

Ready Washtenaw!
Human Services Emergency Response Network

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CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

Communication in Crisis

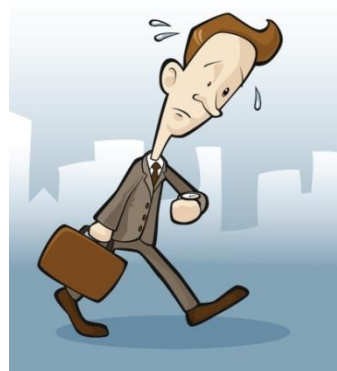
- Communication during crisis is different
 - System or equipment failures
 - Information processing *may be slower*
 - Decision making *may be impaired*

- *Simplicity*
- *Credibility*
- *Verifiability*
- *Consistency*
- *Speed*



What is Crisis Communication?

- Crisis Communication
 - ▣ An organization's effort to address crisis and to communicate with the public and media
 - ▣ Perceived as participant in crisis
 - ▣ Focus on protecting reputation, assets, etc.



What is Risk Communication?

- In health and social service fields...
 - ▣ Information provided about behavior or exposure
 - ▣ Goal to influence behavior or choices



Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Combines the urgency of disaster with need to communicate risks and benefits

“The effort by experts to provide information to allow an individual, stakeholder, or an entire community to make the best possible decisions about their well-being within nearly impossible time constraints and help people ultimately accept the imperfect nature of choices during crisis”

- CDC 2002

Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication

- Be First
- Be Right
- Be Credible

- BUT...
 - ▣ Coordination and consistency is **CRITICAL**
 - ▣ Be one voice, **FIRST**

Crisis Communication Life Cycle



Empathy

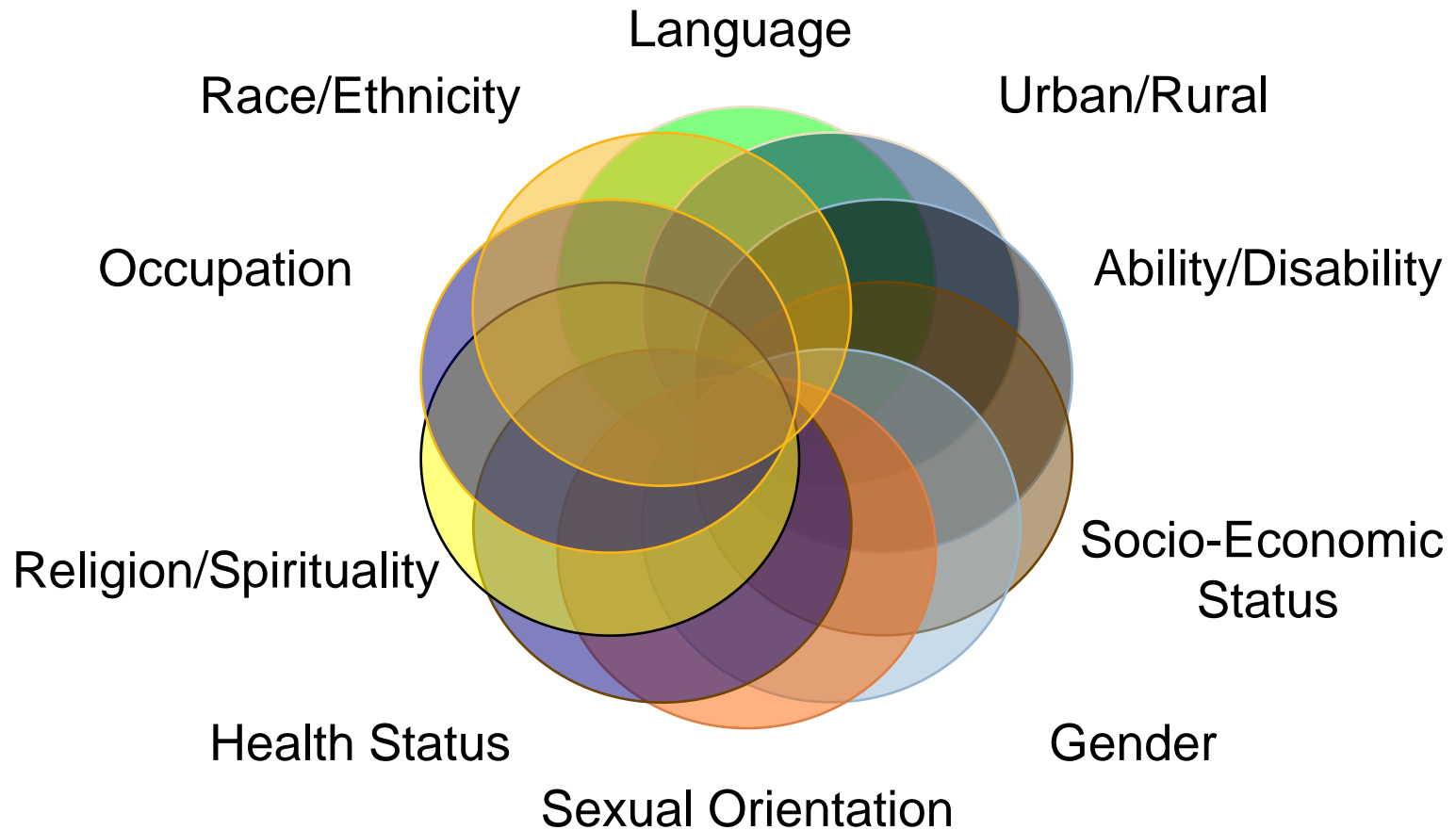
Simplest terms

Credibility

Course of action

Commitment to continued information

Understanding our Audience



Emergency Decision Making

Of those who stayed in New Orleans, approximately 33% reported they had not heard an evacuation order and about 30% state that they had heard an evacuation order but that it had not provided clear information about how to evacuate.

Brodie et. al, 2006 - Washington Post, KFF, and Harvard School of Public Health.

Emergency Decision Making

- Major factors among Katrina evacuees:
 - Insufficient resources
 - Ambiguity of warnings
 - Distrust of warning providers
 - Lower perception of personal risk

Eisenman, et. al. 2007

Other Factors

- ▣ Mixed message from multiple experts
- ▣ Late information
- ▣ Over-reassuring
- ▣ Recommendations without a reality check
- ▣ Leaving myths or rumors unchecked
- ▣ Spokespersons engaging in improper behavior, lack of affect, inappropriate humor
- ▣ Power struggles and confusion

What Can We Do?

- In most cases...
 - ▣ Be prepared. Listen for official instructions.
 - ▣ “Translate” for your constituents.
 - ▣ Reinforce messages, dispel rumors.

- If your organization is in the midst of the crisis...
 - ▣ Coordinate messages with appropriate authorities
 - ▣ Work within response systems
 - ▣ Consider joint public statements

Resources

- Resource list on your jump drive
 - <http://emergency.cdc.gov/training/cerc/index.html>
 - <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/cerc/>
 - Presentations available at <http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>
- More to come at future Ready Washtenaw events...