

# Key components of communicating with the media and public during a pandemic

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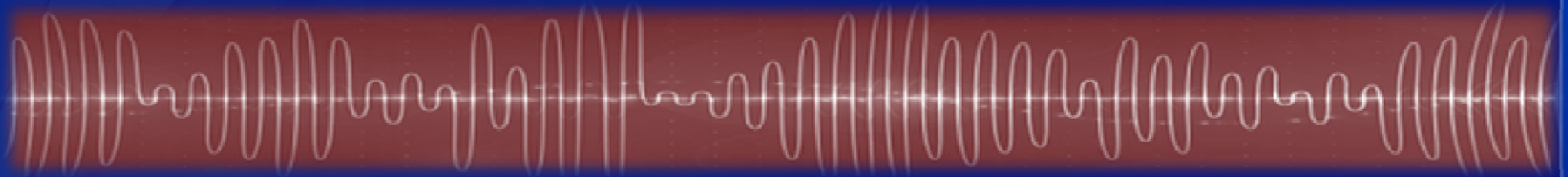
# Overview

- ❑ **Principles of emergency risk communication**
- ❑ **Working with the media**
- ❑ **Reaching the public with clear messages**



# Objectives

- ❑ **State the key elements of emergency risk communication**
- ❑ **Describe three elements of communicating with the public during a pandemic**
- ❑ **Discuss two ways to work well with the media during a pandemic**
- ❑ **Use emergency risk communication methods to reach the public (during day 2 activity)**





# Defining Emergency Risk Communication

## Emergency Communication


- To communicate with leaders, partners, and the public about an unexpected crisis
- To explain how the crisis happened, what officials are doing, and what the audience should do

## Risk Communication

- To give audiences information about the potential outcome of an exposure or behavior, and actions they can take to protect their health
- To help decision making

