How Do You Effectively Communicate Flood Risks? A Dialogue on Applying Communication Principles

The Emergency Information Infrastructure Partnership (EIIP) Virtual Forum

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7 Guiding Principles for Effective Risk Communication

#1 Communicate in Multiple Ways

#2 Understand How High Stress Changes the Rules

#3 Probability Plus Values Equals Real Risk

#4 Recognize and Address Audience Fear and Anger

#5 Acknowledge Uncertainty

#6 Explain Complex and Technical Information

#7 Anticipate, Prepare and Practice for Media Interaction
“Our” Language

Risk = The probability of an event multiplied by the consequences if the event occurs

Risk = P x C

P = probability of hazard occurrence and performance of mitigation system
C = consequences
Principle 1: Communicate in Multiple Ways

- Use Multiple Means
- Use Multiple Messages
Principle 2: Understand How High Stress Changes the Rules

When people are stressed and upset they:

- Become less trusting and tend to think more negatively
- Have difficulty processing information
- Perceptions vary from reality
Principle 3: Probability Plus *Values* Equals Real Risk

“A threat, real or perceived to something we *value*.”
Principle 4: Recognize and Address Audience Fear and Anger

REFRAMING

PROBLEM-CENTRIC

- Avoidance
- Risk
- Negative

AND SOLUTION-CENTRIC

- Attraction
- Benefit
- Positive
Principle 5: Acknowledge Uncertainty

- Use Multiple Means
- Use Multiple Messages
Principle 6: Explain Complex and Technical Information

- Chunking
- Repetition
- Enhancements
Example: Chunking

Question to Mayor Giuliani, 9/11: “Mr Mayor, how many people do you believe have died in the collapse of the World Trade Center?”
Example: Chunking

Answer: “The number is more than any of us can bear, ultimately; and I believe our great country will grow stronger, stronger economically, politically, and most importantly, emotionally.”
Principle 7: Anticipate, Prepare and Practice for Media Interaction

The 95% Rule

"For most high stress situations, over 95 percent of stakeholder concerns and questions can be predicted in advance."

77 Questions Commonly Asked By Journalists During a Crisis