

Drought as a Disaster: What do I tell whom, when, and how?

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February 26, 2019

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The basics

1. **Be First:** Crises are time-sensitive. 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:** 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 a restored sense of control.
6. **Show Respect:** Respectful communication promotes cooperation and rapport.



Communication Failures

Mixed messages from multiple experts (boil water? JIC!))

Information released late (911 gas masks)

Paternalistic attitudes (don't worry)

Not countering rumors and myths in real time (don't "take bait")

Public power struggles and confusion (Mayor vs. Governor)



Four Ways People Process Information during a Crisis

We simplify messages - don't fully hear messages and we don't remember all of the message. To cope, we rely on habit and long held practices.

We hold on to current beliefs - We tend not to seek evidence that contradicts beliefs we already hold. We exploit any conflicting or unclear messages by interpreting it as consistent with existing beliefs



Four Ways People Process Information during a Crisis

We look for additional information and opinions - Change television channels. Call friends and family.

We believe the first message – A lack of information causes speculation. We compare new information to the first message.



Messages Must.....

- Be repeated
- Come from multiple credible sources
- Be specific to the emergency being experienced
- Offer a positive course of action that can be executed



Wooden Barbie

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rRC7mZpf1s>




Let's 'lean forward'

Let's assume that the current drought conditions are not going to resolve.

Base on what we just talked about, and your expertise.....





What are the primary health related issues related to drought that we need to address?

For each issue, what is the MOST important group that needs to hear about it (we are just picking one for now)?

Where is this group located?

What is an effective mode of communication to this group?

What do we need to help them understand?





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