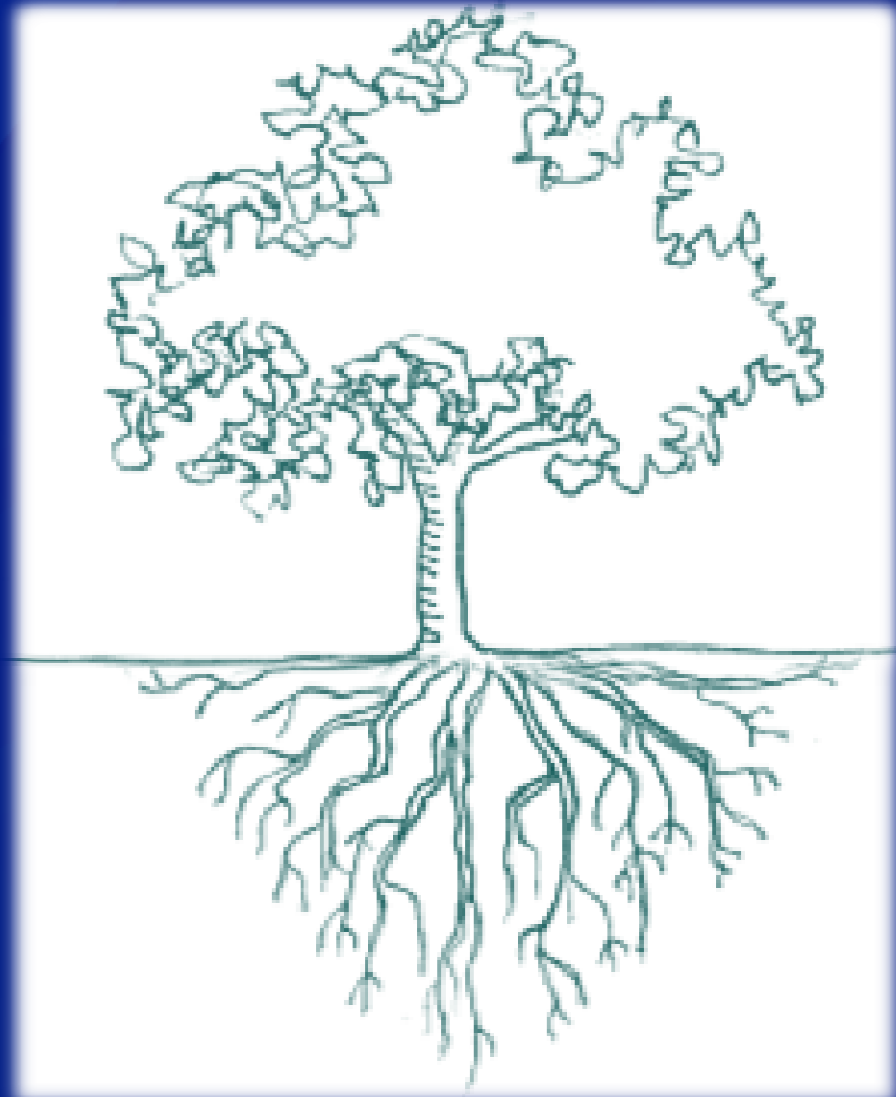


# Goals of Emergency Risk Communication

- 
- Give the right information quickly
  - Tell the public of potential risks and steps being taken during an emergency
  - Help people, leaders and communities cope, make good decisions during an emergency, and begin to return to normal life

# Communication Challenges

- ❑ **Doubt, fear**
- ❑ **Uncertainty**
- ❑ **Confusing politics**
- ❑ **Rumors, myths, wrong information**
- ❑ **Conflicting advice**
- ❑ **Predictions**
- ❑ **Many sources**



# Know Your Audiences

**Schools**

**Health  
care**

**Faith  
leaders**

**Children**

**High-risk  
groups**

**Parents**

**Businesses**

**Community  
leaders**

# Consider Audience Needs

- ❑ What are their concerns and worries?
- ❑ Whom do they care about and take care of?
- ❑ Do they need to take immediate action?
- ❑ What do they need and want to know?
- ❑ What have they already heard?
- ❑ Whom do they trust?
- ❑ How do they feel about your organization?
- ❑ Where and how do they get information?
- ❑ When are they watching, listening, and going?

# The First Questions



## Public

- Am I safe?
- Is my family safe?
- What may affect me?
- What can I do to protect myself and my family?
- Who and what caused this?
- Can you fix it?



## News Media

- What happened?
- Has it been contained or stopped?
- Who is in charge?
- What is being done to fix the problem?
- What can we expect?
- What should people do?



## Other Stakeholders

- How will this affect my group?
- What resources will we have to ensure the safety of our members?
- What is our role in the response and how will it affect our group?

# Approaches to Emergency Risk Communication

Be  
First

Be  
Right

Be  
Credible



# Critical Elements of Communication

## Trust

- Communicating in ways that build, maintain, or restore trust between the public and outbreak managers.

## Early announcement

- Communicating early is crucial in alerting those affected and minimizing the threat of disease.

## Transparency

- Transparency requires timely and complete information of a real or potential risk, and sharing information often.

## Listening

- Understanding the public's beliefs about their risks, views, and concerns is critical to effective communication.

## Planning

- Communication during an outbreak is a challenge and requires planning in advance.

