



Introduction on communication during Emergency

A focused Lecture on communicating with the media

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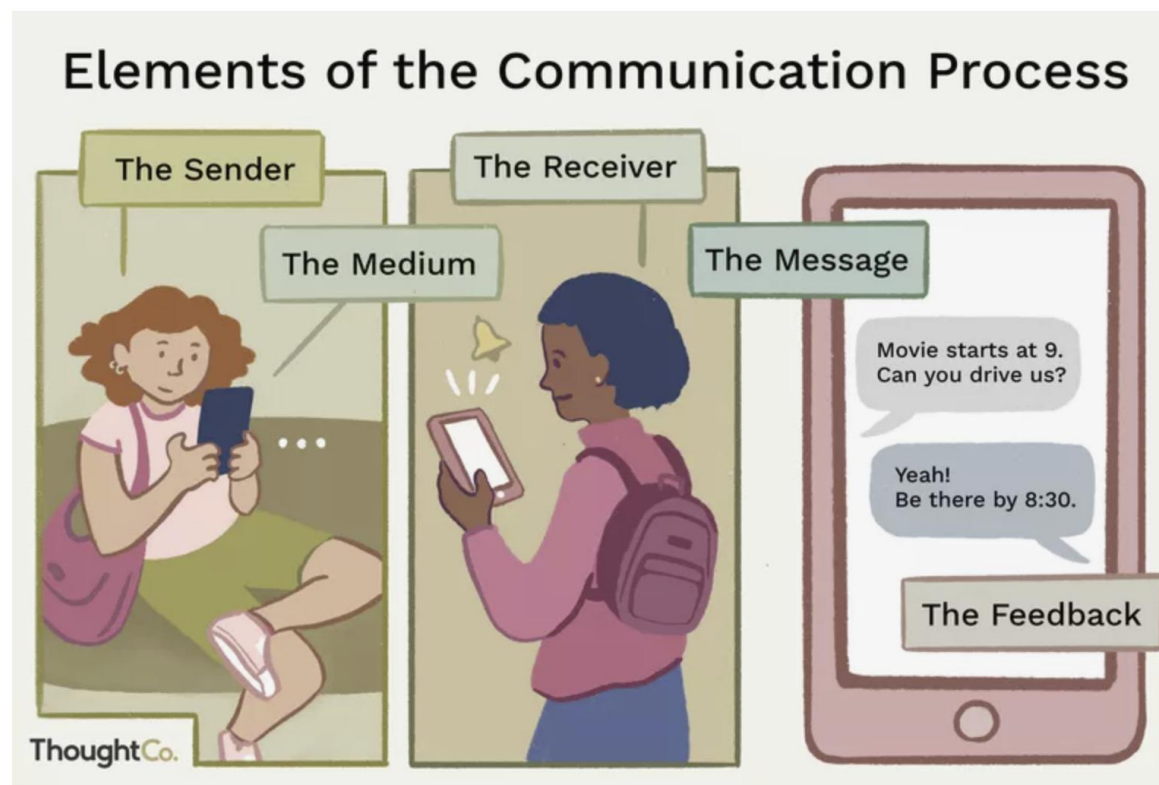
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Basic Elements of the Communication Process



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Communication Process Definition

The term communication process refers to the exchange of information (a message) between two or more parties. For communication to succeed, both parties must be able to exchange information and understand each other. If the flow of information is blocked for some reason or the parties cannot make themselves understood, then communication fails.



The Sender

The communication process begins with the *sender*, who is also called the *communicator* or *source*. The sender has some kind of information — a command, request, question, or idea — that he or she wants to present to others. For that message to be received, the sender must first encode the message in a form that can be understood, such as by the use of a common language or industry jargon, and then transmit it.

The Receiver

The person to whom a message is directed is called the receiver or the interpreter. To comprehend the information from the sender, the receiver must first be able to receive the sender's information and then decode or interpret it.



The Message

The message or content is the information that the sender wants to relay to the receiver. Additional subtext can be conveyed through body language and tone of voice. Put all three elements together — sender, receiver, and message — and you have the communication process at its most basic.

The Medium

Also called the channel, the medium is the means by which a message is transmitted. Text messages, for example, are transmitted through the medium of cell phones.

Feedback

The communication process reaches its final point when the message has been successfully transmitted, received, and understood. The receiver, in turn, responds to the sender, indicating comprehension. Feedback may be direct, such as a written or verbal response, or it may take the form of an act or deed in response (indirect).



Public communications media relations



During an emergency, only authorized persons should make statements to the media. It is key

to ensure that all interview preparation is done under the direction of the IC.



The spokesperson is the official designated to speak to the media with support from public communications/media relations specialists, who will coordinate all responses (in the event where multiple spokespersons are required) to ensure that no conflicting or contradictory messages occur.



The public communications/media relations specialist will also provide

guidance or coaching to prepare the spokesperson for specific interviews or press briefings.

