



# **Zika Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) Discussion: Working with the media—what's different in a crisis?**

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# Messages and Audiences



# The STARCC Principle

Your public messages in a crisis must be:

**S**imple

**T**imely

**A**ccurate

**R**elevant

**C**redible

**C**onsistent

# What the Public Will Ask First

- Are my family and I safe?
- What have you found that may affect me?
- What can I do to protect myself and my family?
- Who caused this?
- Can you fix it?

# What the Media Will Ask First

- What happened?
- Who is in charge?
- Has this been contained?
- Are victims being helped?
- What can we expect?
- What should we do?
- Why did this happen?
- Did you have forewarning?

# Judging the Message

- Speed counts – marker for preparedness
- Facts – consistency is vital
- Trusted source – can't fake these

# Match Audiences and Concerns

## Audiences

- Victims and their families
- Politicians
- First responders
- Trade and industry
- Community far outside disaster
- Media

## Concerns

- Opportunity to express concern
- Personal safety
- Resources for response
- Loss of revenue/liability
- Speed of information flow
- Anticipatory guidance
- Family's safety

# Perceptions of government

- Wide range from distrust to confidence
- Government withholds information
- Importance of local health and elected authorities
- Government should operate with complete openness and disclosure

# Emergency Information

- Any information is empowering
- Benefit from substantive action steps
- Plain English
- Illustrations and color
- Source identification

# Initial Message

## Must

- Be short
- Be relevant
- Give positive action steps
- Be repeated

# Initial Message

## Must *Not*

- Use jargon
- Be judgmental
- Make promises that can't be kept
- Include humor

# Writing for the Media During a Crisis

- The pressure will be tremendous from all quarters
- It must be fast and accurate
- It's like cooking a turkey when people are starving
- If information isn't finalized, explain the process

# Working With the Media



# Disasters Are Media Events

- We need the media to be there
- Give important protective actions for the public
- Know how to reach their audiences and what their audiences need

# Response Officials Should

- Understand that their job is not the media's job
- Know that they can't dismiss media when they're inconvenient
- Accept that the media will be involved in the response, and plan accordingly

# Response Officials Should

- Attempt to provide all media equal access
- Use technology to fairly distribute information
- Plan to pre-credential media for access to EOC/JOC or JIC
- Think consistent messages

# Response Officials Should Not

- Hold grudges
- Discount local media
- Tell the media what to do

# How To Work With Reporters

- Reporters want a front seat to the action and all information NOW
- Preparation will save relationships
- If you don't have the facts, tell them the process
- Reality Check: 70,000 media outlets in U.S. Media cover the news 24/7

# Media, Too, Are Affected by Crises

- Verification
- Adversarial role
- National dominance
- Lack of scientific expertise

# Command Post

- Media will expect a command post. Official channels that work well will discourage reliance on nonofficial channels
- Be media-friendly at the command post—prepare for them to be on site

# Trust and Mistrust

- Stakeholders judge the response to an issue or crisis based on trust
- Trust is the natural consequence of promises fulfilled
- Mistrust is an outgrowth of the perception that promises were broken and values violated
- CDC fulfills trust by combining our best science with strong ethics and values

# Acting Trustworthy

- Share information early
- Acknowledge the concerns of others
- Under promise and over deliver
- Select a spokesperson who is never condescending
- Engage third-party validators and advocates

# Six Principles of CERC

- **Be First:** If the information is yours to provide by organizational authority—do so as soon as possible. If you can't—then explain how you are working to get it.
- **Be Right:** Give facts in increments. Tell people what you know when you know it, tell them what you don't know, and tell them if you will know relevant information later.
- **Be Credible:** Tell the truth. Do not withhold to avoid embarrassment or the possible “panic” that seldom happens. Uncertainty is worse than not knowing—rumors are more damaging than hard truths.

# Six Principles of CERC

- **Express Empathy:** Acknowledge in words what people are feeling—it builds trust.
- **Promote Action:** Give people things to do. It calms anxiety and helps restore order.
- **Show Respect:** Treat people the way you want to be treated—the way you want your loved ones treated—always—even when hard decisions must be communicated.

# Risk Communication Resources

- CDC Zika website: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/>
- Zika communications resources: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/comm-resources/index.html>
- CERC resources: <http://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/index.asp>
- Emergency Risk Communication Training: Atlanta, August 10-12, 2016
- To sign up for the Emergency Partners newsletter to receive Zika and other updates from the CDC, please click [here](#)
- Contact [cercrequest@cdc.gov](mailto:cercrequest@cdc.gov) for questions

For more information, contact CDC  
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)  
TTY: 1-888-232-6348 [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

