

Facing the Media

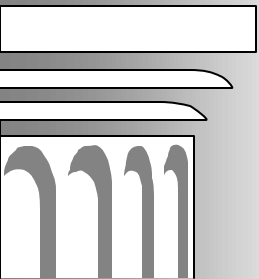
A Course To Prepare CDC
Spokespersons for Crisis
and Emergency Situations

Introduction and Understanding a Crisis



Learning Objectives

- Communicate the importance of the spokesperson and his or her roles and responsibilities during a crisis or emergency.
- Provide the opportunity to practice message delivery in a realistic, high-pressure, on-camera training situation, and receive individualized feedback on performance.



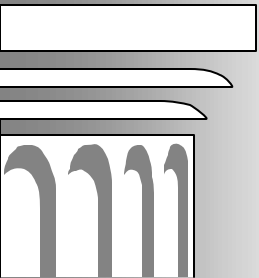
Training Agenda

Morning

- On-camera press-conference training
- Understanding a crisis
- Your role as a spokesperson

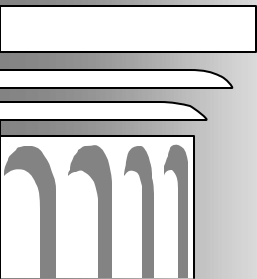
Afternoon

- Message development
- Individual on-camera training
 - Scenario
 - 5-minute interviews



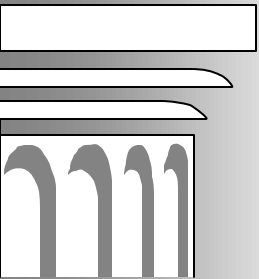
Role of Emergency Risk Communication

- Provide the public with information to make the best possible decisions within nearly impossible time constraints and to accept the imperfect nature of choice.
- Use all the potential channels of dissemination to get messages out:
 - Media
 - Others



Reactions of the General Public During a Crisis

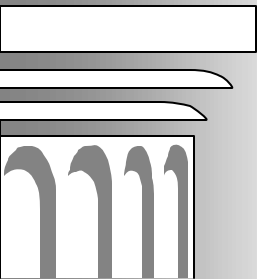
- Decisionmaking is different:
 - People simplify.
 - They cling to current beliefs.
 - They remember what they have seen or experienced before.
 - First messages and messengers carry more weight.
 - Perception becomes reality.
- In “fight or flight” moments of an emergency, more information leads to decreased anxiety.



How People Behave, Feel, and Think

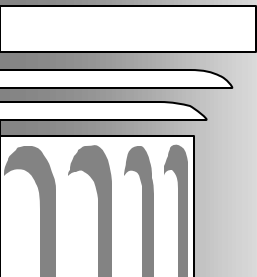
People:

- Seldom panic
- Undergo denial
- Experience fear, anxiety, confusion, and dread
- Feel hopeless or helpless
- Rehearse vicariously
 - People now “experience” local crises and mentally rehearse recommended courses of action (e.g., worried well).



Risk Acceptance

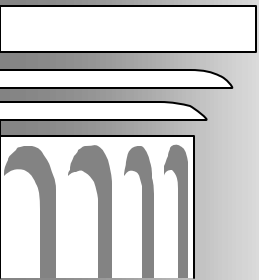
- Dying by falling coconut or dying by shark
- Natural vs. man-made
- Fairly vs. unfairly distributed
- Familiar vs. exotic
- Controlled by self vs. outside control of self
- Affecting adults vs. affecting children



Post 9/11 Suspicion

Most incidences will be suspect for bioterrorism:

- Outbreak of a rare disease
- Seasonal disease at the wrong time
- Unusual age distribution
- Unusual clinical symptoms
- Unusual epidemiologic features
- Outbreak in a region normally not seen

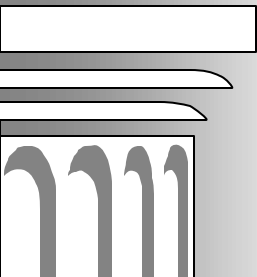


Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

Don't overreassure.

A high estimate of harm modified downward is more acceptable than a low estimate of harm modified upward.

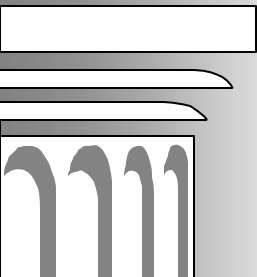
“It's possible that tens of thousands could be afflicted before this is over, but right now only 100 are sick.”



Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

State continued concern before stating reassuring updates.