# Keys to Trust and Credibility



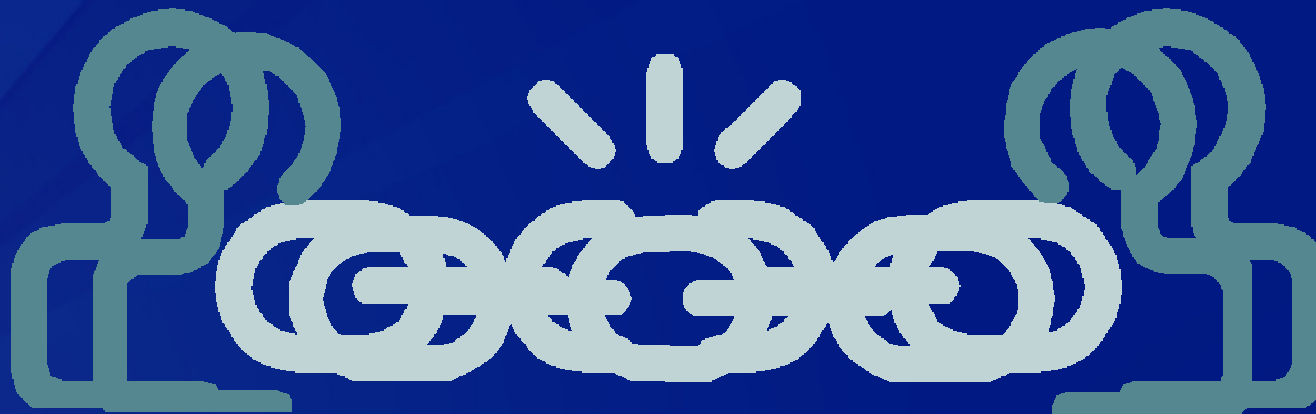
Source: Center for Risk Communication



# Announce Early

## The first announcement—

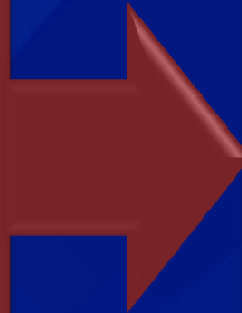
- ❑ Most important of all outbreak communication messages
- ❑ Must show empathy, understanding
- ❑ Must be early
- ❑ May need to be updated and corrected



# Improve Transparency

## Challenges

- ❑ Real or perceived competing interests
- ❑ Spokespersons not comfortable giving bad news
- ❑ Fear the media will inaccurately report bad or uncertain news
- ❑ Concern the public will “panic”



## Solutions

- ❑ Try for total honesty
- ❑ Do not over-reassure
- ❑ Keep detailed records of meetings and decisions
- ❑ Promise and deliver regular updates



# Listening

- ❑ Show you understand people's fears
- ❑ Say what you do know and do not know, and who you are going to find out more
- ❑ In every message, show—



*Care and  
Concern*

*Respect*

*Action*

# Preparing Clear and Concise Messages



- ❑ Decide what the audience needs to know and do
- ❑ Find out what you need to do to correct myths and wrong information



- ❑ Prepare three key messages for main talking points
- ❑ Write supporting points for each key message
- ❑ Keep messages simple and short
- ❑ Try not to use public health jargon or words that are hard to understand



- ❑ Make supporting materials for each message
- ❑ Practice delivering your key messages

# Developing Messages

**Message maps are tools for writing clear and simple messages**

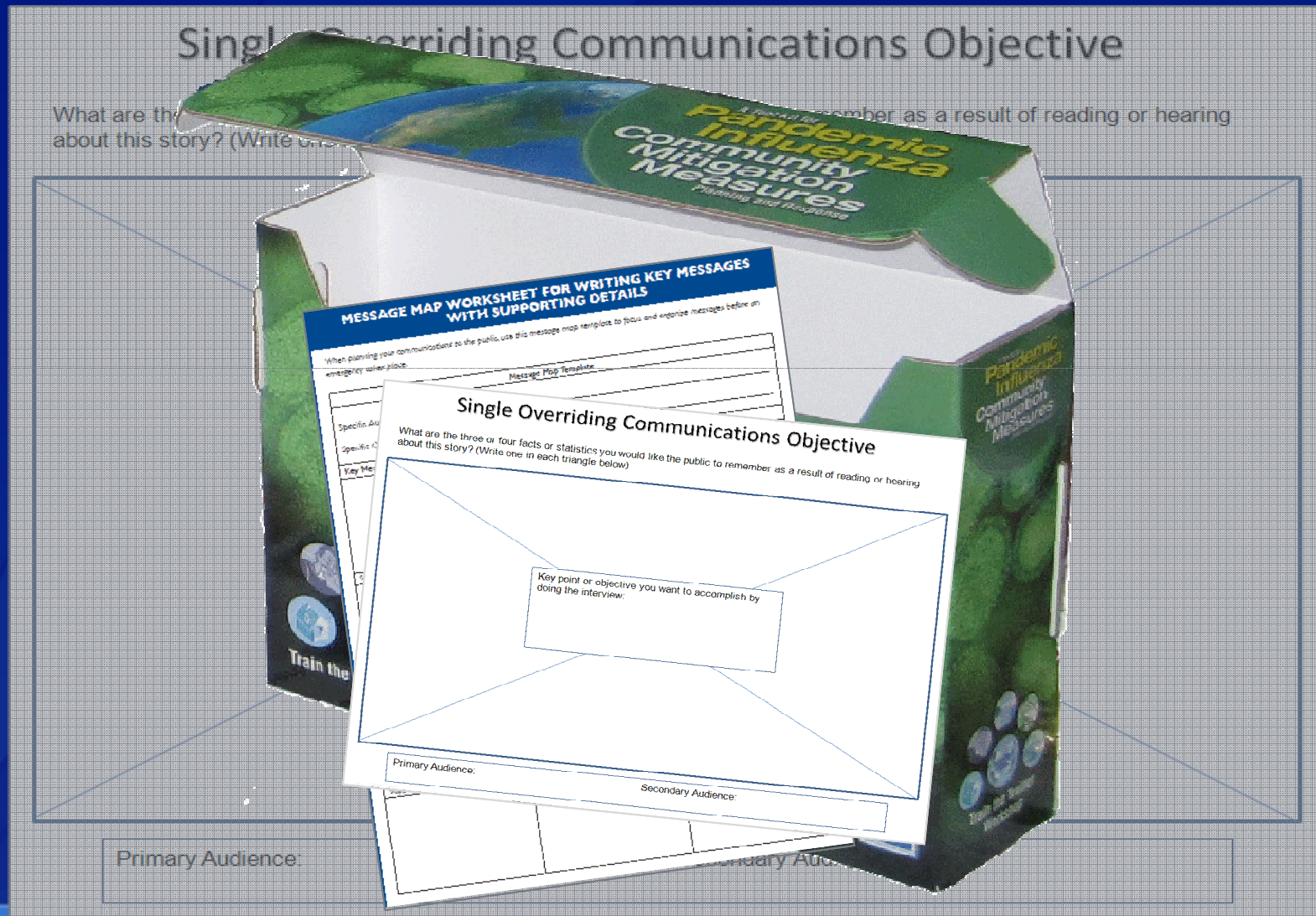
- ❑ **Organizes information**
- ❑ **Used to respond to questions or concerns from audience**

