

Agricultural EMERGENCY Response



Risk and Crisis Communication Pocket Guide



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The Consortium for Risk and Crisis Communication is comprised of the Center for Risk Communication and Widmeyer Communications, two highly experienced organizations in the fields of risk and crisis communications. The Consortium was formed in 2001 to assist public, private and non-profit organizations develop effective crisis communication plans and respond more effectively to actual crises. For more information about the Consortium contact Dr. Tinker at tim.tinker@widmeyer.com.

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To Our Fellow Agricultural Emergency Responders:

The **Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture** has prepared this guide in cooperation with the *Consortium for Risk and Crisis Communication* for all of us who oversee communications during an agricultural emergency. It outlines proven ways to communicate during moments of risk and crisis.

During an emergency, it is important to quickly provide information about what is happening, what steps to take and what government agencies are doing to help. If the information isn't shared in a timely manner, speculation and rumors can spread.



This guide cannot cover every possible circumstance, but it can help all of us share solid and helpful information at the very moment when the public needs it most.

This guide is not intended to replace communications strategies and response plans developed by local and national government agencies.

It is a supplemental "ready reference" to help us in preparing for, and carrying out, communications during an emergency.

I. BEFORE AN EMERGENCY

The success of your communications during an emergency depends on preparation. What information needs to be in place, who makes decisions, who gives orders, and who follows them? How is your plan carried out? A crisis is not the time to begin thinking about these questions. In fact, it's the worst time to do so. Get ready *ahead* of time.

Preparing for an Agricultural Emergency

- Assume that an emergency will happen—it's not a question of *if*, but *when*.
- Prepare for the *worst-case* scenario. If it *can* go wrong, assume it *will*.
- The details of an emergency—who, what, when, where, why, and how—can't all be anticipated, but you can make intelligent assumptions about the scenarios most likely to occur.
- Specifics in an emergency need to be addressed on the spot, but you can prepare for general issues by developing responses to questions that your audience, or "stakeholders," are most likely to have.
- Consult with your partner agencies and organizations before an emergency occurs, so that messages are consistent and your plans are integrated.
- Build strong, healthy connections with the media and with your contacts among stakeholder groups.
- Develop background materials and fact sheets in advance.
- Develop a crisis communications plan that can be put into action immediately.

Developing a Crisis Communications Plan

- **Create a crisis communications team.** For this small team, select experts in areas that will be critical during an agricultural emergency, such as plant and animal disease specialists, communications personnel, and legal staff. The team is responsible for developing a protocol for action to be followed during an emergency.
- **Develop communications goals.** Realistic goals in an agricultural emergency include informing agricultural groups, producers, industry, and the public, providing guidance on appropriate responses, and easing concerns.
- **Develop messages and possible questions and answers—your “message map.”** Information needs, and therefore messages, will vary according to the emergency, so care should be taken to develop messages for various agricultural emergencies. Messages should be prepared in languages other than English. *How to build a “message map” is covered in Section III of this guide.*
- **Develop and maintain media lists.** In a crisis, you will not have time to research the names and phone numbers of media to contact. They should already be on hand.

Myth vs. Truth

RISK COMMUNICATION MYTH Crisis and risk communications is not my job.

TRUTH Yes it is. As a public servant, you have a responsibility to the public. Integrate communication with the public into your job and help others do the same.

All Myth vs. Truth boxes are cited from Chess et al, 1988, unless otherwise specified

- **Prepare fact sheets and background materials.** The tools needed to communicate fully when a crisis happens have to be ready and easily accessible. And remember the differences among your audiences! What farmers should be aware of may be very different from what the public needs to know.
- **Develop precise logistics, roles, and functions** for each member of the team, and a backup communications plan, such as a telephone tree, to reach team members in an emergency.
- **Coordinate communications protocols with other relevant agencies and organizations.** Determine who speaks to the media and the public on particular subjects, and who the primary and secondary contacts and experts for key offices and issues are.
- **Identify and train lead spokespeople and secondary spokespeople** from relevant agencies and emergency response organizations. Good spokespeople can remain calm and in control when addressing large groups of people; can communicate in non-technical, ordinary language; can retain and deliver key messages; and can express empathy and concern. Use the services of a good spokesperson-trainer if necessary.
- **Determine how to disseminate information**, including how to reach your audiences if normal communications channels break down.

Definition

RISK COMMUNICATIONS A science-based approach for communicating effectively in high concern, high stress, emotionally charged or controversial situations. (Covello, 2003)

Work With Partner Agencies and Organizations

Actions To Take

Overview

Identify partners for various scenarios before an emergency.

Some agencies would not necessarily be involved in an agricultural emergency; other agencies can bring additional help depending on the nature of the crisis. Know who these agencies are in advance.

Develop a profile for all partners.

Know what the mission, values, goals, and issues are for partner agencies. This will help you understand what their priorities are in an emergency.

Determine what the strengths and weaknesses of partner agencies are in the specific area of media communications.

What resources can partner agencies share during an emergency? Are there especially effective spokespeople, or is there a history of media difficulties, that should be taken into consideration?

Discuss with your partner agencies what your roles and responsibilities will be, and how to coordinate them.

This is the who, what, when, where, why, and how. Define in advance how joint statements will be issued. Define in advance how clearances and approvals will be made.

Learn the organizational hierarchy for each partner.

Know who makes the decisions in partner agencies so you can be sure you are connected to the right person for information, clearance, and action.

Develop contact sheets.

Create a contact sheet with all partner agency contacts—including both a main contact and a backup contact for each agency. Make sure to include business, home, and cell phone numbers. Carry the list with you at all times so you are always ready for an emergency.

Questions to Consider When Preparing for an Agricultural Emergency:

- What messages must be delivered before, during, and after an emergency?
- What are the obstacles to effective communications and how can they be minimized?
- What are the opportunities for effective communications and how can they be maximized?
- What questions can we anticipate from those who work in agriculture, and from the general public?
- What are the media's needs and how can you help reporters meet them?
- Who will the spokesperson(s) be?
- Where is the Joint Information Center located, and who is in charge?
- Where is the Incident Command Center located, and who is in charge?



