Best Practices for Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC): When You Are the Communicator

There are times that you might be called upon by your Public Information Team to provide information or to serve as a spokesperson for your agency. If this happens, here are some recommendations for answering that call. These are standards and principles that communicators strive to achieve in each interaction.

**Build trust.**
Share information early. Acknowledge the concerns of others. Under-promise and over-deliver. Select a spokesperson who is never condescending. Engage third-party validators and advocates.

**Don’t speculate.**
Share only what you know and talk about what you are doing to come up with answers to the unanswered questions.

**Use one message and multiple messengers.**
This promotes credibility and message consistency while reducing the potential for conflicting information or information overload. This is achieved by using multiple platforms (tailoring messages for social media, town hall meetings, media inquiries, etc.) and by enlisting partner agencies to help disseminate the information.

**Provide actionable recommendations.**
There is always something people can do that will reduce their risk of threats and the action itself can lessen stressful situations. At its best, some actions may reduce the need for immediate service from first responders, who may already be stretched near capacity.

**Correct errors.**
Admit mistakes without making excuses or acting cavalier. Information corrected quickly and in the right way will help maintain credibility and result in improved perceptions that will increase the likelihood of future recommendations being followed.

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