

# PUBLIC RELATIONS AND RISK COMMUNICATION

## Training Supplement

October 15, 2024



Presented to:



**CenSARA**

Central States Air Resource Agencies

Presented by:

**Susan Z. Forney**

**Anthony J. Sadar**



**Environmental Science  
Communication, LLC**

# **Public Relations and Risk Communication Training**

## **October 2024**


1. Agenda
2. Training Slide Deck
3. Exercise
4. Factors Affecting Risk Concerns
5. Message Mapping Form and Examples
6. Listening Do's and Don'ts
7. Examples of Bridging Statements for Media Interviews
8. Links to Free Risk Communication Resources

## **1. Agenda**

**CenSARA Virtual Training**  
**October 15, 2024**  
**Public Relations and Risk Communication**  
**Agenda**

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| 8:30  | Introductions                               |
| 8:35  | Communication Fundamentals                  |
| 9:30  | BREAK                                       |
| 9:35  | Risk Communication Primer                   |
| 10:30 | BREAK                                       |
| 10:35 | Dealing with Uncertainty                    |
| 11:05 | Managing Outrage                            |
| NOON  | LUNCH BREAK                                 |
| 1:00  | Jeopardy! (Interactive Understanding Check) |
| 1:20  | Dealing with the Public                     |
| 2:10  | BREAK                                       |
| 2:20  | Dealing with the Media                      |
| 3:15  | Exercises with Mock Interviews              |
| 4:15  | Final Thoughts and Q&A                      |
| 4:30  | ADJOURN                                     |

## **2. Training Slide Deck**



## Public Relations and Risk Communication

**Susan Z. Forney**  
EHS COMMUNICATION PARTNERS, INC.

**Anthony J. Sadar**  
Environmental Science Communication, LLC

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### Agenda

- Introductions
- Communication Fundamentals
- Risk Communication Primer
- Dealing with Uncertainty
- Managing Outrage
- Jeopardy!
- Dealing with the Public
- Dealing with the Media
- Exercises with Mock Interviews
- Final Thoughts and Q&A

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### Experience and Expectations

- What does success look like?
- What situations do you wish to avoid most?
- Which questions do you hope you never asked?

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## A Universal Truth



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## Communication Fundamentals

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## Communication is...

*A series of events that transfer an idea or concept between individuals and groups.*

Source: International Association for Public Participation: Communications for Effective Public Participation, 2006.

- **Imprecise** – The more translations between the speaker and listener, the more imprecise.
- **Irreversible** – We can't take it back. Even silence sends a message.
- **Contextual** – We shape information based on our experience and point of view.

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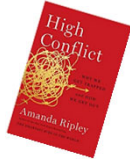
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## The Illusion of Communication

- “The biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”
- Speaker overestimates ability to communicate
- Speaker lacks empathy for others
- Listener occupies a different reality



Source: Ripley, A., *High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out*, Simon & Schuster, April 2021.

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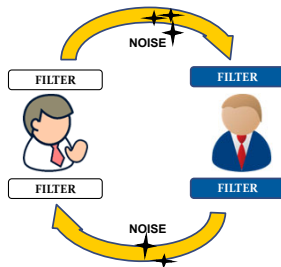
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## Imprecise and Contextual



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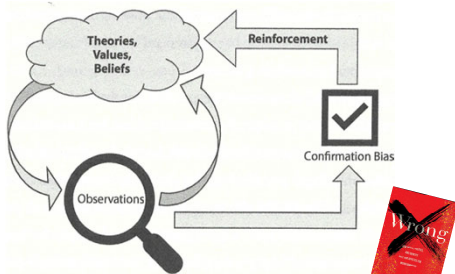
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## Making Sense of the World



Human Meaning-Making. Our observations are theory laden.

Source: Wrong: How Media, Politics, and Identity Drive Our Appetite for Misinformation by Dannagal Goldthwaite Young, John Hopkins University Press, October 17, 2023, p. 30.

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## “The Three Cs”

- Comprehension
- Control
- Community

### The three Cs

COMPREHENSION	CONTROL	COMMUNITY
We want to make sense of our world.	We want to have some control over our world.	We want to be a part of a social group.

Source: Wrong: How Media, Politics, and Identity Drive Our Appetite for Misinformation by Dannagal Goldthwaite Young, John Hopkins University Press, October 17, 2023, pp. 21-32; 35.

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## The Three “R”s

- Reinforcement
- Relevance
- Relationship

Hugh Mackay, “Why Don’t People Listen,” 1994.

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## Solution from Nuclear Industry

### “Three-way communication”

**When instruction is disseminated, the receiver repeats the instruction back to the sender, then the sender confirms if the receiver is correct or not.**

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## Hazard vs. Risk

- Hazard is potential of something to cause harm (sickness, injury, death, damage, etc.)
- Risk is probability or chance that a particular hazard will cause that harm.

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## Risk Communication

*“...the process of informing people about potential hazards to their person, property, or community. Scholars define risk communication as a science-based approach for communicating effectively in situations of high stress, high concern or controversy” [EPA website].*

- **Imprecise** – The more translations between the speaker and listener, the more imprecise.
- **Irreversible** – We can't take it back. Even silence sends a message.
- **Contextual** – We shape information based on our experience and point of view.

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## Risk Communication (Continued)

*“The interactive process of the exchange of information and opinions ... concerning a risk or potential risk.”*

Lundgren & McMakin (1998)

*A science-based approach for communicating effectively in situations involving one or more of the following:*

- *High Concern*
- *High Stress*
- *High Emotion*
- *Controversy*

Adapted from Risk Communication, Covello, Vincent (2003)

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## Risk Communication (Continued)

*“...From the risk manager's perspective, the purpose of risk communication is to help residents of affected communities understand the processes of risk assessment and management, to form scientifically valid perceptions of the likely hazards, and to participate in making decisions about how risk should be managed. Risk communication tools are written, verbal, or visual statements containing information about risk.”*

Source: EPA  
([www.epa.gov/risk/risk-communication](http://www.epa.gov/risk/risk-communication))

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## 4 Basic Risk Communication Challenges

1. Challenges with the information communicated
2. Challenges with the source of information
3. Challenges with the channels of communications
4. Challenges with the receivers of information

Adapted from: Seven Cardinal Rules of Risk Communication, V. Covello & F. Allen (U.S. EPA, 1987).

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**“All the studies show that ...**

*even with good risk communication, people carry on doing what they did before.”*

[Professor David Spiegelhalter, Quartz, 2016]

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## Basic Qualities

- Integrity
- Authenticity
- Humility
- Empathy
- Transparency

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## Integrity, Authenticity, and Humility

- The degree to which you lack integrity or authenticity or are arrogant is the degree to which people will not trust you.
- You also must be empathetic and transparent!
- But the #1 trait or attitude that will kill your communication efforts is arrogance.

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## Trust Among Participants

“When all sides are aware of their mutual learning, and all sides gain thereby in self-understanding and mutual respect, then (and only then) can there develop that element of trust among participants, which is becoming recognized as the essential element in our making progress towards a sustainable world. ...”



Source: The Politics of Modelling: Numbers Between Science and Policy, Oxford University Press, Edited by A. Saltelli & M. Di Fiore, Nov. 25, 2023, Chpt. 12, p. 198.