II. QUICK RESPONSE GUIDE

Be Prepared

When communicating with agricultural stakeholders, the public, and the media, first *be prepared*. Communications blunders can make a crisis worse by confusing your audiences, making it harder for them to know how to protect their animals, plants, property—and themselves. And blunders often reduce the source’s credibility. Planning and rehearsing crisis communications before an agricultural emergency occurs helps ensure that your information is accurate, clear, and delivered with confidence and sincerity.

Communicating in High-Stress Situations

- **Watch your wording.** You want your words to have the impact you desire, so make sure they’re the right ones.
- **Take advantage of professionals.** If communications experts are available, work with them to develop what you will say and how. Their experience and knowledge can be invaluable.

Myth vs. Truth

RISK COMMUNICATION MYTH Communicating risk is more likely to alarm than calm people.

TRUTH Not if done properly. Educate and inform, don’t simply alert and alarm. Give people the chance to voice their concerns, ask questions, and process the answers.

- **Don’t speak unless you’re comfortable doing it.** Most communications mistakes are made by those who are unprepared or uncomfortable. If you’re not at ease with the task, find someone to work with you who is.

- **Understand your audience** and tailor your messages to them.

- **Consider media coverage of the crisis**, so you can tailor messages and presentations accordingly.

- **Avoid “no comment.”** If you say “no comment” during an emergency, people will assume you have information you are not willing to share—and they’ll imagine the worst. “No comment” breeds skepticism and mistrust.



Quick Tips

ALTERNATIVES TO “NO COMMENT”

- *“We are assessing that situation right now, and will share information with you as soon as we have it.”*
- *“Right now we don’t have the full answer on that, as we are still focusing our efforts on the priority of...”*
- *“I’d rather you speak with an authority on the subject who can give you more thorough information. I’ll have (name) call you back.”*

What To Do in an Emergency

If an agricultural emergency occurs, **recognize it as an emergency** and then **put your communications plan into action immediately**. The first 24 hours are the most critical, because mistakes made early have far-reaching consequences.

First Steps

1. Assess the crisis. Determine which other agencies and organizations are dealing with the crisis and how you will obtain and share information with them to be prepared for communications.

- Identify your audiences and the information they need.
- Remember that all audiences' perceptions of the situation and of the government's response will be formed during the first hours of the crisis.

2. Notify appropriate parties.

- Internal Staff
 - Crisis communications team, senior management, veterinarians, etc.
- External Partners
 - State and local agencies, federal agencies, elected officials
- If the disease can be easily spread to humans, contact
 - The Health Department
 - Essential partner health care organizations, including hospitals, physician practice groups, health care provider professional organizations, EMS personnel, medical examiners, etc.

3. Gather, prepare, and obtain approvals on information.

Working with partner agencies, agree on what information needs to be shared during this emergency. Combine it with already prepared messages to create your emergency-specific materials, and get approvals for release.

- Plan for a timely release.
- Check the accuracy of all information.
- Ensure that the messages show compassion.
- Cover the specific concerns of your audience.
- Make your messages concise and direct.
- Have materials available in appropriate languages.
- Clear messages for release to the media/stakeholder groups.

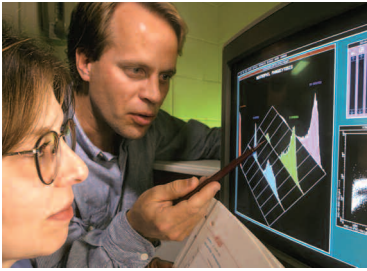


4. Prepare to communicate with the media. In most emergencies, the media offer the quickest channel to the public.

- If the emergency is severe, the media will report on it fast, so it is important to get your essential messages to the media quickly and at continuing regular intervals.
- Identify an expert on the agricultural emergency with whom the media can speak—the public wants to hear from someone knowledgeable about the subject and skilled in talking clearly. (It is best to have a list of individuals prepared before an emergency occurs. These spokespeople should be trained to talk to the media and speak on a variety of topics.)

5. Determine how to disseminate information: when, where, and how you will communicate with the media and all audiences.

- Consider that in some crises affecting agriculture, like natural disasters, there may be disruptions or failures in electricity and/or broadcast signals. Formulate an alternative communications plan and backup systems in partnership with other government agencies.



6. Prepare answers for crisis-specific questions which will be asked immediately.

- Most of the questions that will be asked can be anticipated.
- Support your messages with facts wherever possible.
- In a crisis you should assume anything you say may be reported, so it is important to give accurate information.

Myth vs. Truth

RISK COMMUNICATION MYTH What you say is more important than how you say it.

TRUTH In a crisis, the public and the media will trust the messages they receive if they believe officials have their best interests at heart. It is critical to demonstrate empathy, compassion, and concern when delivering information.

7. Focus on how you deliver information. It is essential to express compassion when speaking publicly, to be honest about what you know and don't know, to be clear about what is being done and when you anticipate having more information, and to be explicit about what the public can and should do.

- Don't report information that you do not know with *certainty* to be credible.
- Don't report information that is inconsistent or implausible.

Keep in Mind

WHEN DEVELOPING RESPONSES FOR QUESTIONS, REMEMBER THAT RESEARCH SHOWS:

- People only retain three key messages.
- The most important messages should be delivered first and last.
- Messages should use simple words that are four grade levels below the average reading level of your audience (AGL-4). For the general public, speak at a 6th to 8th grade reading level.

III. COMMUNICATION PREPARATION

It is important to be prepared for communications during an emergency. One of the best tools you can have is a “message map.” In the template shown on p.15, you can see how a message map provides a roadmap for displaying responses to anticipated questions or concerns in logical order—main points first, with supporting information lined up right behind. Consider it an “at-a-glance” visual aid for providing key messages during the crisis.

Why Develop Message Maps?

Message maps help with many important goals. Developing and using them:

1. Identifies stakeholders before the crisis.
2. Anticipates stakeholder questions and concerns before they are raised.
3. Organizes your thinking as you prepare messages to respond to stakeholders.
4. Builds a clear and accessible framework in which key messages and supporting information are always easy to grasp—and remember!
5. Makes us discuss key messages both inside and outside the organization *before* the crisis.