## MESSAGE MAP WORKSHEET FOR WRITING KEY MESSAGES WITH SUPPORTING DETAILS

When planning your communications to the public, use this message map template to focus and organize messages before an emergency takes place.

Message Map Template		
Specific Audience: _____		
Specific Question or Concern: _____		
Key Message 1	Key Message 2	Key Message 3
Supporting Information 1-A	Supporting Information 2-A	Supporting Information 3-A
Supporting Information 1-B	Supporting Information 2-B	Supporting Information 3-B
Supporting Information 1-C	Supporting Information 2-C	Supporting Information 3-C

# Single Overriding Communication Objective (SOCO)



# Sample Message Map

## MESSAGE MAP WORKSHEET FOR WRITING KEY MESSAGES WITH SUPPORTING DETAILS

When planning your communications to the public, use this message map template to focus and organize messages before an emergency takes place.

Message Map Template		
Specific Audience: <i>General public</i>		
Specific Question or Concern: <i>What can I do to protect my health?</i>		
Key Message 1	Key Message 2	Key Message 3
<i>Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze.</i>	<i>Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.</i>	<i>Stay home if you are sick.</i>

# Sample Message Map

## Key Message 1

*Stay home if you are sick.*

## Supporting Information 1-A

*One of the best ways to reduce the spread of flu is to keep sick people away from well people.*

## Supporting Information 1-B

*Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from making them sick.*

## Supporting Information 1-C

*Stay home until at least 24 hours after your fever goes away.*



# What is news?



## News and Media

News coverage can be sparked by—

- Controversy
- Contradiction
- Criticism
- Confrontation
- Disaster
- Gossip
- Breakthrough

Media can serve the public by—

- Delivering news
- Giving information
- Offering analysis
- Acting as watchdog
- Acting as defender
- Reassuring
- Educating

# Shaping the News

- ❑ People pay more attention to the news during outbreaks and disasters
- ❑ The media plays an important role in educating the public and alerting officials to issues in the community

Consider the media as partners who can give information to the public

Build relationships with local and national media

Be a source of reliable information to the media

# Communication Failures



- ❑ Silence
- ❑ Information is released late
- ❑ Not countering or answering rumors and myths
- ❑ Tone or attitude that insults the audience
- ❑ Messages from experts that conflict
- ❑ Public power struggles and confusion

# Differing Ways of Storytelling

The media  
tells a story by—

## NEWSPAPER

Jumping off from...  
Conflict  
Confrontation  
Danger  
Breakthrough

Showing the human  
connection in the story.

Presenting the end of  
story first then detail, if  
time and space allow.

