

# 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



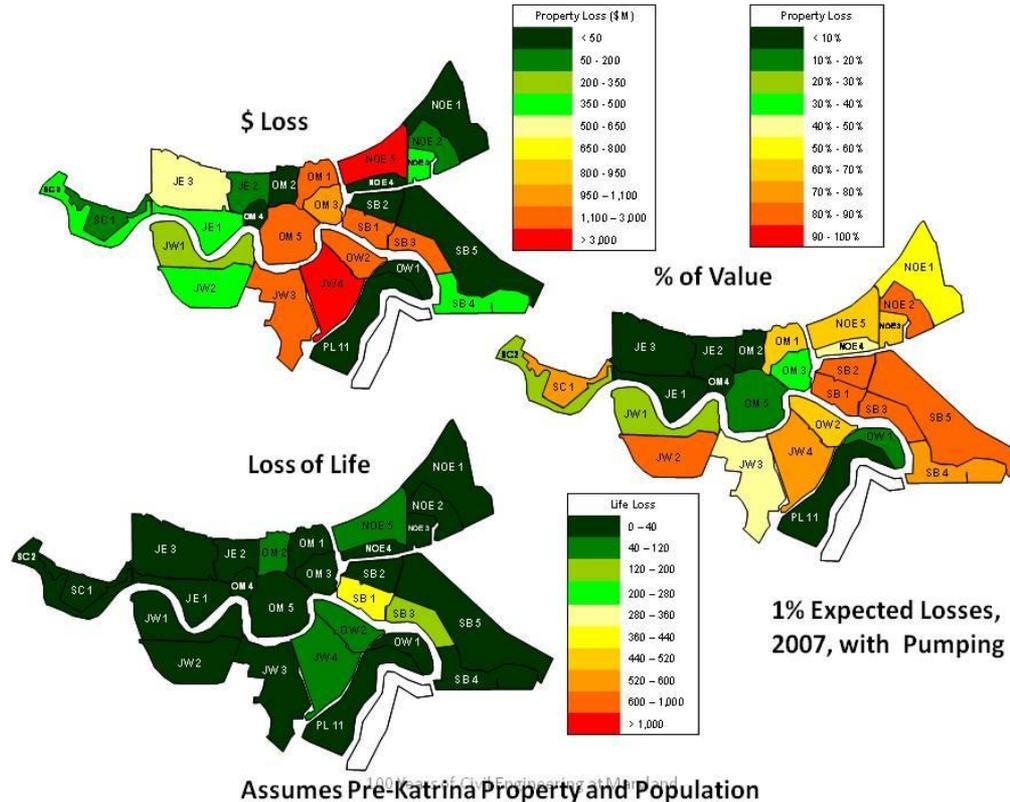
$$\text{Risk} = P \times C$$

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



Cartoon by [Chris Britt/SJ-R](#)

# 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*