Definition

MESSAGE MAPPING A scientifically proven, easy-to-use way to develop messages for effective and concise communication.

Message Map Template

Scenario: Avian Influenza

Stakeholder: Farmers/Producers

Question or Concern: How can I protect myself and my farm from avian influenza

Key Message 1

Avoid contact with infected birds or contaminated objects.

Key Message 2

Use strict biosecurity measures on your farm.

Key Message 3

Monitor your birds closely and contact your veterinarian immediately if you suspect illness.

Supporting Fact 1-1

If contact is necessary, wear protective clothing (disposable gloves, mask, coveralls, and boots).

Supporting Fact 2-1

Limit, monitor and record any movement of people, vehicles, or animals coming in or going off your farm.

Supporting Fact 3-1

Signs of avian influenza in birds include coughing, sneezing, unsteadiness, decreased egg production or shell defects, swelling of the head, comb, wattles and sudden death.

Supporting Fact 1-2

Wash and disinfect items going on or off your farm, such as footwear, vehicles and equipment.

Supporting Fact 2-2

Keep your flock away from wild or migratory birds, especially water-fowl.

Supporting Fact 3-2

Signs develop 2-7 days after exposure to the virus.

Supporting Fact 1-3

If you have had exposure to infected birds, contact your health-care provider.

Supporting Fact 2-3

Isolate any ill animals and contact your veterinarian.

Supporting Fact 3-3

Notify your veterinarian immediately if your animals show signs of unusual or severe illness.

6. Provides user-friendly guidance and direction to spokespeople.
7. Ensures that a central repository of consistent messages is available.
8. Encourages agricultural spokespeople to speak with one voice.



Once developed, message maps can be used to structure press conferences, media interviews, information forums and exchanges, public meetings, websites, telephone hotline scripts, and fact sheets or brochures with frequently asked questions (FAQs).

Constructing a Message Map

There are seven steps.

Step 1. Identify stakeholders. Determine who is interested in or affected by the kinds of agricultural emergencies listed in Appendix A. Stakeholders can be distinguished further by prioritizing them according to their power to change outcomes and their credibility with other stakeholders.

For example, stakeholders in an emergency involving bovine spongiform encephalopathy may include:

- Producers
- Feed manufacturers
- Meat processors
- Public health personnel (local, county, state, national)
- Hospital personnel

- Government agencies (all levels)
- Politicians/legislators
- Media (all types)
- Legal professionals
- Ethnic/minority groups
- Educators
- Scientific community
- Business community (for example: tourism, food services, and recreation)
- General public

Step 2. Identify specific concerns. Develop a complete list of specific concerns for each important stakeholder group.

Questions and concerns typically fall into three groups:

(1) Overarching questions (for example: “What is the most important thing that the public should know about this issue?”)

(2) Informational questions (for example: “What is the budget allocated for your response?”)

(3) Challenging questions or statements (for example: “Why should we trust what you are telling us?”; “How many more animals have to die before you take appropriate action?”)

Keep in Mind

Research indicates that more than **95 PERCENT** of the concerns raised by any stakeholder in any emergency can be predicted in advance.

Step 3. Identify underlying general concerns. Analyze all the specific concerns to identify the larger issues. Case studies indicate that most specific issues of high or immediate concern are associated with no more than 15-25 larger issues. These primary, larger issues are the underlying general concerns.

Sample List of Underlying Concerns

1. Ecological/environmental
2. Economic impact
3. Health
4. Quality of Life
5. Equity/fairness
6. Cultural/symbolic
7. Legal/regulatory
8. Basic informational:
who, what, where,
when, why, how
9. Openness/access to
information
10. Accountability
11. Options/alternatives
12. Control
13. Effects on children/future generations
14. Irreversibility
15. Ethics/morality
16. Unfamiliarity
17. Changes in the status quo

Template Tool

Primacy/Recency

Use when responding to any high-stress or emotionally charged question.

1. Most important information first
2. Least important information middle
3. Second most important information last

18. Voluntariness
19. Benefits
20. Expertise
21. Honesty
22. Listening/caring/empathy
23. Trust

Step 4. Develop key messages for each stakeholder question, concern, or perception. Key messages are usually

developed through brainstorming sessions within the message mapping team. The message mapping team typically consists of a subject-matter expert, a communications specialist, a policy/legal/management expert, and a facilitator. The brainstorming session produces message narratives—usually in the form of complete sentences—which are entered as the “key messages” on the message map. Alternatively, the brainstorming session produces keywords for each message, which are entered on the message map. Keywords serve as an aid to memory. Each separate key message should have no more than 1-3 keywords.



Step 5. Develop supporting facts and proofs for each key message. The same principles that guide key message construction should guide the development of supporting information. Proof points are not necessarily included in the message map. It can be useful to hold some in reserve to support a particular message if it is challenged.

Step 6. Conduct systematic message testing using standardized message-testing procedures.

Message testing should begin by asking subject-matter experts not directly involved in the original message mapping process to validate the accuracy of technical information contained in the message map. Message testing should then be done with:

- (1) surrogates for key internal and external target audiences; and
- (2) partner agencies and organizations.

Sharing and testing messages with partners—above all, with fellow government agencies—ensures the consistency and coordination of the message. This is crucial in securing the public’s confidence.

Step 7. Plan for delivery. Prepare for the delivery of the message maps through:

1. A trained spokesperson
2. Appropriate communications channels
3. Trusted individuals or organizations

NOTE: The process used to build message maps can be as helpful and important as the end map itself. message mapping exercises—involving teams of subject-matter experts (scientists or veterinarians, for example), communications specialists, and individuals with policy, legal, and management expertise—often expose diverse viewpoints surrounding an issue within a single organization. The resulting gaps in the message map often provide early warnings that your message for stakeholders and the public is incomplete. Preparing the message map gives you an opportunity to fix that, and may also suggest ways to improve strategies, policies, and agency performance.