# Differing Ways of Storytelling

Using science and  
data to tell the  
story

Progressing from  
beginning to end

**Public health  
tells a story by—**

- Relying upon
- Studies
  - Reports
  - Programs



# Working with the Media

## Understand how the media works

- National media will lead in major crises
- Will find the story angle that affects the most people
- Will have fast, wide coverage

## Know how reporters work

- Need to get the story first and fast
- Will find other sources if they cannot reach you
- When they have more details, the story has more facts

## Be prepared to take advantage of the opportunity

- Always give only the facts, deliver *your* story
- Give good quotes with action steps

# Considerations: Giving Information

## Ability

- Do you have the right information?

## Competency

- Are you qualified to discuss topic?

## Authority

- Do you have the right to give the information?

## Security

- Is it safe to share the information?

## Accuracy

- Have you checked to be sure the information is correct?

## Propriety

- Is the information given in a way that is respectful and sensitive?



# Prepare for the Interview

Know the reporter's background information

Know the focus of the interview

Be prepared for tough questions

Set time limits for the interview

Know and practice saying your key messages

# Common Interview Mistakes

- ❑ Not understanding your audience
- ❑ Using words that few people will understand
- ❑ Giving messages that conflict with each other
- ❑ Allowing the reporter to take total control
- ❑ Assuming reporters understand your topics
- ❑ Talking too much before saying your key point
- ❑ Speaking too generally, without enough detail
- ❑ Not being ready or not practicing enough



# Avoid Pitfalls



- ❑ Do not say, "No comment."
  - *Explain why you cannot give information*
- ❑ Do not allow a reporter to put words in your mouth
  - *Always correct an error*
- ❑ Do not say or do things that you do not want reported
  - *There is no such thing as "off the record"*
- ❑ Do not offer extra or unnecessary information
  - *Stay on your message at all times*
- ❑ Do not answer "what if" questions
  - *Respond with, "I wouldn't want to guess about that; however...(say your message)"*

# Remember the Audience

- ❑ Speak like your audience
- ❑ Keep your words clear and simple
- ❑ Use trusted sources and experts
- ❑ Give examples that your audience can relate to
- ❑ If you use data, explain why it is important
- ❑ Give action steps



# Stay on Message

**At the beginning of your interview, say—**

*"I want to begin by saying that..."*

**Sometime later, say—**

*"As I said a moment ago..."*

**When you answer a question, say—**

*"That's an important question, but before I answer it I want to say again that..."*

**At the end of the interview, say—**

*"Before I close, I want to remind everyone..."*



# Tips for Staying on Message



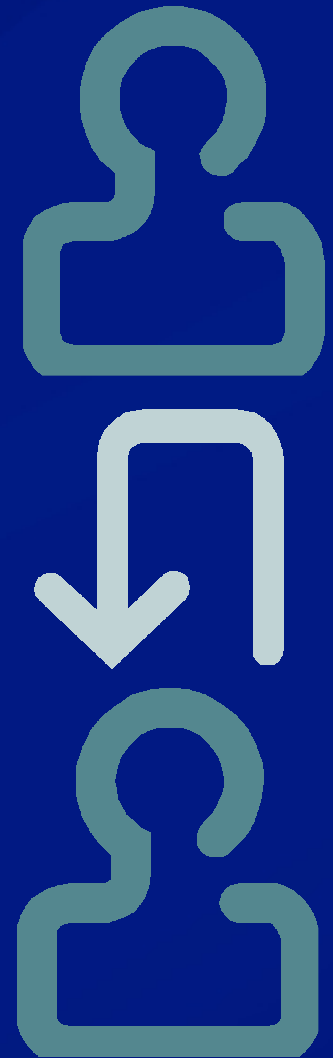
Repeat key points so the audience clearly understands your message

Repeat your message at the beginning or end of each statement

Avoid repeating a single point too many times

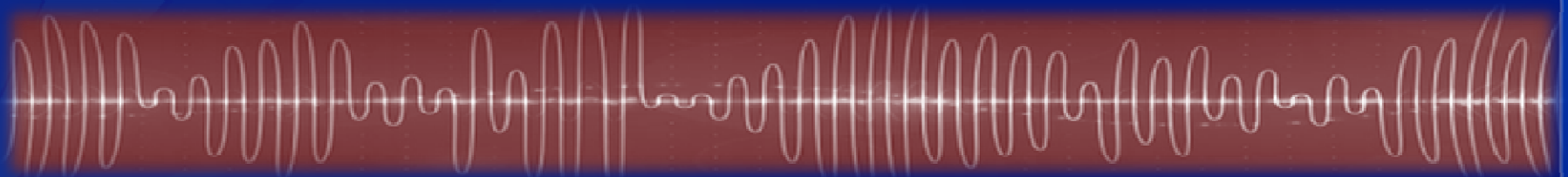
# Practice before the Interview

- ❑ Know your three key messages
- ❑ Use words and phrases that repeat your key messages and are easily quoted
- ❑ Be ready with facts, simple and strong data, and support from experts and trusted leaders
- ❑ Remember your messages and use them to answer tough questions
- ❑ Practice often and be confident