“Although we’re not out of the woods yet, we have seen a declining number of cases each day this week.”

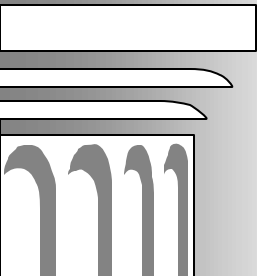


Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

Confidence vs. uncertainty.

Express the uncertainty of the situation and confident belief in the “process” to fix it, and address public safety concerns.

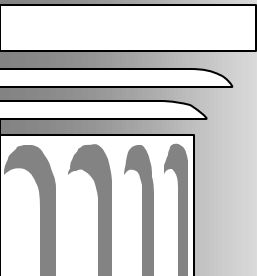
“It must be awful to hear we can’t answer that question right now, but here’s what we are doing to find out . . .”



Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

Give people things to do. Anxiety is reduced by action and a restored sense of control.

- Symbolic behaviors
- Preparatory behaviors
- Contingent “if, then” behaviors
- Three-part action plan:
 - Must do X
 - Should do Y
 - Can do Z



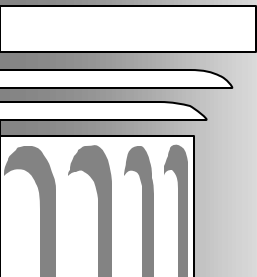
Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

Allow people the right to feel fear.

Don't pretend that they're not afraid, and don't tell them that they shouldn't be.

Acknowledge the fear, and give contextual information.

“We’re all frightened by this, but here’s what we know . . .”

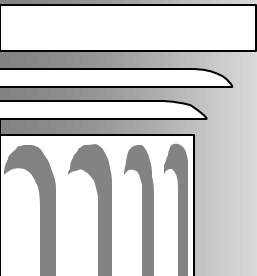


Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

Ask more of people.

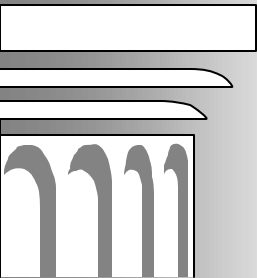
Ask people to bear the risk and work towards solutions with you.

“We don’t know if this is the last case, but right now it’s important for all of us to continue on with our lives . . .”



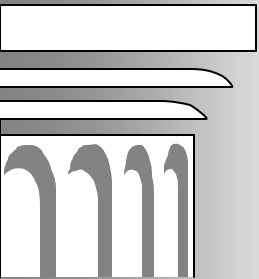
Disasters Are Media Events

- Need the media to be there.
- Tell the public about important protective actions.
- Know how to reach their audiences and what their audiences need.
- Respect the immediacy of their needs for information.
- A sensational story will create a pack mentality.



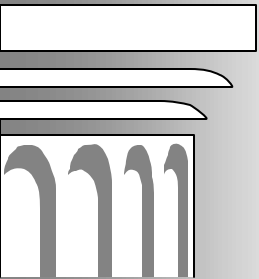
Media Genres

- Broadcast—TV and radio are the news sources of most people during a crisis:
 - Deadline driven.
 - Pressure of visual needs, needs action.
 - Live or taped interviews.
 - Tight deadlines mean little time for verification.
 - Radio gives an audio sense of “being there.”
- TV crawlers mean news is out immediately.



Media Genres

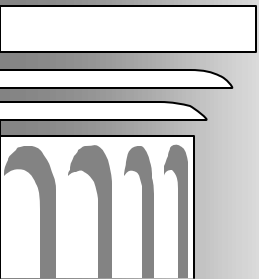
- Print—Newspapers and magazines require sometimes hours instead of minutes to file:
 - Reporters are more likely to verify information and to call other sources.
 - Many will file early for online editions.
- Internet—It has speeded up everything and has changed how reporters get information; instant news can be picked up by anyone.



Media Myths During a Crisis

Experienced reporters will be assigned to give a balanced coverage.

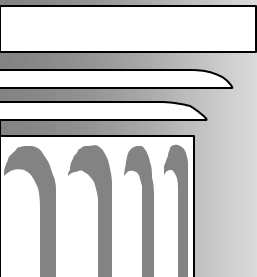
- News does not set up daily for crisis coverage.
- Newsroom sends who is around and available first, then gets its experts on it.
- A sensational story rarely stops for balance.



Media Myths During a Crisis

The media will take the time to understand what we are going through.