Guidelines for Using Message Maps

- Use one or all of the three key messages on the message map as a media sound bite.
- Repeat key messages and bridge to the over-arching message map—the map with the most important information—frequently during interviews.
- Present any sound bite in less than nine seconds for television and less than 27 words for the print media.
- When responding to specific questions from a reporter or a stakeholder regarding a key message, present the supporting information from the message map in less than nine seconds or 27 words.
- If time allows, present the key messages and supporting information contained in your message map using the “Triple T Model” on p. 23.
- Stick with the prepared messages in the message map. Do not “wing it”!
- Keep messages short and focused.
- Be honest!

Template Tool

27/9/3

The average amount of words, time, or concepts that the media will allow is short. Keep your message to:

- 27 words
- 9 seconds
- 3 key messages

Staying on Message

Once goals and messages have been established, and a media interview is in progress, the challenge becomes one of delivery and ensuring that messages are heard and goals are met.

Accomplishing this is known as staying “on message.” It is, essentially, a form of artful repetition.

If the goal is to ease concern and the message supporting that goal is “there is no public risk,” that message should be clearly stated at the start and returned to as often as possible.

Here’s how:

“I want to begin by first saying that there is no risk for the public...”

“As I said a moment ago, there is no public risk...”

“That’s an important question, but before I answer it I want to again stress that the public is not at risk.”

“Before I close, I want to remind everyone that there is no public risk.”

Template Tool

Bridging

It is important to stay on message. Use these types of sample statements when you want to return to your key points or redirect the interview.

“That’s a good question:

...however, the reason we are here...”

...however, what is most important to look at is...”

...however, the real issue is...”

Check Your Message

1. Is the message clear? Is it easy to understand and free from jargon?

2. Is the message consistent? Does it convey what science tells us about the risks and what we do not yet understand?

3. Is the message focused? Does it cover the most important points, avoiding extraneous information and caveats?

4. Is the message appropriate in tone and appeal? Does it create a sense of urgency for action? Does it reassure the audience that answers are being sought? Does it avoid confusing and frightening them?

5. Does the message cover the audience’s concerns? Is the information relevant and important?

Yes

No

Quick Tips

“TRIPLE T MODEL”

1. Tell people what you are going to tell them: your key messages.
2. Tell them more, using supporting information.
3. Tell people again what you told them: that is, repeat key messages.

Dealing With Difficult Questions

During an emergency, the media or public may ask questions that, if answered directly, could back you into a corner on a difficult issue. Here are some types of questions that can be tricky, with tips for handling them:



Allegation Questions (For example, *“The Department of Agriculture’s negligence in surveillance is what caused this mess; how are you going to fix it?”*)

- Repeat/rephrase the question without repeating the allegations or saying negative words.
- Acknowledge that the issue is important.
- Do not become defensive.
- State what has been done and/or what the department is doing or will do to address the issue.

Sample response: *“You’ve raised a serious question regarding the surveillance conducted. This is an important issue for us and the Department of Agriculture is currently investigating all aspects of the situation.”*

Quick Tip

Avoid saying “there are no guarantees in life” or guaranteeing something you can’t control or don’t know.

Guarantee Questions (For example, *“Can you guarantee that mad cow disease won’t affect my family?”*)

- Do not answer with a yes or no response.
- Point out that the question is about the future.
- Acknowledge what has worked in the past/present.
- Bridge to known facts, processes, or actions: *“Here’s what I can guarantee...”*
- Emphasize precautionary measures.
- Focus on processes rather than results.

Sample response: *“What I can guarantee is that we are doing X and Y to protect families in the surrounding community.”*

Worst-Case Questions

(For example, *“What are the worst effects this outbreak of avian influenza could have?”*)

- Point out that this is a “what if” question.
- Indicate that it is more useful to talk about “what is.”
- Bridge to known facts.

Template Tool

1 N = 3 P

(1 Negative equals 3 positives)

When breaking bad news, negative messages should be counter-balanced with three positive, constructive, or solution-oriented messages.

IV. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

How the Public Perceives Risk

People do not like to be “put” at risk. They may engage in “risky behaviors” in their own lives, but they do not like to be forced into risky situations that they did not choose. Because of this, the public may resent an agricultural crisis, especially if the situation poses a threat to health. It is important to recognize this natural human reaction, and respond accordingly. In an agricultural emergency, you should expect that people will want to protect their loved ones, land, plants, and animals. Because of this drive, it is important to have clear, concise, and direct messages to decrease confusion and reduce anxiety overload.

Risk is a Scientific Term

Because “risk” is a scientific term, we need to use it carefully. The public may not grasp the difference between “risk of exposure” to a danger and “risk from exposure.”

Keep in Mind

The public often personalizes risk with the same conviction that scientists strive to depersonalize it! A one-in-a-million comparison could be viewed by the scientific community as low; the general public will personalize risk and recognize that the one could be themselves, their loved ones, or their property.

Trying to sell the public on acceptable risk is difficult because all of us would prefer to live without any health or environmental risk at all. When officials listen to the public and address their concerns, however, the public becomes better able to understand—and, eventually, to accept—the risk.

Perceptions of the seriousness of risk are influenced by factors unrelated to numerical data (Fischhoff *et al.*, 1981). Understanding how the public views risk will help you prepare your messages and comprehend how the public understands and reacts to them.

Risks viewed as...	...are more acceptable than risks viewed as...
voluntary	being imposed
under an individual’s control	controlled by others
having clear benefits	having little or no benefit
distributed fairly	unfairly distributed
natural	man-made
statistical	catastrophic
generated by a trusted source	generated by an untrusted source
familiar	exotic
affecting animals	affecting humans

Securing the Confidence of the Audience

Your communications will be successful if your audiences view you as trustworthy and believable, believe you have their best interests at heart, and hear you addressing their primary needs.

It is crucial to deal empathetically with the feelings of your audience and to assure them that your most important concern is their health and welfare.

Where possible, communicate that the guidance you are providing is not theoretical, but “tried and true.”

People want certainties, and will be more willing to adhere to recommended protective actions if they know these actions have worked before (Becker, 2004). Be careful, however, not to make guarantees!

