM

22

Recap

Understand some key functions of effective communication

Expand upon techniques/skills to effectively communicate across many platforms to inform multiple groups of people complex and changing information

Understand the importance of crisis communication

Be aware of what resources are available to help

23

Questions?

Ben Roeber

broeber@imd.idaho.gov

208-258-6544 (O)

208-900-8622 (C)

24