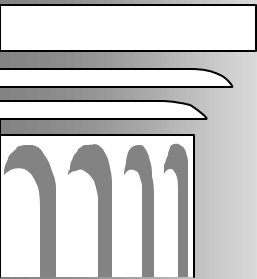
- Deadline pressures mean that they will believe and go with almost any information.
- Beat competition, pressure of a 24-hour news cycle.
- Facts get sorted out later.



Media Myths During a Crisis

The story will be better if we avoid talking to the media until we have all the facts together.

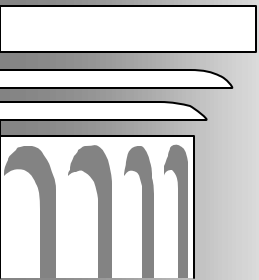
- The media won't wait.
- They'll use what they get and put it on the air.
- They'll be there again when the information is updated.



Media Myths During a Crisis

Reporters verify facts and work just as they do during regular assignments, only faster.

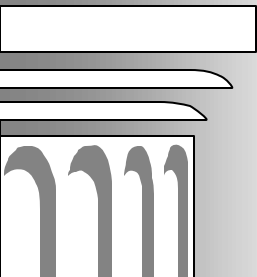
- Reporters go with what they have at the time.
- They come back later for new breaking information.
- They move on to the next aspect of the crisis.



Media Myths During a Crisis

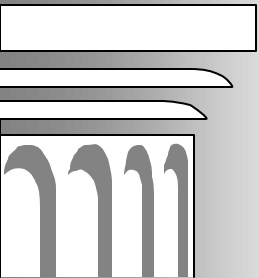
News will play it exactly as I say it.

- No matter how factual your statements are, they will be filtered through a reporter's understanding.
- When under crisis deadlines, reporters won't spend a lot of time going through complex information for background.
- Reporters look for good sound bites and quotes.



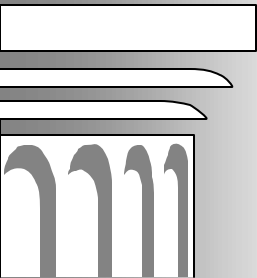
What the Public Asks First

- 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?



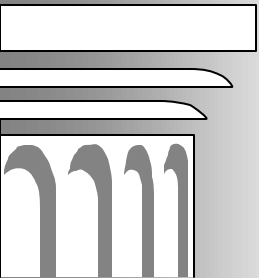
What the Media Ask First

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



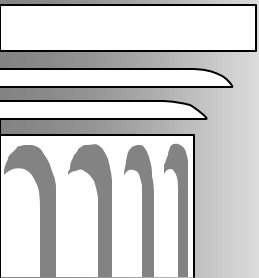
What the Media Now Surely Ask in a Health Crisis

- Is this bioterrorism?
- Could this be bioterrorism?
- Are you investigating this situation as possible bioterrorism?
- Is the FBI involved in this investigation?
- When will you be able to tell us whether or not this situation is bioterrorism?



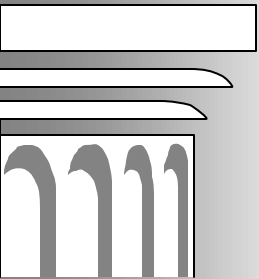
The Spokesperson's Role

- Embody the organization, e.g., “CDC exists to make people safer and healthier. Personnel have history of going in harm’s way to detect disease and prevent its spread. It is humble in going where asked. It has credibility as disease detectives and as a source of sound advice.”
- Be trustworthy, credible, empathetic, and committed.
- Be human.
- Deliver the important messages!



Communicating in a Crisis Is Different

- Empathy
- What you are doing to solve the problem and actions for people to take
- Facts and fast, credible information
- Process for managing the problem and for providing more information
- Limit intake of information (People remember about three bits.)



So How Do We Initially Communicate in a Crisis?

Simply

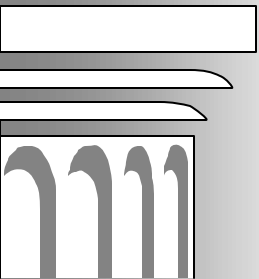
Timely

Accurately

Repeatedly

Credibly

Consistently



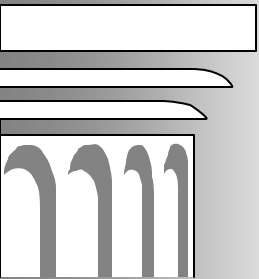
Your Role as a Spokesperson



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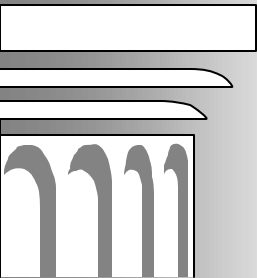
Effective Spokespeople Are Not Born; They Are Made

- It's not “acting natural.”
- Strong spokespeople have knowledge, skills, and practice.



