



Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC)

Lisa Briseño, MS

Health Communication Specialist

2019 National Center for Farmworker Health Midwest Stream Forum

September 26, 2019

AGENDA

- Introduction to CERC
- Psychology of a crisis
- Message development exercise
- Effective practices discussion

CERC Motto

The **right message** at the **right time** from the **right person** can save lives.

SIX PRINCIPLES OF CERC

Fully integrated CERC helps ensure that limited resources are managed well and can do the most good at every phase of an emergency response.

- 1**  **Be First:**
Crises are time-sensitive. Communicating information quickly is crucial. For members of the public, the first source of information often becomes the preferred source.
- 2**  **Be Right:**
Accuracy establishes credibility. Information can include what is known, what is not known, and what is being done to fill in the gaps.
- 3**  **Be Credible:**
Honesty and truthfulness should not be compromised during crises.
- 4**  **Express Empathy:**
Crises create harm, and the suffering should be acknowledged in words. Addressing what people are feeling, and the challenges they face, builds trust and rapport.
- 5**  **Promote Action:**
Giving people meaningful things to do calms anxiety, helps restore order, and promotes some sense of control.¹
- 6**  **Show Respect:**
Respectful communication is particularly important when people feel vulnerable. Respectful communication promotes cooperation and rapport.

¹Benight CC, Bandura A. Social cognitive theory of posttraumatic recovery: The role of perceived self-efficacy. Behaviour research and therapy (2004) 42(10), 1129–1148.

THE CERC RHYTHM

Engage Community • Empower Decision-Making • Evaluate

Preparation

- Draft and test messages
- Develop partnerships
- Create plans
- Determine approval process

Initial

- Express empathy
- Explain risks
- Promote action
- Describe response efforts

Maintenance

- Explain ongoing risks
- Segment audiences
- Provide background information
- Address rumors

Resolution

- Motivate vigilance
- Discuss lessons learned
- Revise plan

PROCESSING INFORMATION IN A CRISIS

People tend to...	So you should...
Simplify messages	Use simple messages
Hold on to current beliefs	Use credible sources
Look for additional information and opinions	Use consistent messages
Believe the first message	Release accurate messages as soon as possible

PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

- Denial
- Fear, anxiety, confusion, dread
- Hopelessness or helplessness

People seldom panic.



ALL RISKS ARE NOT EQUALLY ACCEPTED

- Voluntary vs. involuntary
- Controlled personally vs. controlled by others
- Familiar vs. exotic
- Natural vs. manmade
- Reversible vs. permanent
- Statistical vs. anecdotal
- Fairly vs. unfairly distributed
- Affecting adults vs. affecting children

**EXERCISE:
DEVELOPING WILDFIRE MESSAGES**



SCENARIO



Wildfires have been raging for weeks in areas near your community. Although your community is not yet under evacuation orders, public health officials are urging those with serious health issues and those most vulnerable to wildfire smoke to consider leaving temporarily. They are urging everyone to know evacuation routes and to have a plan in place. You know that many of your clients, patients, and community members continue to work outdoors even though health officials recommend minimizing time outdoors.

REACHING YOUR COMMUNITY

- What channels have you found most effective for sharing health or emergency information?
- Are there any you've found ineffective?
- How do you identify and address issues related to language proficiency?
- How do you build the trust needed, so your audiences will accept your message?
- What are some challenges you've faced related to people frequently moving in and out of the communities you serve?

For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
TTY: 1-888-232-6348 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.

