



Risk Communication: “Lessons from the Field”

Kenny Foscue

11/15/2013



Agenda

- Some Key Basics
 - Outrage Factors
- Beyond the “Traditional” Public Meeting
- Community Advisory Panels
- Working With the Media



Beware!

Bad Things Can Happen!



(Video Clip)

"The most important finding... The agency's behavior, and the agency-community relationship have a substantial impact on the public's perception of risk ... more impact than the objective seriousness of the risk, and far more impact than any technical explanation of the risk"

Peter Sandman

**“People Want To Know
That You Care Before They
Care What You Know.”**

- Will Rogers



Environmental Risk

Risk =

- Magnitude of Effect X
Probability
- Hazard + Outrage

...ship; young people ...
...ate with older ones. ...
...age communication noun 1
communication noun 1
2 something that commu
...tion, a letter or messag
...communicating, e.g. a
...graph, ...

Factors in Community Outrage





Voluntary Risks Vs. Imposed Risks





Natural Vs. Artificial Risks





Familiar vs Exotic Risks





Risks Associated with Memorable Events





Traditional Public Meetings

- Avoid if Possible – Less Productive
- Recruit Independent Moderator
 - Clergy, Board Member, etc
- Establish Ground Rules
- Written Questions



Alternatives to Traditional Public Meetings

- Open Houses
- Public Availability Sessions
- “Hybrid” Events: Open House/Meeting



“Hybrid” Events

- Begin With Open House Hours
- Agencies Provide Information Exhibits, Answer Questions 1 on 1
- Brief Public Meeting w/ Short Presentation(s)
- Open House Hour(s) After Meeting



Why “Hybrid” Events?

- Strategy to Avoid Long, Contentious, Unproductive Meetings
- Individuals’ Questions Can be Addressed
- Provides Time for Presenting Message, Questions
- Allows Forum for Controlled “Venting”
- More Information Provided



Community Advisory Panels

- Advisory Group Representing Affected Community
- Generally for Larger, Complex Sites
 - Rarely utilized
- Agencies Have Ex-Officio Role
- Paid Facilitator/Moderator Helpful



Community Advisory Panels

- Provide More Efficient Way for Community Feedback
- Help Stakeholders Find Constructive Ways To Address Concerns
- Increase Community Knowledge/Expertise
- Enhance Trust And Credibility Among All Parties



Community Advisory Panels

Examples:

- Raymark, Stratford
- Cheshire - Community Concerns
- Stamford Private Wells Project



Smaller, “Quick Turnaround” Sites

- Frequently for Emergency Removal Sites
- Flyers/Fact Sheets Re: Contaminants, Upcoming Removal Actions
- Door-to-Door Home Visits
- Letters



**Men
In
White
Suits!**



Meeting The Media's Needs

- Do Not Ever Lie
- Okay to Say "I Don't Know"
- If You Can't Provide Information - Explain Exactly Why & When





Meeting The Media's Needs

- Help Them Meet Their Deadlines
- Be Succinct In Your Answers
- Be Patient & Help Them To Understand





Closing Thoughts

- Good Risk Communication Integral to Addressing Site Public Health Issues
- Plan Risk Communication from Start – Not Just an Afterthought