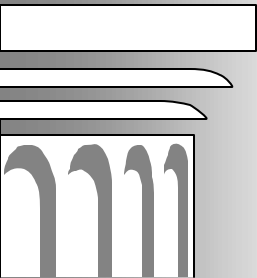
“A journalist is the lookout on the bridge of the ship of state. He notes the passing sail, the little things of interest that dot the horizon in fine weather. . . . He peers through the fog and storm to give warning of dangers ahead. . . . He is there to watch over the safety and welfare of the people who trust him.”

—Joseph Pulitzer



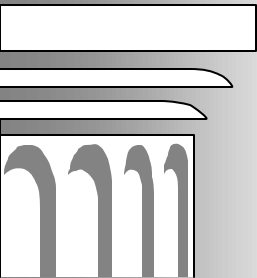
“They’re liars by instinct. They’re cowards by nature. They’re yellow journalists. They’re unbelievable. They’re irresponsible. . . . They’re reprehensible. They don’t have a patriotic impulse in the hand that writes the garbage they bring. They stink like a mackerel.”

—Al Binder
Campaign Manager



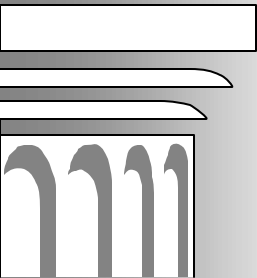
Understanding the Media

- The news media want:
 - Access to experts and information.
 - Stories with audience appeal.
 - To beat their competitors.
 - Professional recognition.



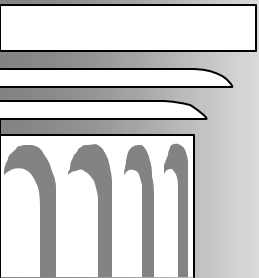
Spokesperson Goals

- Educate target audiences
- Accurate coverage
- Fair treatment



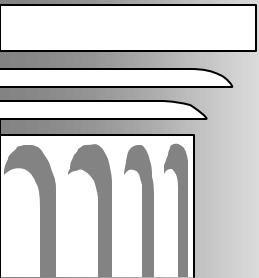
Spokesperson Offerings

- Information
- Credibility



A Formula for Failure

- Not responding quickly
- Being unprepared
- Waffling a question
- Interrupting a reporter on deadline



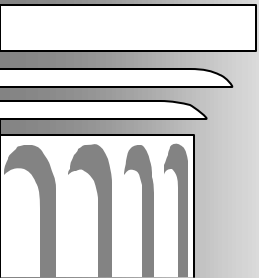
Media Presentation



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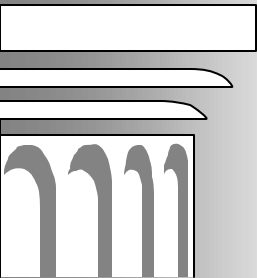
The Elements of an Effective Presentation

- Preparation
- Practice
- Performance



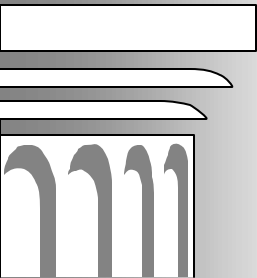
Preparation

- Message
- Environment
- Target audience
- Tailoring the presentation



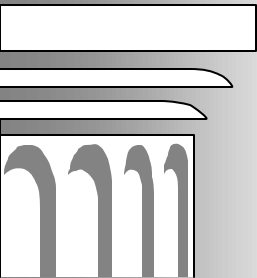
Preparation

- The message:
 - Develop key message points.
 - Personalize or localize.
 - Prepare a Q & A.



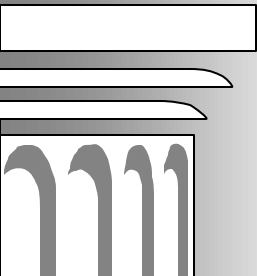
Preparation

- The environment:
 - Ground rules
 - Interviewer style
 - Program format
 - Physical layout



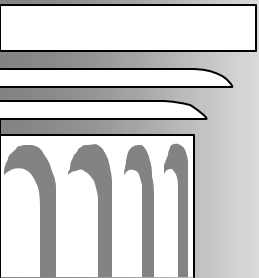
Basic Ground Rules

- Set limits on format and time.
- Agree on location.
- Establish topics/subjects.
- Include no new documents or reports.
- Ask who else will be or has been interviewed.