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## Environmental Risk Communication



Source: [epa.gov/risk/risk-communication](http://epa.gov/risk/risk-communication)

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## How Bad Can It Get, Really?

- “We want sampling now!” (B&W clean-up site)
- “I don’t care if any lead comes out of the stack, I don’t want the industry to locate here.” (WTI incinerator)



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## Conflicts Over Environmental Issues

- Private property rights
- Free-market system
- Individual/business choices
- Freedom of speech
- Representation during formation of laws/regulations
- Local control of local issues
- Right-to-know about chemicals and plant activities
- Right-to-live in a clean, safe environment

Adapted from: The Practical Guide to Environmental Community Relations, C. J. Forrest & R. Hix Mays (John Wiley & Sons, 1997).

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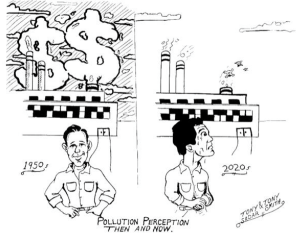
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## Public Perception

You got to know your audience

- For
- Against
- Indifferent
- Concerned



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## Good Risk Communication Practices

- Keep it simple
- Listen first
- Always follow through
- Seek maximum input
- Define and follow your goals
- Be consistent
- Recognize and address uncomfortable facts
- Accept that stakeholder perception equals reality
- Acknowledge uncertainty
- Use compatible comparisons and objective terms
- Every word and every gesture are always on the record



Source: Environmental Risk Communication: Principles and Practices for Industry, S. Forney & A. Sadar, 2021.

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## Strategic Communication

- Know your public and seek mutual areas of benefit
- Establish the public's trust
- Engage opinion leaders
- Become savvy about media products, techniques, and contacts
- Build narratives through texts and visual aids
- Stress social/environmental responsibility



Source: Environmental Strategic Communication: Advocacy, Persuasion, and Public Relations, D. Moscato, Rowman & Littlefield, December 2023.

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## So, What Do You Do?

Deliver information in a:

- Clear
- + Accurate
- + Contextual
- + Succinct
- + Prompt
- + Consistent
- + Sensitive
- + Flexible Communications
- ~ Effective Messaging

Adapted from: Environmental Risk Communication: Principles and Practices for Industry, S. Forney & A. Sadar, 2021.

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## Front Line Communication Guidance

- Keep employees & public informed
- Address rumors with good information
- Frame messages with the perspective of the listener in mind
- Deliver the truth tactfully
- Check inappropriate emotions but speak with poignancy
- Explain actions and apologize if things go wrong. Tell what is being done to correct and prevent future missteps. Don't cover up mistakes
- Be approachable but careful with words
- Remain humble



Adapted from: Leadership Strategy and Tactics: Field Manual, J. Willink, 2020.

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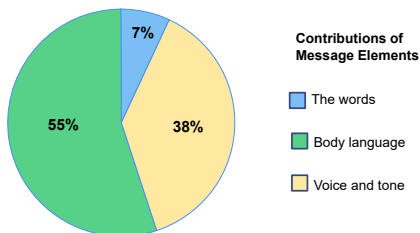
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## Whatever the numbers, it's not just WHAT we say.

Mehrabian's "7-38-55 Rule" of Communication



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### Overall Challenges

- Complex issues and conflicting science
- Lack of trust in the source(s) of information
- Poor track record
- Public misperception and fear
- Emotions overrule facts (stakeholder outrage)
- The media and the internet have a strong influence
- Confirmation bias

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### Constraints on Organizations

- Lack of resources
- Lack of buy-in from upper management
- Difficult review and approval procedures
- Lack of communication between departments

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### Constraints on Risk Communicators

- Feeling that public shouldn't be an equal partner
- Inability to consider different value systems
- Lack of faith in public's ability to understand science

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## Constraints on Audiences

- Hostility and outrage
- Mistrust of industry and institutions
- Apathy
- Panic and denial
- Unreasonable expectations about risk

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## Ask Questions to Understand & Reduce Conflict

1. "What is oversimplified about this conflict?"
2. What do you want to understand about the other side?
3. What do you want the other side to understand about you?
4. What would it feel like if you woke up and this problem was solved?
5. What's the question nobody's asking?
6. What do you want to know about this controversy that you don't already know?
7. Where do you feel torn?
8. Tell me more."

However, note that understanding people doesn't necessarily change them. "It's not nearly enough. But almost no one changes until they feel heard."

Source: Ripley, A., High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out, Simon & Schuster, April 2021, Appendix III, pp. 296 & 247.

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## Mutual Gains Approach

- "Acknowledge the concerns of the other side.
- Encourage joint fact finding.
- Offer contingent commitments to minimize impacts if they do occur; ... .
- Accept responsibility, admit mistakes, and share power.
- Act in a trustworthy fashion at all times.
- Focus on building long-term relationships."



Source: Susskind, L. & Field, P. Dealing with an Angry Public: The Mutual Gains Approach to Resolving Disputes, Free Press, April 1996, pp. 37-38.

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## Risk Communication Primer

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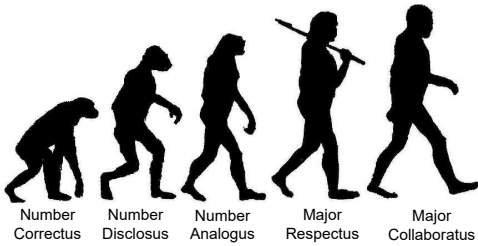
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## EVOLUTION OF RISK COMMUNICATION



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## EPA SALT Framework

- Strategy
- Action
- Learning
- Tools



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## Strategy

*Moving away from the knowledge-deficit model.*



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*The technical seriousness of risk can be virtually irrelevant.*

– Peter Sandman

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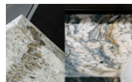
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## Public Versus Experts

What's the number 1 concern?



- Granite countertops  
(Avg. 0.01 pCi/L)



- Landfilled drill cuttings from oil and gas wells  
(Avg. 0.4 – 0.75 pCi/L background)



- Home indoor air  
(Avg. 7-8 pCi/L in PA)

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**Management:** Risk = Hazard x Likelihood

**Public View:** Risk = Hazard + Outrage

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<b>Seen as Less Risky</b>	<b>Seen as More Risky</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Voluntary</li><li>• Individual control</li><li>• Fair</li><li>• Naturally occurring</li><li>• High trust in source</li><li>• Familiar</li><li>• Affects everybody</li><li>• High personal benefit</li><li>• Chronic</li><li>• Positive experience</li><li>• Morally irrelevant</li><li>• Not memorable</li><li>• Responsive process</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Involuntary</li><li>• No or little control</li><li>• Unfair</li><li>• Created by humans</li><li>• Low trust in source</li><li>• Unfamiliar</li><li>• Affects children</li><li>• Low personal benefit</li><li>• Catastrophic</li><li>• Negative experience</li><li>• Morally relevant</li><li>• Memorable</li><li>• Unresponsive process</li></ul>

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***Systematic analysis of what the audience knows and what they need to know.***

– Baruch Fischhoff

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## Mental Model Approach

1. Create an expert model.
2. Conduct mental model interviews.
3. Conduct structured initial interviews.
4. Draft risk communication.
5. Evaluate risk communication.

