Overcoming Message Resistance

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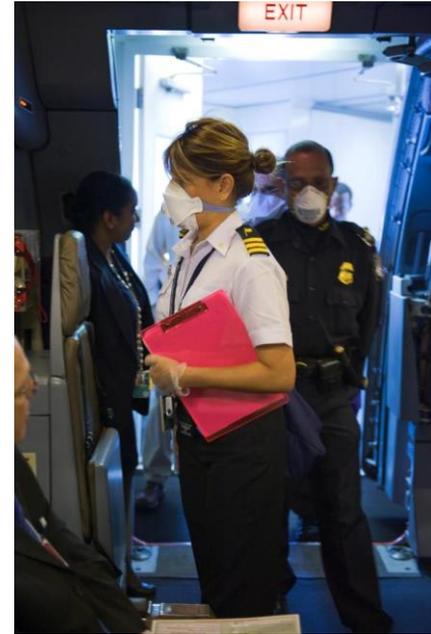Senior Health Communication Specialist

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CERC

CRISIS + EMERGENCY RISK COMMUNICATION

Communicating in a Crisis is Different

In a serious crisis, all affected people

- Take in information differently
- Process information differently
- Act on information differently

The **right message** at the **right time** from the **right person** can save lives.

Six Principles of CERC

Fully integrated Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) helps ensure that limited resources are managed well and can do the most good at every phase of an emergency response.

1 **Be First:**
Crises are time-sensitive. Communicating information quickly is crucial. For members of the public, the first source of information often becomes the preferred source.

2 **Be Right:**
Accuracy establishes credibility. Information can include what is known, what is not known, and what is being done to fill in the gaps.

3 **Be Credible:**
Honesty and truthfulness should not be compromised during crises.

4 **Express Empathy:**
Crises create harm, and the suffering should be acknowledged in words. Addressing what people are feeling and the challenges they face builds trust and rapport.

5 **Promote Action:**
Giving people meaningful things to do calms anxiety, helps restore order, and promotes some sense of control.[3]

6 **Show Respect:**
Respectful communication is particularly important when people feel vulnerable. Respectful communication promotes cooperation and rapport.

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Psychology of a Crisis

What do people feel when a disaster threatens?

Psychological barriers:

1. Denial
2. Fear, anxiety, confusion, dread, anger
3. Hopelessness or helplessness

Messages and Audiences

Understanding your Audience

The public will judge your message by its

- Content
- Messenger
- Method of delivery

You can better understand the needs of your audience if you understand:

- Their relationship to the incident
- Their psychological differences
- Their demographic differences

Community Engagement Goal

To provide the most people with the information they need to make decisions and take actions

"Communities" in CERC

Any group of people associated by a common tie or interest

Ask Questions

- What is most important to your community when faced with a problem?

- What are specific risks and benefits associated with different solutions?

Questions?

Thank you.