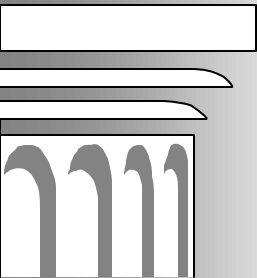
Preparation

- The audiences:
 - Media audience
 - Target audience

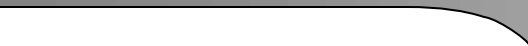


Preparation

- Tailor the presentation:
 - Consider the medium.
 - Respect the ground rules.
 - Focus on format.
 - Use visuals.



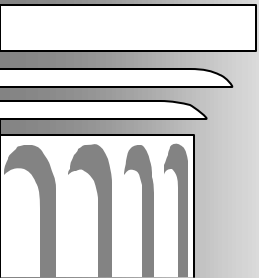
Media Presentation



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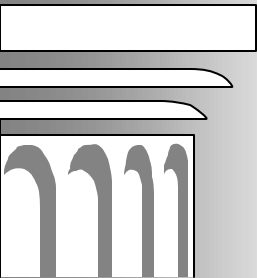
Practice

- Rehearse your message.
- Practice Q & A.
- Sharpen your style.



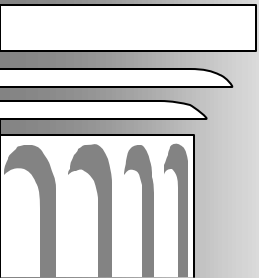
Practice

- Rehearsal:
 - Rehearse with a colleague.
 - Emphasize your message points.
 - Localize or personalize.
 - Speak to the public.
 - Avoid jargon, acronyms, and statistics.



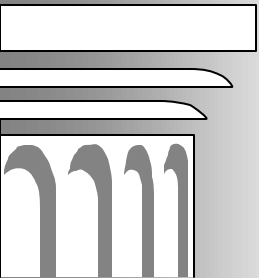
Practice

- The Q & A
 - Use the answer formula:
 - ♦ A conclusion
 - ♦ An explanation/transition
 - ♦ Your core message
 - Prepare to say “I don’t know.”



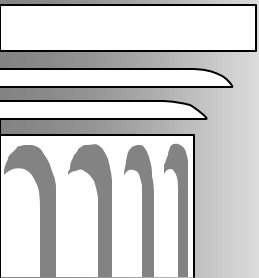
Practice

- Presentation style:
 - Stress brevity.
 - Keep eye contact.
 - Do not use notes.
 - Speak in common terms.
 - Maintain a good posture.



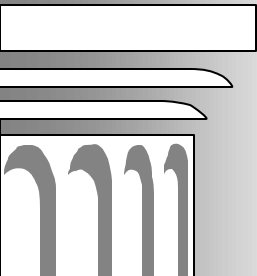
Performance

- During an interview:
 - Focus on your message points.
 - Listen.
 - Look directly at the interviewer.
 - Speak in common terms.



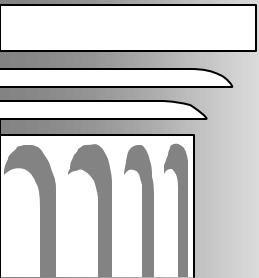
Performance

- During an interview:
 - Avoid unnecessary gestures.
 - Never repeat or introduce a negative.
 - Don't be afraid to say "I don't know."
 - Stay cool.
 - Record your performance.



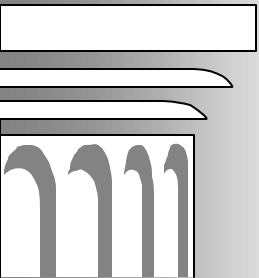
Performance

- Interview followup:
 - Request a tape of your interview.
 - Send a followup letter.
 - Provide information.
 - Critique yourself.



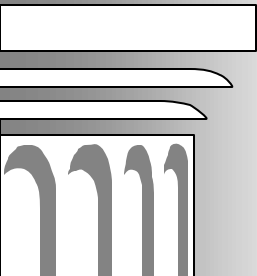
Telephone Interview Tips

- Know who is on the other end of the line.
- Ask whether you are being recorded.
- Ask when and where the information will be used.
- Spell out difficult names and technical terms and phrases.
- Limit the time available for the interview.
- Be certain to ask for feedback from reporters to ensure that they have understood your points.