Source: Morgan, Fischhoff, Bostrom, Atman. Risk Communication: A Mental Models Approach, 2002

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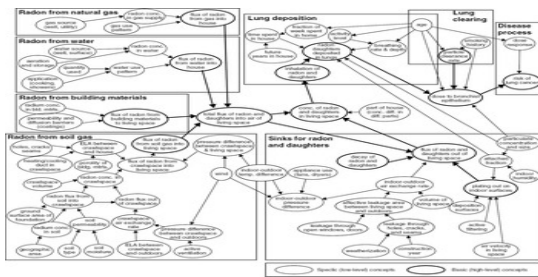
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## Mental Model Approach – Radon Model



Source: Morgan, Fischhoff, Bostrom, Atman. Risk Communication: A Mental Models Approach, 2002

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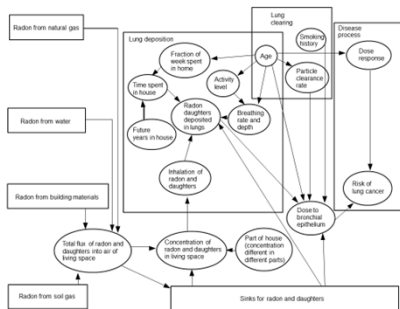
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## Mental Model Approach – Simplified Radon Model



Source: W.G. Morgan, B. Fischhoff, A. Bostrom, L. Lave, et al. Communicating Risk to the Public: First, know what people know and believe. *Environmental Science & Technology, ES&T Features* Vol. 26, No. 11, 1992 2051. Copyright 1992. American Chemical Society.)

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## Research Matters...

or visit [www.epa.gov/radon/radontest.html](http://www.epa.gov/radon/radontest.html).

### You can fix a radon problem

Help is available to fix a radon problem. You can call your state radon office to find qualified radon mitigators in your area. Also local companies with radon mitigators are in the phone book or online. The cost to reduce radon depends on how was built and how you use it. Most homes can be fixed for about the same cost as other common repairs.

program, which also has radon testing companies in your area. Visit [www.epa.gov/wheretheyoulive.html](http://www.epa.gov/wheretheyoulive.html).

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## Proactive Communication Planning

Proactive Communication	Reactive Communication
Thinks long-term	Thinks short-term
Builds good will for future dialogue	Jeopardizes future good will for short-term gains
Sets the stage for success	Ignores tripping hazards and obstacles
Achieves buy-in and consistency at all organizational levels	Lacks buy-in and consistency across organization
Targets resources where they are most effective	Scatters resources among seemingly pressing issues
Builds collective knowledge of successful strategies and actions	Fades from organizational memory

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## Building a Communication Strategy

- Set Goals and Objectives
- Identify Stakeholders
- Develop Messages
- Select Delivery Methods
- Prepare Messengers
- Assess and Adjust

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## The Power Of Threes

- Develop 3 key messages (Tier 1) that serve as the foundation for your risk communication strategy
- Develop 3 or more supporting messages (Tier 2) for each key message
- Each supporting message is, in turn, supported by additional messages (Tier 3)
- Messages necessarily become more complex with each succeeding tier
- Lower tier messages may also be referred to as supporting facts or talking points

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## Message Map: Three Levels

- Tier 1 Message: "Your drinking water [is safe]."
- Tier 2 Message: "We are confident in the safety of your drinking water because we test it thoroughly each day using proven methods along with independent verification by the Department of Health, outside experts, and local residents."

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## Message Map: Three Levels (Cont.)

- Tier 3 Message: "Water testing standards are derived from the National Water Quality Protocols manual. Samples are taken simultaneously at a dozen different sites around the city. We take every possible precaution to ensure all testing protocols are followed. Water testing results are shipped to three separate lab locations. A site is deemed safe if all three labs verify that the sample is within standards."

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## Message Map Examples (Cont.)

Stakeholder: General Public.		
Question or Concern: What can people do to prevent West Nile Virus?		
Key message 1	Key message 2	Key message 3
Remove standing water.	Wear protective clothing.	Use insect repellent.
<b>Supporting fact 1-1</b>	<b>Supporting fact 2-1</b>	<b>Supporting fact 3-1</b>
Remove old tires which collect water and serve as breeding grounds for mosquitoes.	Wear long sleeved shirts.	Repellents containing DEET are recommended.
<b>Supporting fact 1-2</b>	<b>Supporting fact 2-2</b>	<b>Supporting fact 3-2</b>
Empty or clean flower pots and bird baths daily.	Wear long pants.	Use 25% DEET.
<b>Supporting fact 1-3</b>	<b>Supporting fact 2-3</b>	<b>Supporting fact 3-3</b>
Empty and clean cat/dog water bowls daily.	Especially at dawn and dusk.	Do not use repellents that do not contain DEET.

Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency, EPA/625/R-06/012, August 2007.

<https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPURL.cgi?Dockey=60000105.txt>

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## Why Pretest Messages?

- Increase chance of success
- Assess comprehension
- Assess recall
- Identify strong points and weak points
- Test sensitive and controversial points
- Identify cultural impact
- Assess personal relevance

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## Trust

*When people are concerned, stressed or upset, they want to know that you care before they care what you know.*

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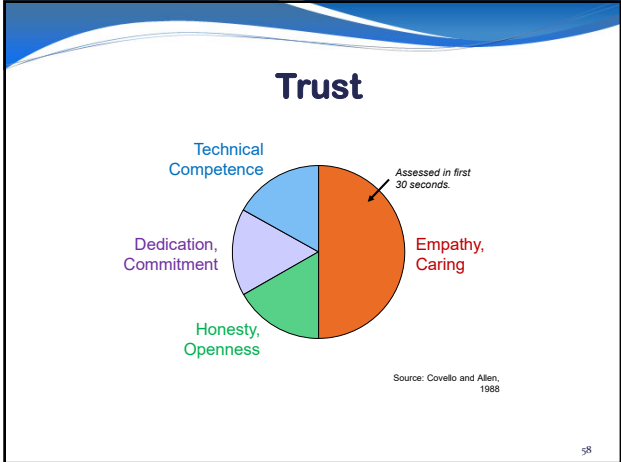
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## Empathy

- Is NOT sympathy
- Is NOT agreement
- MUST be genuine

Stephen R. Covey, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," 1989.

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## Developmental Stages of Empathy

- Mimic content.
- Rephrase content.
- Reflect feeling.
- Rephrase the content and reflect the feeling.

Stephen R. Covey, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," 1989.

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## Example

**STAKEHOLDER:** "You tell us to contact you, but no one ever responds. I've called twice an emailed once and never heard anything back."

**MIMIC:** "You've called twice and also emailed and never heard anything back."

**REPHRASE CONTENT:** "You've called twice and even emailed and no one got back to you."

**REFLECT FEELING:** "You're frustrated with us."

**REPHRASE CONTENT AND REFLECT FEELING:** "You're frustrated because we invited you to contact us, but we never responded when you called and emailed."

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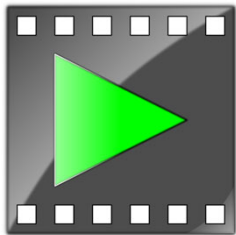
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## Communicating with Empathy



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## Dealing with Uncertainty

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## Dealing with Uncertainty

- Aspects of uncertainty
- What is it about Science & Engineering...?
- Some Solutions
- A focus on modeling
- Giving uncertain news

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## Uncertainty Abounds

- Science
- Regulations
- Toxicology
- Epidemiology
- Statistics
- Legal Matters
- Policy
- Others

Adapted from: Fran Watkins Marshall, "Risk Communication & Uncertainty in Environmental Health," presentation to Metro 4/SESARM Air Directors Meeting, Greenville, SC, November 15, 2023.