Example: *“Our extensive research confirms that...”*

Your messages will be more successful if the public hears consistency between them and those of other experts and agencies involved in the agricultural emergency. When possible, coordinate media briefings so that the public can see that experts are united in their recommendations.

Don’t confuse the public. Messages that are not consistent among agencies erode the public’s confidence and trust. If information that you do not agree with is presented publicly, resolve the matter in private with the other agencies or

Template Tool

C/C/O

During an emergency, messages should convey three main overarching messages:

- **Compassion** (a statement that shows caring and empathy)
- **Conviction** (a statement that reassures the public and shows a form of control over the situation)
- **Optimism** (a statement that emphasizes hopefulness and a movement forward)

parties, and then present the new information to the media as a correction or clarification, not as a different opinion.

Five General Rules for Building Trust and Credibility

(Covello and Allen, 1988)

- **Involve the public as a partner.** People will be satisfied when spokespeople express that they are in the situation together with the public.

- **Recognize the public’s specific concerns.** People will be dissatisfied when information does not cover what they feel is important.

- **Be open and honest.** People will be satisfied when spokespeople display honesty and empathy and their messages are clear.

- **Coordinate with other credible sources.** People will be dissatisfied if agencies deliver inconsistent messages, or if the spokesperson does not have expertise in the issues involved in the agricultural emergency.

- **Meet the media’s needs.** If the media is working on a specific aspect of the story, they will report it to the public with or without your help. Make sure you tell the media what you want the public to hear.

Template Tool

IDK (I Don’t Know)

Use these when you don’t know, can’t answer, or aren’t the best source:

1. Repeat the question (without negatives).
2. Say “I wish I could answer...” or “We are still looking into the situation...”
3. Say why you can’t answer. Don’t say “No comment!”
4. Give a follow-up with a deadline.
5. Bridge to what can be said.

Public Meetings

In many agricultural emergencies, a town-hall meeting or presentation to an agricultural organization is the best way to address the situation and offer solutions. Here are some useful pointers:



Presentation Structure

It should have four key segments:

1. Introduction

The audience will assess in the first 30 seconds of your presentation whether or not they find you credible and trustworthy. It is important to include these three elements in your introduction:

- A statement of personal concern; for example: *“I can see by the number of people here tonight that you are as concerned about this issue as we are.”*
- A statement of good organizational intention; for example: *“The entire Department of Agriculture is committed to protecting the health and safety of your [land, animals, crops, etc.], and we are working tirelessly during this emergency to...”*
- A straightforward statement about the purpose and structure of the meeting; for example: *“Tonight we would like to talk about the findings of the report for about 15 minutes. Then we would like to open the floor for discussion, questions, and concerns. We will also be available afterwards to answer any additional questions you might have.”*

2. Key Messages

These are the important points you want the audience to understand and remember after the meeting. They should relate to your audience’s primary needs and concerns about the health of their animals, the protection of their land/crops, and the safety of their loved ones.

Reinforce these key messages with visual aids and in handouts, because people are more likely to remember information that they both see and hear at the same time. Your visual aids should be limited, neat, clear, and uncluttered. They may be fact sheets, PowerPoint presentations, charts, diagrams, maps, lists, glossaries, photographs, or illustrations, for example. The fewer and clearer, the better.

3. Conclusion

This summary statement should reemphasize your key messages. If appropriate, you should include an action statement detailing the next steps your organization will take to address the crisis, or, short of that, a statement about when the audience can expect the next update from you.

Myth vs. Truth

RISK COMMUNICATION MYTH The public is often focused on the wrong concerns and can divert officials from communicating what is most important.

TRUTH The public’s concerns can not be ignored. It is your job to handle the issues and expectations the emergency has prompted in your audience. Your priorities and theirs need not be mutually exclusive: use whatever issues they raise to bridge to your key messages. The better informed people are, the more likely their agenda will be aligned with yours—and vice versa.

4. Q&A

How you answer questions—both what you say and how you say it—has a major impact on how the audience views your success.

- **Practice beforehand** how to answer general questions—and rehearse responses for the specific questions you are most likely to receive.
- **Listen attentively to the questions.** Repeat the question to make sure that you understood it correctly, and also as a courtesy to audience members who may not have heard it.
- **Keep your answers focused** on the questions asked and keep your answers short (less than two minutes). Re-emphasize your key messages when you can.
- **Be truthful.** If you don't know, say so. Follow up as promised. If you are unsure of a question, repeat or paraphrase it to be certain of the meaning.

Presentation Skills Tips

- **Attire/Grooming:** Dress as your audience would expect to see you at your place of work—or slightly less formal if they expect you to be “in action” or “in the field” as the emergency unfolds.
- **Attitude:** Express empathy. Be confident, calm, factual, and honest.
- **Body language:** Don't slouch, but don't be rigid. Stand up straight with legs slightly apart. Be aware of where your hands are. Crossing your arms can make you seem distant, withdrawn, or defensive. Keeping your hands behind your back or in your pockets may give the impression that you have something to hide.
- **Volume:** Don't make your audience strain to hear you, but don't shout at them either.

- **Enunciation/Pronunciation:** Speak distinctly and correctly. Be careful with unfamiliar words—make sure you know how to pronounce key terms in advance. Spell and define terms where appropriate, but don't sound like a schoolteacher.
- **Pace/Rhythm/Pitch:** Speaking in a monotone makes audiences lose concentration. Vary your tempo. Speak slowly to emphasize key messages; pause for emphasis; vary your voice pattern and length of phrases. Avoid repeating such “filler” or “idling” expressions as “ok,” “like,” “not,” “and so,” or “uh.”
- **Facial Expression/Eye Contact:** Eye contact is crucial. Your mouth, eyes, forehead, and eyebrows also communicate. Don't fidget, glance around, look past your audience, or lick your lips.
- **Gestures:** Gestures can enhance or detract from your communication. Be aware of yours and make sure they are appropriate.
- **Distractions:** Never check your watch, jingle keys or change, or pace.