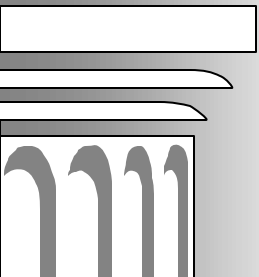
Radio Interview Tips

- A live interview is very different from a taped interview.
- Watch out for verbal pauses—
“Uh,” “Um,” and “You know.”
- Radio will not be as in-depth as print.
- Be careful not to repeat the negatives in a reporter’s question.



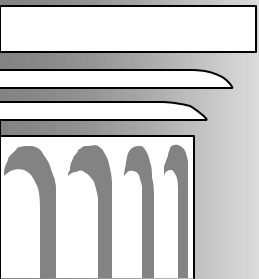
Coping With Sticky Situations

- The interviewer expects you to comment on issues beyond your expertise.
 - Inform the interviewer that you are only prepared to answer questions related to your expertise as a spokesperson.
 - Transition into key message points.
 - If the interviewer persists, say “I’m sorry; I’m unable to answer your question.”
 - Stick to the substance of your message.



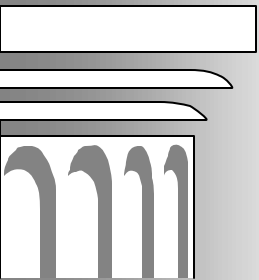
Coping With Sticky Situations

- The interviewer is unprepared and asks irrelevant questions.
 - Take control by reaffirming your expertise.
 - Stress your key message points, feeding him questions about your topic.
 - Involve the interviewer by asking questions about his experiences and concerns.



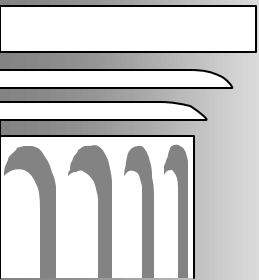
Coping With Sticky Situations

- The interviewer/guest keeps interrupting you in midsentence.
 - When it happens again, say “I will be happy to respond to your comment, but first let me finish with mine.”
 - Be pleasant, but insist on your right to give complete responses.
 - Do not interrupt a questioner!



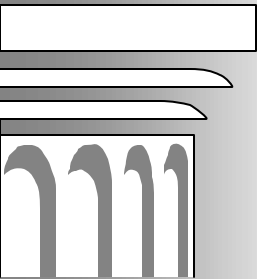
Coping With Sticky Situations

- The interviewer is particularly antagonistic and asks one hostile question after another.
 - Do not become combative. Maintain your enthusiasm.
 - Do not repeat a negative question.
 - Remember, you are well prepared and rehearsed.
 - Answer questions with a brief response, then transition to a key message point.



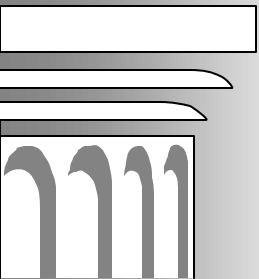
Coping With Sticky Situations

- During a taped interview, the reporter keeps raising his voice higher and higher.
 - Don't respond by raising your voice.
 - Each time the reporter raises his voice, lower yours.
 - Remain calm, and stick to your message.



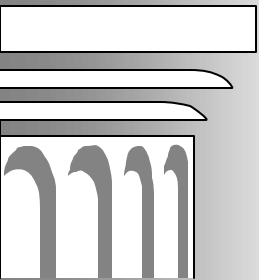
Coping With Sticky Situations

- A reporter puts down his microphone and says, “Let’s go off the record”:
 - Never go off the record with a reporter.
 - Assume that anything you say in the presence of a reporter will be quoted.
 - Assume that anything you say in the presence of a reporter’s equipment will be quoted.



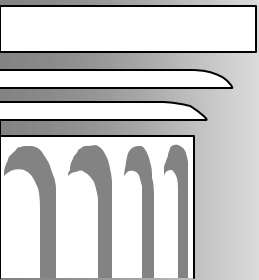
Coping With Sticky Situations

- The interviewer wants you to respond to questions with yes or no answers.
 - Do not fall for this technique.
 - If a one-word answer will not do justice to your topic, say that there is not enough time for a proper answer to the question.
 - Offer to provide an answer in writing.