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## Uncertainty Includes...

- An inability to measure and model accurately and precisely
- Limited knowledge about the meaning (and projection) of results
- Lack of understanding of the space between "safe" and "unsafe"
- Lack of understanding about the recipients of your information

Adapted from: Fran Watkins Marshall, "Risk Communication & Uncertainty in Environmental Health," presentation to Metro 4/SESARM Air Directors Meeting, Greenville, SC, November 15, 2023.

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## What is it about Science & Engineering?

- Generally objective, but also have a level of subjectivity
- Give an air of sophistication that is not always warranted
- Use language frequently unfamiliar to the general public
- Can be intimidating and more confusing than helpful

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## Some Solutions

- Help residents understand technical language
- Admit what you don't know and are working to find out
- Provide timely updates
- Be open, honest, patient, and humble
- Others

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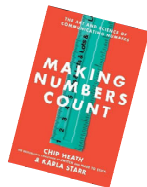
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## Making Your Numbers User-Friendly

“The gold standard for user-friendly is small, whole numbers.”

- Rule #1: Round with Enthusiasm
- Rule #2: Concrete is Better
- Rule #3: Defer to Expertise



Source: *Making Numbers Count: The Art and Science of Communicating Numbers*, C. Heath & K. Starz, 2022.

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## Communicating Quantitative Info

“The gold standard for user-friendly is small, whole numbers.” Examples:

0.34165 is “A little over 3 out of 10”

2/49 is “About 1 out of 25”

483 x 9.79 is “500 x 10”

87,387 km is “Slightly under 90 km”

4,753,639,000,000 is “Almost 5 trillion”

Source: *Making Numbers Count: The Art and Science of Communicating Numbers*, C. Heath & K. Stan, 2022, pg. 139. 70

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## How Would You Explain: 24-hr PM<sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS?

Particle Pollution (PM)	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	primary	1 year	12.0 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	annual mean, averaged over 3 years
		secondary	1 year	15.0 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	annual mean, averaged over 3 years
	primary and secondary	24 hours	35 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	98th percentile, averaged over 3 years	
	PM <sub>10</sub>	primary	24 hours	150 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Not to be exceeded more than once per year on average over 3 years
		secondary	24 hours	150 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	

Source: US EPA

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## Example: Air Quality Permits

- **Public input in decision-making**
  - What opportunities are available? Are more needed?
- **Understanding regulatory aspects**
  - Is more public education necessary?
- **Understanding technical aspects**
  - Can more be done to inform the public?

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## Example: Public Communication of Modeling

Modelers should be able to explain in straight-forward language:

- The thinking that went into model construction, including assumptions and limitations
- How the knowns and unknowns in the model were handled
- How the model makes sense of the world
- How the model has been or will be validated (to the extent possible), and
- How the results should be interpreted.

Based on: The Politics of Modelling: Numbers Between Science and Policy, Oxford University Press, Edited by A. Saltelli & M. Di Fiore, Nov. 25, 2023, Chpt. 12, p. 198.

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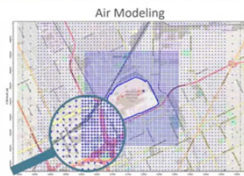
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## Public Communication of Modeling Example (Continued)

- "...you can't monitor something that hasn't been built [or changed] yet..."
- Virtual monitor in almost everybody's backyard
- Source operating under maximum emission potential and worst-case weather
- Which receptor point gives the highest concentration?
- Model overpredicts by design
- Advice given based on results

**EGLE** MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY



Modeling Grid from Permit Application

Source: Jim Haywood, EGLE, 5/27/2020.

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## Modelers Need to Make Certain...

- Input data is valid and suitable
- Assumptions are reasonable
- Mathematical formulas sufficiently represent real-world conditions
- Output makes sense
- Results are properly applied
- No undetected bias is introduced in any step of the modeling process

Adapted from: Escape From Model Land, E. Thompson, 2022.

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## Modeling Insight

At their best, models are:

- “helpful, self-conscious simplifications;
- their criteria of inclusion and exclusion are clear or at least retrievable; and
- their makers or users do not try to stretch their usefulness or their authority too far.”

At their worst, models are:

- not responsive to changing conditions, so are limited as representations and guides to actions;
- they induce a complacency that they produce objective results from dispassionate inputs.

Source: The Politics of Modelling: Numbers Between Science and Policy, Oxford University Press, November 25, 2023, Forward, p. xvi.

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## What are the Uncertain Aspects of Air Quality Science & Engineering?

Measurements, Modeling, Decisions/Regulations:

- -
- -
- -

Resolutions:

- -
- -
- -

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## Giving Uncertain News

- Acknowledge uncertainty
- Don't wait until you're certain
- Do dilemma-sharing
- Show reasonable confidence
- Stake out the middle ground
- Don't claim anything is “safe”
- Tolerate exaggeration from opponents
- Ride the “seesaw,” but aim for the fulcrum

Source: Sandman, P. 2002, Laundry List of 50 Outrage Reducers. [www.psandman.com/col/laundry.htm](http://www.psandman.com/col/laundry.htm).

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## Be Aware of:

- Cultural and personal sensitivities
- Ethical dilemmas
- Unwarranted overconfidence in ability to anticipate unintended harms

Consider that: “[O]pen acknowledgement of value judgements made in any assessment increases its usefulness as a risk communication tool.”



Source: Dangerous Science: Science Policy and Risk Analysis for Scientists and Engineers, D. J. Rozell, Ubiquity Press, February 2020, pp. x-xii.

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## Managing Outrage

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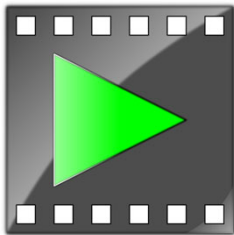
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## The Engine of Outrage

[psandman.com](http://psandman.com)



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*When dealing with people, let us remember we are not dealing with creatures of logic. We are dealing with creatures of emotion, creatures bristling with prejudices and motivated by pride and vanity.*

*Dale Carnegie*

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### Typical Outrage Emotions

- Anxiety
- Fear
- Defensiveness
- Frustration
- Lack of Control
- Anger

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### Traditional Outrage Management

- Ignore Them. You know there isn't a "real" problem.
- Bury Them in Data. Let them see for themselves that they're wrong.
- Impugn Their Motives. If they're local, call them ignorant or hysterical. If they're not local, call them radicals and outside agitators.
- Give Them What They Asked For. Fine, have it your way. We'll spend money on a problem that doesn't exist.

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## Strategies for Reducing Outrage

- Apologize if you did something wrong.
- Stake out the middle. Acknowledge what's true on the other side.
- Acknowledge sins of the past. They will let go when they are ready to move on.
- Acknowledge current problems. Don't omit, distort, or spin facts.

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## Strategies for Reducing Outrage (Cont.)