How Your Audience Interprets Your Non-Verbal Communication

- **Poor Eye Contact:** dishonest, closed, unconcerned, nervous, lying
- **Sitting back in chair:** not interested, unenthusiastic, unconcerned, withdrawn, distancing oneself, uncooperative
- **Arms crossed on chest:** arrogant, not interested, uncaring, not listening, impatient, defensive, angry, stubborn, not accepting

- **Infrequent hand gestures/body movements:** dishonest, deceitful, nervous, lacking self-confidence
- **Rocking movements:** nervous, lacking self-confidence
- **Pacing back and forth:** nervous, lacking self-confidence, cornered, angry, upset
- **Frequent hand-to-face contact/resting your head in your hands:** dishonest, deceitful, nervous, tired, bored
- **Hidden hands:** deceptive, guilty, insincere
- **Speaking from behind barriers (podiums, lecterns, tables):** dishonest, deceitful, too formal, withdrawn, distancing oneself, unconcerned, not interested, superior
- **Speaking from an elevated position:** superior, dominant, judgmental
- **Speaking from behind a desk:** bureaucratic, uncaring, removed, distant, uninvolved
- **Touching and/or rubbing nose:** in doubt, disagreeing, nervous, deceitful
- **Touching and/or rubbing eyes:** in doubt, disagreeing, nervous, deceitful
- **Pencil chewing/hand pinching:** lacking self-confidence, in doubt
- **Jingling money/items in pockets:** nervous, lacking self-confidence, lacking self-control, deceitful. *A good tip: empty your pockets before an interview or presentation.*
- **Constant throat clearing:** nervous, lacking self-confidence
- **Drumming on table, tapping feet, twitching, etc.:** nervous, hostile, anxious, impatient, bored

V. WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

What the public thinks depends mainly on what the public sees, reads and hears. During emergencies, the public turns to the media—television, newspapers, online, and radio—for information about what has happened and what they should do. That’s why we need to view the media as allies, and not talk past, around, or against them, but *with* them.



If you cooperate with the media and provide accurate, timely information, the media can assist you in an emergency by:

- Quickly informing and educating the public
- Reaching major target audiences
- Helping to rally support
- Preventing and/or calming fears and anxiety
- Encouraging appropriate behaviors

Keep in Mind

THE MEDIA:

- Provides an effective channel of communication.
- Is a critical “audience” in a high-risk, high-stress situation.
- Will report what has happened—with you or without you.

When an agricultural emergency occurs, it is important to be prepared to help the media so that the messages they convey are the ones you want and the public needs.

During an emergency, be prepared to provide the media with:

- **Information in a timely manner.** This prevents an information vacuum where speculation and rumor can grow.
- **Ease of access to knowledgeable, skilled, confident spokespeople.** These should be experts relating to the emergency, such as veterinarians, ecologists, zoologists, and so on.
- **Facts, sources, and relevant materials.** The general public and the media have limited knowledge about agricultural emergencies and their effects. You should have easy-to-read materials with the most important information on the subject ready for distribution.
- **Media communicators.** These are people who can speak with the media directly or arrange interviews with subject-matter experts. You should supply cell, home, and work phone numbers as well as email addresses so they can be reached at any time.

Understanding the Media

When working with the media, remember to keep a positive attitude, an open mind, and a tight schedule.

Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Short deadlines.** Reporters are responsible for making deadline. It is important to follow-up and provide information and updates on a timely basis. If you need to research a question and get back with to reporters, be sure to ask what their deadlines are so that you can be sure to meet them.

- **Space limitations.** It's okay to provide reporters with background information; however, do not expect it to be included. When providing a quotation, keep your information to no more than three points, and no more than 27 words total.

- **Competition.** Media outlets compete with each other. Be sure to provide information equally and avoid "exclusive" interviews. They can suggest you will not provide the story to any other media outlet. And any information the public needs should be shared as widely as possible.

What the Media Wants

All media professionals want:

- To meet deadlines.
- To give a human face to the subject.
- To demonstrate knowledge/authority.
- To get the information *in* fast and to get it *out* fast.
- To get it out first.

Print journalists want:

- Complex issues explained to them as clearly and briefly as possible.
- Information and authoritative quotations.
- Visuals and printable elements; picture/photo opportunities.
- Short (27-word) quotations that are punchy, informative, and to the point.
- On-site interviews.

Online journalists want:

- Material that can be displayed online effectively.
- Authoritative links to more information.

Radio journalists want:

- To keep listeners' attention.
- To work with clear and comprehensible spokespeople.
- To illustrate differences of opinion.

Television journalists want:

- Images that attract the audience.
- Complex issues to be explained visually—and simply.
- Short (9-second) quotations that are punchy and to the point.
- On-site interviews.

Quick Tips

WHAT'S IN YOUR MEDIA KIT?

- News release
- Fact sheet
- Biographies of speakers, subject-matter experts, etc.
- Copies of any reports/documents that would be useful to the reporter
- Visual material like maps, charts, timelines, diagrams, drawings and photographs
- Other material as appropriate for the situation

Choosing a Spokesperson

Local

In an agricultural emergency, people need to know that experts are guiding them and minimizing the effects of the emergency on their lives and property. They also need to know that officials are sensitive to their needs and concerns.

What You Should Do When Addressing the Public:

(Covello, 1992; Covello, 1993)

- **Express empathy and caring.** Always important—but, in a crisis, essential!
- **Communicate honestly and openly.** People want to know they can trust you.
- **Exhibit commitment and dedication.** The public needs to be able to rely on the leadership of public officials to deal with the crisis at hand.
- **Demonstrate competence and expertise.** You should convey command of the situation and the response plan. Be careful, however, not to act overconfident.
- **Be responsive to public concerns.** Acknowledging and allaying the fears and concerns of the public is one of your most important jobs in a crisis.
- **Express optimism.** People can rarely see beyond the crisis at hand and need to be assured that the situation will get better.
- **Be attentive to your body language.** A confident yet open demeanor will help build credibility and trust.

Did You Know?

"People need to know that you care, before they care what you know."

