Session 7: Risk and Crisis Communication
Session Overview

Summary
In this session, we will discuss what risk communication is, touch on some risk communication theories, and talk about strategies to use in the real world.

What we commonly refer to as risk communication has several branches:
- Risk communication provides information about expected outcomes resulting from a behavior or exposure.
- Crisis communication is an effort to inform the public about a crisis and how to react.
- Emergency risk communication attempts to provide information to people so they can make decisions.

Effective risk communication takes into account theories of defining risk, trust determination, and mental noise. Basic strategies for implementing risk communication include:
- Having a plan before the crisis arises
- Listening to the public
- Responding to media requests
- Preparing for questions, and
- Paying attention to body language

In summary, during a crisis, people external to your public health agency will be frightened and seeking information, guidance, and reassurance. Communication should be open and honest and should respect the rights of the public to gain information, ask questions, and disagree with the experts. To get your message to the public, keep messages clear, short, consistent, and memorable. When delivering your message, remember that your audience is human: speak with compassion, humanity, and show your personal concern in addition to presenting facts and instructions.

Intended Audience
All public health, medical, veterinary, pharmacy, emergency management, hospital and other professionals interested in public health preparedness and field epidemiology.

Running Time
35 minutes of lecture
20 minutes for pre-test, post-test, and evaluation
Optional Discussion: 15 minutes (approximate)
Learning Objectives

- Define risk communication
- Identify theories of risk communication
- Determine basic strategies for implementing risk communication; and
- List components of a risk communication message