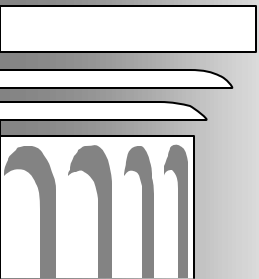
Coping With Sticky Situations

- An interviewer attempts to elicit your endorsement of a legislative proposal or program related to your issue.
 - Be pleasant, but inform the reporter that your purpose is to provide information, not to make judgments.
 - Stress your key message points.
 - Develop a transition to get back to your subject.



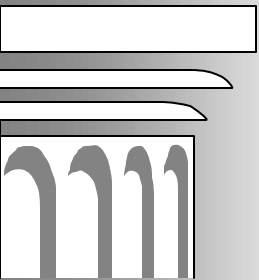
Coping With Sticky Situations

- You are asked a question that you don't know the answer to.
 - Say “I don't know.”
 - Offer to find the answer.
 - Never attempt to respond to a question that you don't know the answer to. Your credibility will be jeopardized!



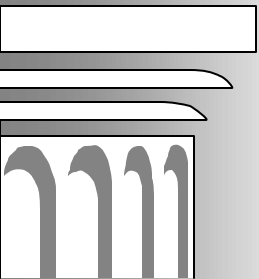
Coping With Trick Questions

- The interviewer starts questions with hostile or inaccurate comments. This is called the loaded preface.
 - Don't allow the loaded preface to stand unchallenged. Either correct the comment or state "I would have to verify that; I'm not sure it is correct."
 - Quickly dispute the interviewer's comments, and explain why. Then, respond to the question posed, using the answer formula.



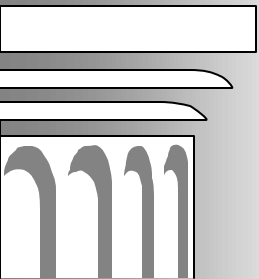
Coping With Trick Questions

- The interviewer poses an either/or question, and you don't agree with either option.
 - Don't fall for this old trick.
 - If you don't agree with either option, your answer must be “neither.”
 - After you've responded correctly, explain your response, then develop a transition.



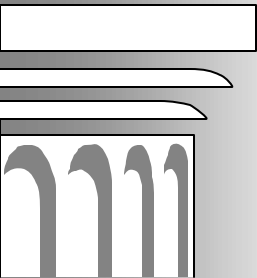
Coping With Trick Questions

- You've answered fully, but the interviewer stares at you as if you should say more. Don't. This is called the pregnant pause.
 - Keep your eye contact, and ask him or her for another question.
 - If the interviewer continues to use this technique, launch into a transition, and deliver your key message points.



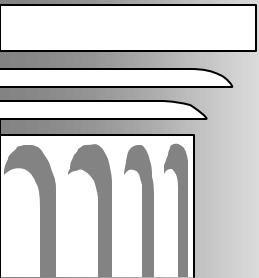
Suggested Transitions

- “What I think you are really asking is...”
- “The overall issue is...”
- “What’s important to remember is...”
- “It’s our policy not to discuss (x), but what I can say is...”



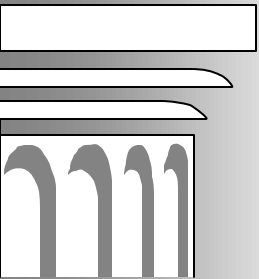
Ten Rules for a Successful Interview

1. Be yourself.
2. Know your message.
3. Stick to your expertise.
4. Don't be afraid to say "I don't know."
5. Avoid jargon, acronyms, and statistics.



Ten Rules for a Successful Interview

6. Be brief and to the point.
7. Personalize your answers.
8. Never repeat or introduce a negative.
9. Answer questions with:
 - A conclusion
 - An explanation/transition
 - Your core message
10. Maintain eye contact.



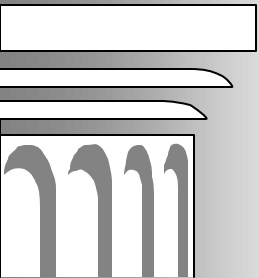
Message Development



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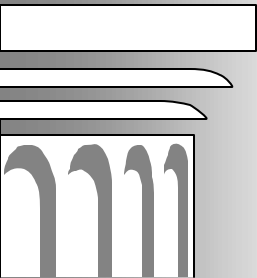
Messages

The public will judge your message by its content, messenger, and method of delivery.