—Will Rogers

National

During an emergency with the potential to spread to other areas or cause national concern, federal organizations may choose to send a representative to act as a spokesperson. National spokespeople may be appointed by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), or other national agencies, depending on the nature of the emergency.

NOTE: During an outbreak of an agricultural disease, APHIS is generally the point of contact for appointing a national spokesperson. If the USDA sends a representative, it typically sends one or more of the following individuals:

- Secretary of Agriculture
- Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Animal Services
- Chief Veterinarian
- Under Secretary of Food Security

For media inquiries that require a national response, please refer them to the **USDA communications department at 202-720-4623**. Be sure that you speak with the USDA communications department before communicating with the media so that the USDA communications department is completely briefed on the situation.

Keep in Mind

Studies find that male communicators must spend more time on caring statements and showing empathy and women must spend more time on expertise and showing competence.

Media Interviews

Media interviews come in three basic types. Here are key points to keep in mind for each:

- **Talk Show.** Conducted by invitation at a television or radio studio. Can be either local or national, and in general should be treated as an entertainment venue instead of news. Be sure to come prepared, use your time wisely, and, in a professional manner, take control of the interview.

- **News Conference.** Conducted on-site or at a pre-designated location. Media from all outlets should be invited to participate. Format should be structured by your organization to provide time for you to get your message across and to answer a limited number of questions. Providing a short agenda of how the briefing will flow and setting a time or question limit at the beginning of the session is helpful in structuring the event.

- **On the Spot or Ambush.** Conducted wherever you are. Before answering any questions, be sure to run through the following in your mind: *“Am I the right person? Do I have the answers? Is this the time/place?”* In this situation, you decide if you go or stay. If you decide to go, be sure to explain politely why you are choosing not to respond. Avoid using the words *“no comment.”*

Did You Know?

Retention of Information

After three hours

- Radio—70 percent
- Newspaper—72 percent
- Television—85 percent

After three days

- Radio—10 percent
- Newspaper—20 percent
- Television—60 percent

The Interview

Before you accept, consider:

- Should I do the interview?
- Who is the audience?
- What are the issues at hand?
- Who will be the interviewer?
- Is there a hidden agenda?
- What is the cost/benefit ratio?

Before the interview:

- Do your homework on issues.
- Decide if the topic has a local impact causing high concern.
- Develop and practice your key messages and responses to anticipated questions.
- Practice speaking without jargon/acronyms.
- Be familiar with current events.
- Last-minute details:
 - Check dress and grooming
 - Establish rapport with reporter. Remember that *everything* you say is fair game for reporting. There is no “off the record.”

During an interview:

- Remember that you are always “on the record.”
- Exert control of the interview.
- Stay on message.
- Be confident.

- Listen carefully and repeat questions to clarify.
- Avoid answering (or asking) hypothetical questions.
- Avoid referring to the reporter/ interviewer as “Sir” or “Ma’am.”
- Never lie or knowingly mislead.
- Never comment on matters beyond your knowledge—or speculate.
- Never treat a question as dumb.
- Look at the interviewer. Practice good eye contact. If the interview is on television, do not look at the camera or monitor.
- Keep your cool, even if the interviewer becomes hostile.



Avoid Interview Pitfalls. Don't Be Caught:

Using “I”. Speak for the organization by using the pronoun “we.” Don’t give the impression that you, alone, are the authority on the issues being raised or the sole decision-maker. Never disagree with the organization you are representing by saying, “*Personally, I don’t agree...*,” or “*Speaking for myself...*,” or “*If it were me...*”

Speculating. Stick to the facts of what has, is, and will be done. Don’t speculate on worst-case scenarios, what *could* be done, on what *might* happen, or on *possible* outcomes.

Making Promises. Promise only what you can deliver. It is better to state your willingness to try.

Using Jargon, Technical Terms, and Acronyms. Limit their use and be sure to explain those you must use.

Using Negative Words and Phrases. Use positive or neutral terms. Don’t make highly-charged analogies, like “*This is not another ‘mad cow’ outbreak like the one in England.*”

Assessing or Deflecting Blame. Accept your share of responsibility and don't point fingers at others. Focus your communications on how problems can be rectified.

Addressing Costs. Focus on the human benefits to be derived, not on the costs entailed.

Using Humor. Avoid it, period!

Responding to Negative Allegations. Refute allegations succinctly and don't repeat them.

Responding to Attacks. Respond to issues, not to people. Strive to end debates, not further them.

Keep in Mind

WHEN RESPONDING TO REPORTING ERRORS AND RUMORS, REMEMBER TO:

- **Squelch rumors.** Be clear and unequivocal. Don't leave comments open to interpretation.
- **Never overreact!** Usually mistakes are just that; mistakes.
- **Fix substantive inaccuracy.** Calmly and privately contact the reporter to set the facts straight.
- **Correct inconsequential or isolated mistakes.** Emphasize the facts whenever possible. If a small mistake is made before a limited audience, correct the mistake within that group only.
- **Don't make it a big deal.** Bringing up rumors and mistakes only reemphasizes them. Fight back with facts!

VI. AFTER AN AGRICULTURAL EMERGENCY

We know that there can always be a "next time." It is essential to analyze all aspects of communications after an emergency to determine what worked and what didn't in order to be better prepared. Conduct a "hotwash"—an initial debriefing before "spin" can set in—within 48 hours.

■ **Debrief the communications response team.** Team feedback will help to assess the communications response.

- Was the team readily available to answer questions and address public concerns?
- What do they think worked?
- What didn't?
- What challenges did they face, and how did they respond?
- What criticisms have been received?
- Does the team have ideas for improvement?

■ **Review your messages and delivery methods.**

- Which messages resonated with the media and the public? Which caused confusion or anxiety?
- Were the systems for disseminating information effective?
- How did the public react to messages?
- Did the public heed the your guidance?
- Did people feel that the Department of Agriculture demonstrated leadership in managing and controlling the crisis?



■ Gather and analyze available data.

- If people were instructed to take actions, try to learn how many actually carried them out.
- Monitor the results of those actions.

■ Add up results—both communications results and real-world agricultural and public-safety results.

- Which methods and messages worked? Which didn't?
- Are there patterns we can learn from?

