

KNW-149

Communicating Effectively 2

Modified from original Waller County ARES training article.

Types of Communication

Communication media range in complexity from handwritten notices to international satellite broadcasts. The communication tools most frequently used in emergencies and the advantages of each type will be presented.

Emergency Alert System (EAS)

The EAS is an established communication method that warns a community quickly of impending dangers. All local partners should be well versed in the use of warning tones, crawl messages (a message that moves across the bottom of a TV screen), cable television override, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radios, and other warning technologies linked to EAS.

In the Houston area EAS is sent out through KTRH 740AM. Many municipalities have a radio that will transmit an alert tone to KTRH and will take their message and retransmit it to the public.

Oral Communication

Oral communication is fluid and dynamic, and is shaped by both the speaker and the audience. Oral communication is enhanced by nonverbal communication such as body language and tone of voice.

Types of oral communication include:

- Individual briefings.
- Phone conversations.
- Public speeches.
- On-air interviews.
- Public Service Announcement (radio and/or television)
- Amateur radio – VHF, UHF, HF

Print Communication

In many emergency situations, it is best to use written communication. Never underestimate the value of documentation. It allows the information to:

- Be consulted in the future.
- Exist independent of human memory.
- Be reviewed and revised before it is delivered.
- Be passed on intact to a second audience.
- Types of print communication include:
 - Fax
 - E-mail
 - Public notice
 - Fact sheet or flier
 - Press release
 - Feature article
 - Digital modes of amateur radio

Choose the most effective communication type or method to deliver your message.

The best communication method for your message is the one that reaches *more* of your intended audience more quickly and elicits the desired response (e.g., increased awareness, increased knowledge, or action).

While technology is not a communication solution in itself, the right technology can support and enhance your communication. Most often, you will use a combination of methods to deliver a consistent message. Other times, one communication tool is sufficient. Your selection will depend upon the reach and frequency you want to achieve, as well as the message content and audience.

Choose methods that reach your identified target audience most quickly and effectively. Know who the audience is.

- Are you sending your message to the general public?
- Does your message apply only to people living in a specific geographic area?
- Is your message intended for emergency management personnel only?
- What is the primary language of the intended audience?
- Where does this audience usually obtain news?
- How many people does the information need to reach?

When and how long does your audience need this information?

- Is this information immediately safety related?
- Is this referral information for future recovery?
- When do various media (radio, TV), publish, or broadcast information?
- How long will this information be useful to the audience?
- How many times do you think your audience needs to see or hear your information before they act on it?
- Should urgency take priority over “crossing every t and dotting every i” in producing the communication?

Ensure that your choice of media is reliable during the emergency. (During *this emergency situation*, which media are functional?)

- Are the radio, television, and newspaper companies functioning normally?
- Are there widespread power outages that affect some or all media outlets?
- Is mail delivery interrupted?
- Are residents currently located at their normal mailing addresses?
- Can you identify public places where your audience can assemble?
- Is your after-hours contact information for key emergency partners up-to-date?

Choose appropriate media to enhance comprehension. Which medium is the best fit for my message?

- Is your message too sensitive to send via fax or radio?
- Is your audience geographically concentrated enough to make a public meeting possible?
- Can you make your point on a billboard? – Obviously this does not relate to an immediate emergency threat.
- Should you prepare explanatory handouts to support a public speech that presents complicated ideas?
- Does the urgency of this information warrant an immediate press conference?
- Will your audience want to refer to this information repeatedly?

Consider your resources in your media choice. (What may be required when you choose each communication tool?)

- Are on-site interpreters needed?
- Do you have appropriate radio equipment to get the message out?