- Discuss achievements with humility. Where appropriate, acknowledge opposition's role in your change or achievement.
- Share control and be accountable. Look for ways to show you are not the only one at the switch.
- Pay attention to unvoiced concerns and underlying motives. If it's out on the table, you can deal with it.

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## Relieving Pressure

- Listen – Actively listen and show empathy
- Echo – Demonstrate that you heard
  - “Let me see if I’ve heard you right....”
  - “It sounds like some of the people here probably feel that....”
  - “I wonder if some of what I’ve heard tonight means that....”
- Validate – Feelings and Truths

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## Showing Empathy

**Caring** – “I’m very sorry to hear about...”

**Compassion** – “I can’t imagine how difficult that must be...”

**Concern** – “I assume you asked that question because you care about..., which I also care about.”

*Be yourself when showing you care.*

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## Managing Outrage



*The essence of empathic risk communication is understanding what your stakeholders are feeling, and then finding a way to sort-of acknowledge what they’re feeling – without trespassing on their emotional property.*

*Peter Sandman*

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## No Trespassing

**Not:**

“You must have felt afraid.”

**But:**

“That would be alarming...I could see why people may have felt afraid.”

**Not:**

“I understand why that made you angry.”

**But:**

“I can see why that would make someone angry.”

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## Even Subtle Empathy Makes a Difference

"It is important to note that the results of clinical studies with one drug in a given class are not necessarily applicable to others in a class."

- Peter Kim, president of Merck Research Laboratories

vs.

"It's hard to comprehend how two drugs in the same class could be so different. But they are each in a subclass of their own, and those different chemical structures translate into a different safety profile."

- Mitch Gandelman, Vice President of Pfizer

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# Jeopardy

## Communications Checkup

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## Dealing with the Public

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## Listening Stages

1. **Not listening:** Not paying attention to or ignoring the other person's communications.
2. **Pretend listening:** Acting like or giving the impression that you are paying attention to another person's communications, but in actuality not really paying attention to that individual.
3. **Partially listening:** Only focusing on part of the other person's communication or only giving it your divided attention.
4. **Focused listening:** Giving the other person your undivided attention to his or her communication.

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## Listening Stages (Cont.)

5. **Interpretive listening:** Going beyond just paying attention but really trying to understand what the other person is communicating.
6. **Interactive listening:** Being involved in the communications by asking clarifying questions or acknowledging understanding of the communication.
7. **Engaged listening:** Being fully engaged in communications involves listening to the other person's views, feelings, interpretations, values, etc., concerning the communication and sharing yours as well with the other person(s). In engaged listening, both parties are given the opportunity to fully express their views, feelings, and ideas.

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## People Who Feel They Weren't Heard

- Keep repeating what wasn't acknowledged.
- Become more emotional and accusatory.
- Become more fixed and rigid in their positions, and less open to alternatives.
- Begin to see you as an adversary.

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## Listening Handouts

- Behaviors that Facilitate Active Listening
- Roadblocks to Active Listening
- Listening Self Evaluation

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## When Listening is Most Important

- Lack of trust or relationship
- Perceived lack of shared interests
- Differing opinions
- Emotionally charged subjects
- Significant consequence

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## How to Listen Better

1. **Receive the message before reacting:** Withhold your evaluation until you are certain about what was said.
2. **Resist distraction by “trigger” words:** Ignore the temptation to retreat to your comfort zone.
3. **Ask “What can I do about this?” or “How can I use it?”** Find a way to make it relevant to your situation.
4. **Work hard and ration your time.** Make every effort to truly listen and be open about your commitment.

Hugh Mackay, “Why Don’t People Listen,” 1994. 99

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## How to Listen Better (Cont.)

5. **Harness your thought speed:** Focus your energy on understanding and summarizing rather than racing ahead in your mind.
6. **Empathize with the speaker:** Work to understand what the speaker is feeling. Match the energy and mood.
7. **Reflect what you've heard:** Show that you understand by summarizing what was said and confirming.

Hugh Mackay, "Why Don't People Listen," 1994.

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## Avoid Autobiographical Responses

- Evaluating
- Probing
- Advising
- Interpreting

Stephen R. Covey, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," 1989.

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## Nonverbal Communication



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## Nonverbal Message Delivery

- Can be more important than words
- Often more memorable than words
- Often more noticeable than words

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## Basics with the Body

- Stand or sit straight and lean in
- Maintain eye contact
- Level eye contact if possible
- Square up
- Open arms and hands
- Use hand gestures to support your messages

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## Read the Room

Observe non-verbal cues.

Ready to care about what you know?



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## Challenges for Meetings

- Stakeholders unaware of meeting
- Attendees unruly
- Attendees expect different process
- Attendees expect different outcome
- Attendees make personal attacks
- Agency staff unclear on roles
- Agency staff unsure how to respond
- Other?

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## Meeting Notifications

- Plan and invite early.
- Invite through multiple channels.
- Call people with invitations if possible, especially critics.
- Provide opportunities for people to share concerns ahead of time or afterwards.
- Continually update mailing/contact list.
- Share information on notification efforts in future communications.

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## Meeting Etiquette

- Share meeting norms/rules of engagement
- Review meeting purpose and limitations
- Partner with communication staff

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## Managing Expectations

- Explain meeting purpose and limitations.
- Prepare for unrelated requests.
- Emphasize what can be done.
- Show where you are in process and how input has been used so far.
- Explain how input from meeting will be used.

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## Handling Emotions and Disruptions

- Let people vent.
- Don't interrupt, be defensive, or argue.
- Respect their opinion and their right to hold it.
- Don't take their anger or emotion personally.
- Use empathetic listening skills.

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## Handling Emotions and Disruptions (Cont.)

- Ask open-ended questions to clarify the source of attendee's concern, anxiety, fear or anger.
- Create exit strategies for unmanageable disruptions in advance.
- Plan for security.

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## Nondiscrimination Accommodations

- Physical disabilities
- Language barriers
- Cultural considerations

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## Beware the “Trust Busters”

- Condescending comments
  - “Calm down.”
  - “I can’t understand you when you shout.”
  - “You don’t seem to understand.”
- Promises you can’t keep
- Long-winded answers
- Humor

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## Beware the “Trust Busters” (Cont.)

- Push-back answers:
  - Not “Could you be clearer?” but “I’m not sure I understand. Can you tell me more?”
  - Not “What you need to know is” but “We have additional information here...”
  - Not “That’s news to us.” but “I wasn’t aware of that. I’ll look into it further and get back to you.”
- Jargon
- Defensiveness
  - “You’ve got it wrong. That’s not what we’re doing.”
  - “Just give me a chance to explain.”
  - “If I can get a word in here, I can tell you what we’re really doing.”

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## For Discussion

**ATTENDEE:** "My wife was just diagnosed with cancer. She is the fourth person in this town in the last five years."

**RESPONSE 1:** "None of the emissions covered in the permit application are carcinogens."

**RESPONSE 2:** "Our epidemiologist, Dr. Smith, is with us tonight to address concerns about cancer if you have questions."

**RESPONSE 3:** "I'm very sorry to hear that."

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## For Discussion

**ATTENDEE:** "You're an idiot."

**RESPONSE 1:** "Clearly you're upset. What can we do to help you?"

**RESPONSE 2:** "We will not tolerate that kind of language and personal attack."

**RESPONSE 3:** (Say nothing because that statement doesn't deserve a response.)

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## For Discussion

**ATTENDEE:** Continues speaking emotionally without stop during a Q&A session of an informational meeting. Others are waiting to ask questions or speak.