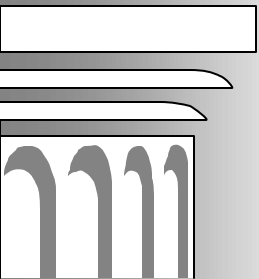
Key Elements To Build Trust

- Expressed empathy
- Competence
- Honesty
- Commitment
- Accountability



Perception Is Reality

- Competence and humanness are key.
- How you look means as much as what you say.
 - Impact of any message:
 - ♦ 40% nonverbal
 - ♦ 40% voice
 - ♦ 20% what you say
- Build trust by repeating your core messages and by looking competent and human.





CREDIBILITY

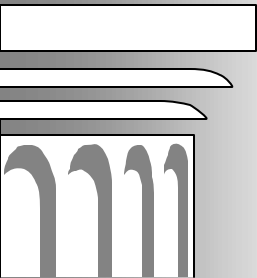
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**Successful
Communication**



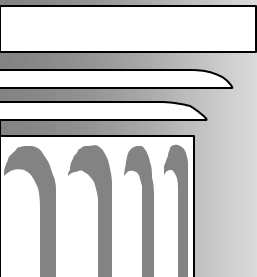
TRUST



Constructing Crisis Messages

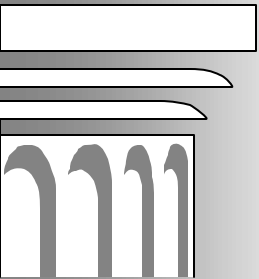
- Express empathy.
- Simply inform the public about risks.
- Establish organization/spokesperson credibility.
- Provide emergency courses of action.
- Commit to communicate with the public and stakeholders.

Reputations are made or broken here.



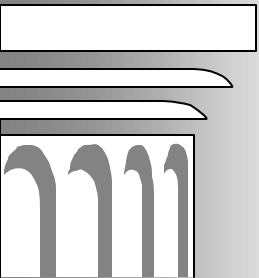
Sound Bites Rule!

- Words, phrases, 7–9 seconds, about 30 words
 - Make them your most core message
 - Brackets for story background
 - Punchy
 - Persuasive
 - Plain language
 - Memorable



Message Development Do's

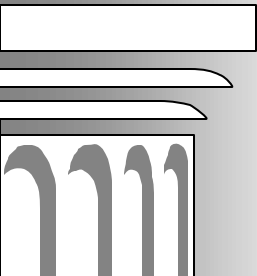
- State the who, what, where, when, and why.
- Be clear, concise, and focused.
- Show relevance.
- Give action steps in positives (e.g., in case of a fire, use the stairs).
- Provide sound bites (7–9 seconds, 30 words).



Message Development Don'ts

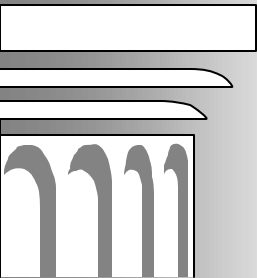
Don't:

- Use jargon (“outbreak” instead of “epidemic”).
- Be judgmental.
- Make promises that can't be kept.
- Use humor.
- Make more than three main points.




Risk Communication Principles for Emergencies

- Don't overreassure.
- State continued concern before stating reassuring updates.
- Express uncertainty, but also express confidence in the process to fix the problem.
- Give people things to do.
- Allow people the right to feel fear.



Message Development Template

Message Development for Emergency Communication		
First, consider the following:		
Audience	Purpose of Message	Method of Delivery
<input type="checkbox"/> Relationship to event <input type="checkbox"/> Demographics (e.g., age, language, education, culture) <input type="checkbox"/> Level of outrage (based on risk principles)	<input type="checkbox"/> Give facts/update <input type="checkbox"/> Rally to action <input type="checkbox"/> Clarify event status <input type="checkbox"/> Address rumors <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfy media requests	<input type="checkbox"/> Print media release <input type="checkbox"/> Web release <input type="checkbox"/> Spokesperson (TV or in-person appearance) <input type="checkbox"/> Radio <input type="checkbox"/> Other (e.g., recorded phone message)
Six Basic Emergency Message Components:		
1. Expression of empathy: _____		
2. Clarifying facts/Call for action:		
Who _____		
What _____		
Where _____		
When _____		
Why _____		
How _____		
3. What we don't know: _____		
4. Process to get answers: _____		
5. Statement of commitment: _____		
6. Referrals: _____		
For more information _____		
Next scheduled update _____		
Finally, check that your message:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Includes positive action steps <input type="checkbox"/> Has an honest/open tone <input type="checkbox"/> States applied risk communication principles <input type="checkbox"/> Is clear <input type="checkbox"/> Uses simple words and short sentences	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoids jargon <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids judgmental phrases <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids humor <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids extreme speculation	
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