The selection of the spokesperson is based primarily on three factors: technical expertise,

level of authority and communication skills. To be credible, the spokesperson should be an

expert in the area and hold a position with a level of authority appropriate to the matter about which he/she will be speaking.



In an emergency, the spokesperson is often a senior official involved in managing the response. The spokesperson must also be a good communicator, who can empathize with the public's concerns and be able to simplify scientific and technical information. He/she should work with the PIO to develop appropriate plain language explanations and analogies to explain technical matters.



In communicating with the media, the spokesperson should be:

Straightforward

Comfortable
and confident

Honest

Brief.

Human and
sensitive

Personal

Positive and
consistent

Attentive

Energetic

Committed and
sincere



Interview instructions

WHEN A JOURNALIST CALLS ask:

Will the interview be broadcast live or recorded?

Who else will be interviewed?

How long have you got for answers to questions? (e.g. 20 seconds per answer).

Where and when will the interview be broadcast/published?

What type of programme will the interview be used in?

Negotiate any special requirements well before the interview (e.g. when and where).

You always have right to say no, but remember the public have a right to know.

You don't need to answer all questions. Give your core message.

The interview should be an opportunity to get an important message to the public.





DURING AN INTERVIEW:

Be brief, clear and simple (e.g. 20 seconds per statement).

Be self-confident.

Be truthful. If you cannot answer a question, give the reason why or indicate who the question should be put to.

Always include your message in an answer irrespective of particular questions.

Don't theorize or speculate.

Speak only in your field, about things you know.

Answer only the questions put about the emergency, not any general statements.

Never use the phrase: "No comment." (If necessary, explain why you can't comment.)

Keep cool and avoid any heated exchange.





BEFORE TV INTERVIEW

Talk to the journalist and try to establish some personal contact.

Talk to the journalist about the broader aspects.

Ask the journalist to tell you the questions – word for word.

Request no more than 3 questions in front of the camera.

Take time to think over your answers before the interview.

Remember the core messages you intend to put out.

For TV, check the interview background. The surroundings can be a message too.





DURING TV INTERVIEW

Take time to answer questions but stick to the point or message.

Try to keep your answers short (e.g. 20 seconds per answer).

Don't just say "yes" or "no". Explain and include your message.

Don't fold your arms.

During an emergency, the interview could be outside. If so, agree to be standing, not sitting.

Behave naturally and try to enjoy the interview.

Try to answer clearly, just as you would to a friend or relative who wanted your opinion or some information.

If it is a recorded interview, you can always ask for a question to be repeated.

Remember that the camera or microphone may be running before and after the interview.



WHAT THE MEDIA WILL ASK DURING AN EMERGENCY ?

Be prepared to respond to questions about the following:





A. Descriptions of the emergency

- Cause of the emergency.
- When it happened.
- Extent of the emergency.
- Extent of any releases, spills, blasts, explosions.
- Levels of radiation and hazardous materials released.
- Description of odors or color of flames.
- Attempts at rescue or escape.
- Soundness of structures, systems, equipment.
- Status of other units at site.
- Power supply implication or effects.
- Generic implications.
- Preliminary or tentative INES level assigned.
- What the next steps will be.



B. Response efforts

- How emergency was discovered.
- Who sounded alarm and called for help?
- What agencies have responded to the emergency?
- What agencies are expected to respond?
- Forewarnings; prior indications of emergency.
- Status of plant at time of emergency (in case of NPP emergency).
- Current status of plant and of the response (in case of NPP emergency).
- Interview opportunities with participants, witnesses.
- Interview opportunities with key responders (operators, fire, police) and company executives.
- Interview opportunities with experts.



C. Property/equipment damage

- Description of damage – kind of building(s), plant, equipment.
- Estimated value of loss.
- Significance of damage (to the continued safe operation or shutdown of the plant).
- Other property or buildings threatened.
- Previous emergencies associated with the facility or site.



D. Casualties

- Number killed, injured, missing.
- Nature of injuries received.
- Care given to injured.
- Whether or not injured were contaminated.
- Where injured were treated, decontaminated.
- Job description of anyone who was killed, injured, or escaped.
- How escape was completed, handicapped or stopped.





E. Relief efforts

- Number evacuated from site.
- Number involved in rescue and relief.
- Equipment used.
- Obstacles to correcting the problem.
- How problem was prevented from escalating.
- Acts of heroism.
- Capabilities of off-site agencies to respond.





F. Public Protection and Health Consequences

- Will the public be affected?
- What protective action has been taken?
- What was the basis for any decision on protective action?
- Who decided what actions the public should take, and where are they based?
- Will there be radiation-induced illnesses (e.g. increases in number of cancer cases)?
- Definitions of exposure terms.
- How time, distance, shielding provide safety.
- What does shelter mean?
- What does evacuation mean?
- Why are livestock sheltered?
- How long are these measures likely to continue?
- How did decision makers learn of plant status?
- What methods have been used to educate the general public before and during the emergency?



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