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Radiation Emergencies – Common Features

Instructing, Warning and Informing the Public

Lecture
Introduction

- Communication with the media and the public is an essential part of emergency response preparedness plans

- The objectives of this lesson are to present and explain principles and basic ways of communication with the media and the public in an emergency
Content

- Why inform the public?
- How to communicate with the public
- Basic communication principles
- Working with the media
  - Media outlets
  - Media operations
  - The media interview
  - Media Briefing/Interview Planning Worksheet
  - The press release/news statements
- Benefits of good media communications
- Summary
Background

- People fear what they don’t understand

- Few understand radiation, and most distrust authorities

- Honest, accurate, and timely information builds trust
Effective Communications

- The importance of effective communications with the media cannot be overlooked

- In any significant emergency, media interest will be high
- News is a 24 hour activity
Why Inform the Public?

- Provide information to public
- Ensure that the public response is consistent with the public protective actions instructions
- Prevent rumor
- Maintain credibility of response organizations
- Allow responders to focus on response
- Reduce the psychological impact
How to Communicate With the Public

- **Directly**
  - Through public warning systems
  - Through community spokespersons
  - Through public audiences

- **Indirectly**
  - Through the media
Public Warning Systems

- Sirens with loud speakers
  - Expensive to build and maintain
  - Impact on real estate
- Direct telephone warning systems
  - Expensive and difficult to maintain
- Mobile loud hailers (Fire trucks, Police)
  - Cheap
  - Not always effective
Like it or not, the media is the most effective way to communicate with the public.
Fundamental Principles of Communications

- Effective organizations communicate well
- Less can be more
- Have trained communications experts at the executive level
- Communication must be on-going and predictable
- The foundation of trust is openness
- Use terms that are simple and easy to understand
- Evaluate your communication program and annual budget
Golden Rules of Media Relations

- You cannot control the media... Do not try!!
- Integrate the media into the plans
- Educate the media
- Journalists want facts, not public relations
- The media can be a tool to communicate with the public
- Bridge the technical gap
- Designate a single credible spokesperson for each level
- Coordinate media relations through a joint media centre if possible
- Monitor the media and correct rumours
Working With the Media

To communicate effectively with the media, you need to understand how the media works!
The Media

- Media outlets – Examples
  - Broadcast
    - Television
    - Radio
  - Print
    - Newspapers
    - Magazines
  - Internet Web Sites
Media Operations

• Media expectations/needs
  ▪ Facts the media wants to know
    ◆ Who, what, when, where, why, how?
  ▪ Access to Emergency Manager and On-scene Controller near the accident site
  ▪ Production deadlines
Communication With the Media and the Public

- When and What Form
  - On-going media effort as part of preparedness program
  - General information leaflets with terms, radiation units, emergency arrangements, and putting risks in perspective
  - Background information on radiation uses and emergency plans for use in media briefings
Identifying/designating individuals authorized as spokespersons
Communications With the Media and the Public (1)

- Information must be coordinated and approved before release in briefings, interviews, or press releases
- Designated media gathering point
- Joint Information Center/Emergency Public Information Center may be required for large scale accidents
The Press Release/News Statement

- Content
- Format
- “Inverted pyramid style”
- When to write a release
On-scene Media Operations

- Must not interfere with response operations
- Establish “rules of engagement”
On-scene Media Operations (1)

- On-scene Controller must establish media boundaries
- Monitor the media
On-scene Media Operations (2)

- Access to scene
- Designated media area
- “Pool coverage” arrangement
- Information technology
- Visiting dignitaries/officials
The Media Interview

- Types of interviews
  - Live vs. taped
  - Print
  - Broadcast
  - General vs. investigative
  - Ambush vs. prearranged
  - Office vs. on scene
The Media Interview (1)

“Unwritten rules”
Unwritten Rules

- Everything you say is on the record
- You are entitled to polite behavior
- Journalists must identify themselves, their employer, and the subject of the interview.
- You can control to a certain extent where the interview takes place
- You should know if others will be present, who they are, and if there will be others interviewed, as well as the interview order.
- You are entitled to know if the interview will be taped, if it will be edited
- If you need an interpreter, bring your own
General Interview Guidelines

- Ten rules of communication during an interview
General Guidelines

- Be yourself
- Be comfortable and confident
- Be honest
- Be brief
- Be human
- Be personal
- Be prepared, positive, and consistent
- Be attentive
- Be energetic
- Be committed and sincere
Media Briefing/interview Planner Worksheet

- Date/time/place
- Audience
- Anticipated questions/responses
- Opening statement/introduction

Be Prepared!
Media Briefing / Interview Planner Worksheet

- Key messages
- Supporting facts
- Sound bites
- Summary statement/conclusion
- Visual aids/handouts

Be Prepared!
Benefits of Good Media Communications

- Response focused on *real* issues as opposed to *perceived* ones
- Better appreciation of the response effort
- Better control over public protective actions
  - Less overreaction
- The emergency will be shorter-lived!
Summary

- Communicating with the public is an essential part of emergency response
- Use the media to communicate with the public
- Know the mass media and work with it
- Coordinate media relations
- Good media communications will enhance your emergency response
Where to Get More Information

- All the references listed in this lecture
- Practical exercise – simulation of media briefing/interview