**RESPONSE 1:** "Thank you for the comments. We have to move on so that others have to time to speak as well..."

**RESPONSE 2:** "I can see why that's been a source of frustration. Can we come back to this with you..."

**RESPONSE 3:** "We're past the three-minute mark. We have to move on to the next person."

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## For Discussion

- ATTENDEE:** "This is just another case of you rubber stamping permits to pollute in a minority neighborhood..."
- RESPONSE 1:** "Actually, we've continued to expand the public participation process and tighten air quality standards for applicants across the state. On top of that, for communities that fall within EJ areas, as this one does, we've added additional..."
- RESPONSE 2:** "We don't rubber stamp permits..."
- RESPONSE 3:** "Can you explain a little more about that so I can better understand how you are seeing this?..."

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## Dealing with the Media

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## Media Perspective



*Journalism is a process in which a reporter uses verification and storytelling to make a subject newsworthy.*

*American Press Institute*

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## Media Categories

- Traditional (Mass) Media: Mainstream media sources available in print, broadcast, online (newspapers, magazines, television, radio)
- Online-only Media: Online news sites and widely-followed blogs that report on top news stories, these do not have an offline version

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## Media Categories (Continued)

- Social Media: Includes social networking sites (Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.), online discussion forums, content-sharing sites (YouTube, etc.) and micro-blogging sites (Twitter, Weibo, etc.)
- Owned Media: Websites, blogs, software applications or “apps” owned and controlled by a brand or a company that is not a media company
- Search Engines: Google, Yahoo!, Bing, Baidu, etc.

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## Are the Mass Media Important?

- Today’s mass media contribute significantly to “setting the tone” for how stakeholders view risks.
- Science and the media are often at odds, yet the media tend to present risk information as facts.
- It is the very nature of the media to be skeptical and raise risk issues.
- Once the media’s interpretation of a risk is widely accepted, it may be very hard to alter perceptions.

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## Role Of The Mass Media

- Interprets risk to the public (information source)
- Reports existing information (alerts the public)
- Influences issue portrayal (educates the public)
- Highlights or restricts information (gatekeeper)
- Proposes solutions (advocacy)

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## How The Mass Media Work

- Event focused and looking for drama
- Controversy oriented (villain & victim)
- Seeks balance and opposing views
- Condenses and simplifies
- Personalizes and sensationalizes
- Deadline driven and competitive
- Independent and profit oriented

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## How The Mass Media Translate Risk Information

- They inform, educate and propose solutions.
- Sometimes they fail to correctly translate scientific information into layman's language.
- Especially in crisis situations, the mass media tend to be less cooperative.
- Often the media welcome risk issues that create controversy and hence sell well.
- Social media better tool for communicating risk?

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## Social Media - Benefits

- Quick
- Unaltered
- Boundless reach
- Increased participation
- Rich data

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## Social Media - Challenges

- Skewed discourse
- Lazy journalism
- Lazy debate
- Misleading and untrue information
- Censorship

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## Why Media Interviews?

Every media interview presents a valuable opportunity to convey carefully chosen messages to specific audiences using the reporter as the filter.

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### Three Musts In Media Interviews

- Get your key messages in early
- Stay positive, never act defensive
- Remain message oriented, not question oriented

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### Journalists Need Your Help

- They often have limited background information regarding your organization.
- They often have limited scientific and technical knowledge and experience.
- They often have limited access to important risk related information.
- They usually want to be accurate and therefore appreciate fact sheets and other relevant information.

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### What to Expect

- Each outlet has a different mission.
- You can't control what's written.
- Is a response necessary?

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## Great Spokespeople:

- Authentic—genuinely believe their message
- Natural—same on camera as off
- Flexible—adapt to changing circumstances
- Speak to audience—not the boss or peers
- Self edit—simplify but don't "dumb down"
- Compelling—engage their audiences

Source: The Media Training Bible: 101 Things You Absolutely, Positively Need to Know Before Your Next Interview by Brad Phillips, CEO, Throughline Group.

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## Preparation and Practice

Media interview success is first and foremost the result of effective preparation and repeated practice. Those who don't sufficiently prepare and practice all too often end up regretting it.

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## Bridging - Conjunctive Words

- And
- But
- Therefore
- Let me put it this way
- In fact
- In other words

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## Bridging Example 1

Question:

- Is it true that your agency is hiding crucial information from the public?

Answer:

- Absolutely not. In fact we have been...

↑                      ↑  
**Emphatic "No"**    **Taking it to a positive message point**

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## Bridging Example 2

Question:

- Are you doing everything possible to limit risks associated with these dangerous chemicals?

Answer:

- Yes, we are. And we will continue to...

↑                      ↑  
**Emphatic "YES"**    **Taking it to a positive message point**

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## Hooking



- Hooking is a technique that gets the reporter to follow-up on your first point allowing you to address a second point/deliver a second message.
- The audience will regard the interview as incomplete if the reporter does not follow-up regarding the second point.
- Deliver the more important message first in case the reporter does unexpectedly not follow-up on the second point.

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## Hooking Example

Question:

- Why was your agency not able to prevent this incident?

Answer:

- “There are two things I want to mention in regard to your question. First, we take safety very seriously... Second, ...

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## Flagging



- Flagging means alerting your audience to what you regard as most important.
- Your choice of words, intonation, volume, and non- verbal signals emphasize the importance of a given message.
- Many people use this technique unconsciously on a day-to-day basis, but deliberately employing it during a media interview can be difficult.

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## Flagging Example

Question:

- What are you going to do to ensure this does not happen again?

Answer:

- “The critical point is we are conducting a thorough...
- “What I want everyone to know is that we regard the health of our employees and the community...

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### Media Interview Do's

- Do be professional at all times
- Do assume that you are always "ON"
- Do fortify answers with examples
- Do ask for clarification when needed
- Do prepare and use talking points
- Do use first name if appropriate

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### Media Interview Don'ts

- Don't use "fancy" language
- Don't repeat the negative
- Don't attack critics, only the issues
- Don't use absolutes
- Don't ever lie
- Don't overuse humor

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### Challenging Air Quality Issues

Examples and Discussion:

- Permitting & Regulatory Challenges
- Exceptional events
  - Public & Media Perspective

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## Air Quality Permits

- **Public input in decision-making**
  - What opportunities are available? Are more needed?
- **Understanding regulatory aspects**
  - Is more public education necessary?
- **Understanding technical aspects**
  - Can more be done to inform the public?
- **Application of HAP Rule**
  - Why isn't air toxic rule applied more often?

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## Example: Exceptional Events

Public and media perspective on wildfire emission contributions to attainment and maintenance of air quality standards.

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The Guardian

## Revealed: how a little-known pollution rule keeps the air dirty for millions of Americans

Major investigation shows local governments are increasingly exploiting a loophole in the Clean Air Act, leaving more than 21 million Americans with air that's dirtier than they realize

- **What you need to know about loophole hiding extent of US wildfire pollution**

Molly Peterson, Dillon Bergin and Emily Zentner with graphics by Andrew Witherspoon

Mon 16 Oct 2023 06:00 EDT



☑ 'The true conditions on the ground in terms of the air that people are breathing in ... is an increasingly unhealthy situation.' Composite: The Guardian/ Andri Tambunan

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## Exceptional Events Challenge

### Claimed Problems with Exceptional Events Rule:

“The true conditions on the ground in terms of the air that people are breathing in ... is an increasingly unhealthy situation.”