# Revisiting the Objectives

- ✓ State the key elements of emergency risk communication
- ✓ Describe three elements of communicating with the public during a pandemic
- ✓ Discuss two ways to work well with the media during a pandemic
- Use emergency risk communication methods to reach the public (during day 2 activity)





# Resources

- ❑ CDC Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC)
- ❑ PAHO Fundamentals of Communication During Crises and Emergencies
- ❑ WHO Outbreak Communication Planning Guide

## CRISIS EMERGENCY RISK COMMUNICATION Pandemic Flu

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### FUNDAMENTALS OF COMMUNICATION DURING CRISES AND EMERGENCIES

A Message from the World Health Organization (WHO)  
about the Current Influenza Pandemic

"Effective communication is paramount. Real-time exchange of information has been  
a key feature of the response so far. The short time that elapsed between first reports  
of the new influenza pandemic virus and the start of the response is a testament to the  
importance of communication in making people aware of the situation and the need to  
take action."

### World Health Organization Outbreak Communication Planning Guide

2008 Edition



World Health  
Organization

### Single Overriding Communications Objective

What are the three or four facts or statistics you would like the public to remember as a result of reading or hearing

### 7 STEPS TO EFFECTIVE MEDIA COMMUNICATION DURING PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES

<b>STEP 1: Assess media needs, media constraints, and internal media-relations capabilities</b>	1.1: Assess the needs of the media 1.2: Assess the constraints of the media 1.3: Assess internal media-relations capabilities
<b>STEP 2: Develop goals, plans and strategies</b>	2.1: Develop media communication goals and objectives 2.2: Develop a written media communication plan 2.3: Develop a partner and stakeholder strategy
<b>STEP 3: Train communications</b>	3.1: Train the media communication team 3.2: Train a public information officer 3.3: Train a designated lead spokesperson
<b>STEP 4: Prepare messages</b>	4.1: Prepare lists of stakeholders and their concerns 4.2: Prepare clear and concise messages 4.3: Prepare targeted messages
<b>STEP 5: Identify media outlets and media activities</b>	5.1: Identify available media outlets 5.2: Identify the most effective media outlets 5.3: Identify media activities for the first 24-72 hours
<b>STEP 6: Deliver messages</b>	6.1: Deliver clear and timely messages 6.2: Deliver messages to maintain visibility 6.3: Deliver targeted messages
<b>STEP 7: Evaluate messages and performance</b>	7.1: Evaluate message delivery and media coverage 7.2: Evaluate and improve performance based on feedback 7.3: Evaluate public response to messages

Taken from:  
Effective Media Communication during Public Health Emergencies: A WHO Handbook.  
Hyer RN and Cavellio VT. Geneva, World Health Organization (WHO/CDS/2005.21) 2005, July

When talking with the media, questions often asked include:

- Who is affected?
- Who is at fault?
- Who is responsible?
- What has happened?
- What is the cost?
- Where has it happened?
- What is being done?
- When did it happen?
- Why did it happen?
- Why wasn't it prevented?
- Will it happen again?

See WHO Handbook for a fuller list

When wanting to return to normal communication, examples include:

- And what's most important to remember is...
- However, what is most important to remember is...
- And what this all means is...
- And what's most important to remember is...
- With this in mind, if we look at the bigger picture...
- With this in mind, if we take a look back...
- If we take a broader perspective...
- Please look at the big picture...
- Let me put all this in perspective by saying...
- Other all this information tells me is...
- Before we continue, let me take a step back and repeat that...
- Before we continue, let me emphasize that...
- This is an important point because...
- "Other this all boils down to is..."
- "The heart of the matter is..."

See WHO Handbook for a fuller list of 33 bridging statements



World Health  
Organization

In the  
Toolkit

# Questions?



**Please contact:**

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

1600 Clifton Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30333

Telephone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) / TTY: 1-888-232-6348

E-mail: [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov) Web: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

