

Getting on the Same Page:

A Practical Tool For Inter-Agency Collaboration
In Risk Communication

RPIC 2010

Federal Contaminated Sites National Workshop



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Presentation Overview

- **Communication Landscape**
 - The need for effective inter-agency collaboration
 - Goals for risk communication
- **The Response Matrix**
 - A communication planning tool
 - Description and Applications

Communication Landscape

INTERNAL

- Shared jurisdiction
 - Agenda may be misaligned
 - National vs. Regional imperatives
 - Organizational change
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Communication Landscape

EXTERNAL

- **Diverse concerns; many stakeholders**
- **Stakeholder capacity**
 - Literacy, numeracy and perception
 - Competing interpretations of 'science'
 - Culture of fear; media interest
- **Access to information**

Potential Consequences

- **Communication becomes reactive**
- **Stakeholder confusion impacts risk decisions**
- **Project delays**
- **Increased costs**
 - **Financial**
 - **Credibility**

Risk Communication

- **Engaging audiences to share risk information**
 - Public health, environmental risks, product safety, etc.
 - May involve high concern, combined with low trust
 - Promoting action, responding to fear or outrage, managing crises
- **Multiple stakeholders with differing (and changing) needs**
- **Theoretical basis in research**
 - Behavioural psychology, sociology, communication
 - V. Covello, P. Sandman, others

Risk Communication...

- provides truthful, consistent, credible, accessible information
 - anticipates and responds to stakeholder concerns
 - involves all stakeholders
 - focuses on the process, not the events
 - builds stakeholder capacity
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Planning to Communicate

- **Identify and involve partners early**
- **Develop a collaborative process and goals**
- **Have a communication strategy**
 - **Consider the principles of Risk Communication**
- **Schedule milestones and monitor progress**
- **Use tools to prepare and deliver consistent messaging**

The Response Matrix

- Collaborative planning tool for responding to stakeholder concerns

 Question

 Lead Agency, Department, Consultant

 Spokesperson(s)

 Third-party credible sources of information

 Key message

 Supporting facts

 Next steps (actions)

 Follow-up

THE RESPONSE MATRIX

Question	
Lead Agency (or Dept.)	
Spokesperson(s)	
Third-Party Credible Sources	
Key Message	
Facts (Supporting Information)	
Next Steps	
FOLLOW-UP REQ'D:	

Guidelines for using a Response Matrix

- **Identify stakeholder and concern**
- **Write it all down**
 - Focus forward; avoid repetition, digression
 - Check consistency with previous communications
- **Edit**
 - Complexity, jargon, acronyms, spelling, grammar, punctuation and flow
- **Complete all cells**
 - Assign actions to obtain missing information
- **Use as a foundation for communications**

Applications

- **Document authoring**
 - Report writing
- **Communication vehicles**
 - Reports and Presentations
 - Stakeholder engagement materials
 - Internet
 - Media relations
 - Correspondence
- **Spokesperson preparedness**
- **Issues management database**

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