“...local regulators [avoid] having to tighten rules on local emissions.”

“Scrubbing smoke from regulatory accounting allows local governments and business to continue as usual, since the practice obscures the toll wildfires take on public health.”

Excerpts from The Guardian “Revealed” air pollution article, 10/16/23

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## Exceptional Events – EPA Response

“EPA said it takes all air pollution seriously.”

“Wildland fire and smoke pose increasing challenges and human health impacts in communities all around the country..

“EPA works closely with other federal agencies, state and local health departments, tribal nations, and other partners to provide information, tools, and resources to support communities in preparing for, responding to, and reducing health impacts from wildland fire and smoke.”

Excerpts from The Guardian “Revealed” air pollution article, 10/16/23

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## Exceptional Events – EPA Response

“EPA also pointed to ‘mitigation plans’, in which air districts that have experienced repeated exceptional events must create plans for educating and notifying the public about the pollution risk, as well as ‘steps to identify, study, and implement mitigating measures’ like limiting the use of wood-burning stoves and wetting down unpaved roads before dust storms.”

Excerpts from The Guardian “Revealed” air pollution article, 10/16/23

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## Exceptional Events – “Solutions”

### Proposed “Solutions” to Exceptional Events Rule:

Governments could “make a new cost-benefit analysis.... to boost spending significantly to manage public and private lands to minimize smoke”.

Be honest about “how smoke is changing air over time”.

Keep decisions from being made “behind the scenes”.

Excerpts from The Guardian “Revealed” air pollution article, 10/16/23

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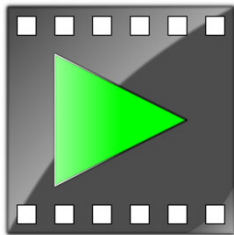
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## How did they do?



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## Exercises

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## Public Meeting Disruptions



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### **3. Exercise**

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## EXERCISE IN AIR QUALITY RISK COMMUNICATION: PERMIT TO INSTALL ADDITIONAL UNITS AT STORAGE TANK FARM

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### Background

Bulk Storage Industries (BSI) operates a tank farm near a riverfront neighborhood in a historically industrialized area. The tanks contain a variety of petroleum-based products, including oil and asphalt. BSI is not the only operation near the neighborhood, but it is the most visible and well known. Among other operations are various storage and distribution centers and a substantial bus garage. Air permits for nearby sources regulate a variety of VOCs and particulate matter.

Up until recently, complaints about BSI have been infrequent and fleeting. However, since the company applied for a permit to expand the tank farm, a regional environmental watchdog group, Advocates for Environmental Equity (AEE), began raising awareness about the operation. Many of the neighborhoods around BSI fall within environmental justice communities, and AEE is claiming that the Department has been rubber-stamping permits in this community for decades.

With the help of AEE, some residents in the community have been logging odor complaints and posting these, along with other information, on social media pages targeting BSI. They have raised concerns with City Council and demanded that the Council take action.

### Assignment

Imagine that you are participating in a public meeting about the draft permit. A project overview has just been presented, and attendees are free to ask questions before the public hearing portion of the meeting begins. Answer the following questions from the public and the media, using your imagination regarding facts and background information to help fill in the blanks.

From the public.

1. We can't even open our windows half the time. Would you want to live near this facility?
2. Whether there are permit violations or not, there are no "safe" levels of carcinogenic VOCs. How can you justify adding more chemicals into air in this neighborhood?
3. We know that there is a cancer cluster right here. Why aren't you doing an epidemiology study?

From journalists:

1. Residents living near BSI are saying that their calls to the Department about odors have been unanswered. What do you say to residents claiming their calls are being ignored?
2. AEE says that the neighborhood around BSI already shouldered more pollution than nearby communities. Your online database seems to support this claim. Is that fair to these people?
3. What's the process for determining whether the permit will be approved for the expansion?

#### **4. Factors Affecting Risk Concerns**

<b>Seen as Less Risky</b>	<b>Seen as More Risky</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Voluntary</li><li>• Individual control</li><li>• Fair</li><li>• Naturally occurring</li><li>• High trust in source</li><li>• Familiar</li><li>• Affects everybody</li><li>• High personal benefit</li><li>• Chronic</li><li>• Positive experience</li><li>• Morally irrelevant</li><li>• Not memorable</li><li>• Responsive process</li><li>• Transparency</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Involuntary</li><li>• No or little control</li><li>• Unfair</li><li>• Created by humans</li><li>• Low trust in source</li><li>• Unfamiliar</li><li>• Affects children</li><li>• Low personal benefit</li><li>• Catastrophic</li><li>• Negative experience</li><li>• Morally relevant</li><li>• Memorable</li><li>• Unresponsive process</li><li>• Secrecy</li></ul>

## **5. Message Mapping Form and Example**

## Sample Message Map

**Key message 1**

**Key message 2**

**Key message 3**

**Supporting Fact 1-1**

**Supporting Fact 2-1**

**Supporting Fact 3-1**

**Supporting Fact 1-2**

**Supporting Fact 2-2**

**Supporting Fact 3-2**

**Supporting Fact 1-3**

**Supporting Fact 2-3**

**Supporting Fact 3-3**

## Sample Message Map – Smallpox

<b>Stakeholder: General Public.</b>		
<b>Question or Concern: How contagious is smallpox?</b>		
<b>Key message 1</b>	<b>Key message 2</b>	<b>Key message 3</b>
Smallpox spreads slowly compared with measles or the flu.	This allows time for us to trace contacts and vaccinate those people who have come in contact.	Vaccination within 3-4 days of contact will generally prevent the disease.
<b>Supporting fact 1-1</b>	<b>Supporting fact 2-1</b>	<b>Supporting fact 3-1</b>
People are only infectious when the rash appears and they are ill.	The incubation period for the disease is 10-14 days.	People who have never been vaccinated are the most important ones to vaccinate.
<b>Supporting fact 1-2</b>	<b>Supporting fact 2-2</b>	<b>Supporting fact 3-2</b>
It requires hours of face-to-face contact.	Resources for finding people are available.	Adults who were vaccinated as children may still have some immunity to smallpox.
<b>Supporting fact 1-3</b>	<b>Supporting fact 2-3</b>	<b>Supporting fact 3-3</b>
There are no asymptomatic carriers.	Finding people who have been exposed and vaccinating them is the successful approach.	Adequate vaccine is on hand, and the supply is increasing.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention et al. (2003).



## Sample Message Map – West Nile Virus

<b>Stakeholder: General Public.</b>		
<b>Question or Concern: What can people do to prevent West Nile Virus?</b>		
<b>Key message 1</b>	<b>Key message 2</b>	<b>Key message 3</b>
Remove standing water.	Wear protective clothing.	Use insect repellent.
<b>Supporting fact 1-1</b>	<b>Supporting fact 2-1</b>	<b>Supporting fact 3-1</b>
Remove old tires which collect water and serve as breeding grounds for mosquitoes.	Wear long sleeved shirts.	Repellents containing DEET are recommended.
<b>Supporting fact 1-2</b>	<b>Supporting fact 2-2</b>	<b>Supporting fact 3-2</b>
Empty or clean flower pots and bird baths daily.	Wear long pants.	Use 23% DEET.
<b>Supporting fact 1-3</b>	<b>Supporting fact 2-3</b>	<b>Supporting fact 3-3</b>
Empty and clean cat/dog water bowls daily.	Especially at dawn and dusk.	Do not use repellents that do not contain DEET.

Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency, EPA/625/R-06/012, August 2007.  
<https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPURL.cgi?Dockey=60000IOS.txt>.

## Sample Message Map – PFAS

<b>Stakeholder: General Public.</b> <b>Question or Concern: What are PFAS and why is the state concerned about them?</b>		
<b>Key message 1</b>	<b>Key message 2</b>	<b>Key message 3</b>
PFAS are a family of human-made chemicals in many products used by consumers and industry.	PFAS are emerging contaminants of concern.	PFAS may adversely impact human health.
<b>Supporting fact 1-1</b>	<b>Supporting fact 2-1</b>	<b>Supporting fact 3-1</b>
PFAS are a large group of thousands of manufactured compounds, produced and used for over 60 years.	PFAS are contaminants of active scientific research. Scientific knowledge is changing rapidly.	Some PFAS can build up in the body (bio accumulate) and take a long time to leave the body.
<b>Supporting fact 1-2</b>	<b>Supporting fact 2-2</b>	<b>Supporting fact 3-2</b>
PFAS have been used in coatings for textiles, paper products, and cookware and to formulate some firefighting foams, and have a range of applications in the aerospace, photographic imaging, semiconductor, automotive, construction, electronics, and aviation industries.	Laboratory methods may or may not exist to detect all the PFAS contaminants that we know about; methods are developing and evolving with the emerging science.	Some PFAS have been found to impact fetal development and are passed to babies through nursing and bottles.
<b>Supporting fact 1-3</b>	<b>Supporting fact 2-3</b>	<b>Supporting fact 3-3</b>
PFAS are found throughout the environment, in people, and in animals and fish.	Federal and state regulations are changing as the scientific knowledge evolves; this leads to guidance and recommendations that may vary across the country.	Studies in exposed humans suggest that some PFAS may cause high cholesterol, higher liver enzymes in blood, decreased response to vaccines, decreased birth weight, and testicular and kidney cancer.

Source: <https://rct-1.itrcweb.org/appendix-d-key-message-mapping-guide-with-pfas-specific-example/>.

## **6. Listening Do's and Don'ts**

## Behaviors that Facilitate Active Listening

Behavior	Example
Encouraging	"Can you tell me more?" "And then what happened?"
Clarifying	"When did this happen?" "By impacts you mean...?"
Restating/Paraphrasing	"So you would like us to provide these materials in Spanish. Is that right?" "You thought that this action was required at this time?"
Reflecting/Echoing	"This has really been frustrating for you." "You sound disappointed." "I hear the anger in your voice..."
Summarizing	"These seem to be the key ideas you have expressed..." "Your main priorities were..."
Validating	"I appreciate your willingness to resolve this issue."
Questioning	"How did that surprise you?" "What made you think that?" "Where exactly did this happen?"

## Roadblocks to Active Listening

Behavior	Example
Ordering, Demanding	"You need to..." "You must..." " "Stop talking like that..."
Warning, Threatening	"If you keep that up..." "Unless you stop doing that..."
Admonishing, Moralizing	"It's your responsibility to..." "We're all accountable for..."
Persuading, Arguing, Lecturing	"The facts are that..."
Advising, Giving Answers, Proposing Solutions	"What you should do..." "The best way to deal with that is..."
Criticizing, Disagreeing, Contradicting	"That's absolutely wrong..." "You're not thinking about this correctly..."
Praising, Agreeing	"You've done a good job of..." "That's absolutely correct, in fact..."
Reassuring, Sympathizing	"You shouldn't worry about..." "You'll feel better when..."
Judging, Evaluating	"You're being very unfair..." "You're acting like..."
Interpreting, Diagnosing	"You're just feeling that way because..." "Your problem is..."
Probing, Questioning	"Why do you feel that way?" "Are you sure you have all the facts?"
Sarcasm, Kidding, Humor	"What are we complaining about this time?" "Aren't we Miss Sunshine Today?"
Diverting, Avoiding	"Let's stay focused on the important stuff." "You think that's bad, let me tell you..."

# Self-Evaluation

## Bad Habits When Listening

Following is a list of ten bad habits of listening. Check those listening bad habits that you are sometimes guilty of committing when communicating with others. Be honest with yourself!

- I interrupt often or try to finish the other person's sentences.
- I jump to conclusions.
- I am often overly parental and answer with advice, even when not requested.
- I make up my mind before I have all the information.
- I am a compulsive note taker.
- I don't give any response afterward, even if I say I will.
- I am impatient.
- I lose my temper when hearing things I don't agree with.
- I try to change the subject to something that relates to my own experiences.
- I think more about my reply while the other person is speaking than what he or she is saying.
- I ask questions to determine the relevance of the information for me, not to better understand what the other person is saying.

## **7. Examples of Bridging Statements for Media Interviews**

## Examples of Bridging Statements

Bridging statements are transitions used by spokespersons to return to key messages or to redirect when discussions with journalists move off course.

- “What matters most in this situation is ...”
- “Here’s what we know right now...”
- “Let me put all this in perspective by saying ...”
- “Before we continue, let me take a step back and repeat that ...”
- “This is an important point because ...”
- “Let me just add to this that ...”
- “I think it would be more correct to say ...”
- “In this context, it is essential that I note ...”
- “Before we leave the subject, let me add that ...”
- “While...X...is important, it is also important to remember ...Y...”
- “It’s true that...X...but it is also true that ...Y...”
- “I don’t know about X, but what I can tell you about...”
- “I can’t speak for X, but from our perspective...”
- “I can’t speculate, but I can tell you that...”



## **8. Links to Free Risk Communication Resources**

## FREE ON-LINE RESOURCES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RISK COMMUNICATION

### U.S. EPA Risk Communication Guidance Documents

Comprehensive Risk Communication Guide

[Risk Communication in Action: The Risk Communication Workbook](#)

Air Pollution and Health Risk Discussions

[https://www3.epa.gov/ttn/atw/3\\_90\\_022.html](https://www3.epa.gov/ttn/atw/3_90_022.html)

[https://www3.epa.gov/ttn/atw/3\\_90\\_023.html](https://www3.epa.gov/ttn/atw/3_90_023.html)

[https://www3.epa.gov/ttn/atw/3\\_90\\_024.html](https://www3.epa.gov/ttn/atw/3_90_024.html)

### Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) Website

<https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/index.asp>

Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) Manual and

Tools <https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/resources/index.asp>

### Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Interstate Technology and Regulatory Council Website Link on Risk Communication

<https://pfas-1.itrcweb.org/14-risk-communication/>

Interstate Technology and Regulatory Council Risk Communication Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqOaPip-z5g&feature=youtu.be>

### Environmental Justice

EPA Environmental Justice site with access to EJSCREEN

<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>

### Peter Sandman Collection of Works

Risk communication expert Peter Sandman's collection of works

[www.petersandman.com](http://www.petersandman.com)