Accomplishments and jobs done well should be praised and noted for future responses. Weaknesses, challenges, or pitfalls should be noted and directly addressed with steps for improvement.

APPENDIX A:

Agricultural Emergencies Quick List

All of the following emergency situations can affect agriculture, directly or indirectly.

Animal Diseases

- African swine fever
- Anthrax
- Avian influenza (bird flu)
- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or “mad cow disease”)
- Brucellosis
- Chronic wasting disease
- Classical swine fever
- Exotic Newcastle disease
- Foot and mouth
- Glanders
- Hanta virus
- Johne’s disease
- Nipah virus
- Plague
- Pseudorabies
- Rift Valley fever
- Swine vesicular disease
- Tularemia
- Vesicular stomatitis

Plant Diseases/Pests

- Bacterial wilt
- Brown stripe downy mildew
- Emerald ash borer

- Philippine downy mildew
- Soybean rust

Natural Disasters

- Drought
- Fire (wild fires)
- Flooding
- Hurricane
- Tornado
- Winter weather

Man-Made Situations

- Animal feed poisoning (intentional or unintentional)
- Bio-terrorism attack
- Bombing
- Chemical spill
- Food contamination
- Government shutdown
- Pharmaceutical corn issues
- NAIS (National Animal Identification System) issues
- Nuclear power plant accident near agricultural crops or industry
- Radiation incident near agricultural crops or industry

NOTE: This list provides only some examples of the agricultural emergencies for which we must be prepared; it is not meant to be definitive. You should feel free to add to it or modify it depending on the needs of your state or region.

APPENDIX B:

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What happened?
2. How certain are you about this information?
3. Is the situation under control?
4. What are you doing about the situation?
5. Is there a threat to human health?
6. Who is in charge of the situation?
7. What can I do to protect myself, my family, and my farm?
8. What are you advising people to do?
9. What information should I have about (X)?
10. Is treatment available?
11. What symptoms should we watch for?
12. Where should we go for more information?
13. Why wasn't this prevented from happening?
14. What is the worst-case scenario?
15. What can we expect next?
16. Who is in charge?
17. Who else is involved in the response?
18. Do you have a plan?
19. What is the economic impact of the situation?
20. Can you guarantee this will not happen again?

APPENDIX C:

Acronyms

A

AAR	After Action Report
AEC	Agency Emergency Coordinator
AMA	American Medical Association
APHA	American Public Health Association
APHL	Association of Public Health Labs
ARC	American Red Cross
ARES	Amateur Radio Emergency Service
ARI	Acute Respiratory Infection
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
AVMA	American Veterinary Medical Association

B

BDRP	Biological Defense Research Program
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
BIDS	Biological Integrated Detection
B-NICE	Biological, Nuclear, Incendiary, Chemical or Explosive
BPRP	Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Program

C

CA	Cooperative Agreement
CAA	Clean Air Act
CABIN	Chemical and Biological Information Network
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CEM	Comprehensive Emergency Management
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CFSAN	Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition
CPC	Climate Prediction Center
CSEPP	Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program
CVM	Center for Veterinary Medicine

D

DEFCON	Defense Condition
DES	Department of Emergency Services
DFO	Disaster Field Office
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DLA	Defense Logistics Agency
DMAT	Disaster Medical Assistance Team
DMH	Disaster Mental Health
DMORT	Disaster Mortuary Response Team
DNR	Department of Natural Resources
DOC	Department of Commerce
DOD	Department of Defense
DOE	Department of Energy
DOH	Department of Health
DOI	Department of the Interior
DOJ	Department of Justice
DOL	Department of Labor
DOS	Department of State
DOT	Department of Transportation
DPS	Department of Public Safety
DPW	Department of Public Works
DWR	Department of Water Resources

E

EAS	Emergency Alert System
EBS	Emergency Broadcast System
EFO	Emergency Field Office
EICC	Emergency Information and Coordination Center
EIS	Epidemic Intelligence Service
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EMT	Emergency Medical Technician
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EPO	Epidemiology Program Office
EPI	Emergency Public Information
ERC	Emergency Response Coordinator
ERT	Emergency Response Team
ESF	Emergency Support Function
ESO	Engineering Services Office

F

FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
FCO	Federal Coordinating Officer
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FECC	Federal Emergency Communications Coordinator
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FR	Federal Register
FRP	Federal Response Plan
FSIS	Food Safety and Inspection Service
FTS	Federal Telecommunications System

G

GAO	General Accounting Office
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System

H

HAN	Health Alert Network
HAZMAT	Hazardous Materials
HSIN	Homeland Security Information Network

I

IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAG	Interagency Agreement
IAP	Incident Action Plan
ICS	Incident Command System
ICRC	International Red Cross
IHPO	International Health Programs
IHS	Indian Health Service
INS	Immigration and Naturalization
ISA	Incident Staging Area

J

JEOC	Joint Emergency Operations Center
JIC	Joint Information Center
JIS	Joint Information System
JOC	Joint Operations Center

L

LAN	Local Area Network
LAO	Lead Agency Official
LEPC	Local Emergency Planning Committee
LHD	Local Health Department
LFA	Lead Federal Agency
LNO	Liaison Officer
LOA	Letter of Agreement
LOG	Logistics

M

MHC	Mobile Health Clinic
MMWR	Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report
MO	Medical Officer
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MUPS	Multiple Unexplained Physical Symptoms

N

NASDA	National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
NACCHO	National Association of County and City Health Officials
NAS	National Academy of Sciences
NBC	Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical
NIH	National Institutes of Health
NIMBY	Not In My Backyard
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NRC	Nuclear Regulatory Commission
NRT	National Response Team
NSA	National Security Agency
NSF	National Science Foundation
NVOAD	National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
NWS	National Weather Service

O

ODP	Office for Domestic Preparedness
OEM	Office of Emergency Management
OEP	Office of Emergency Preparedness
OES	Office of Emergency Services
OET	Office of Emergency Transportation

OPS	Operations
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
OSTP	Office of Science Technology

P

PAC	Public Assistance Coordinator
PIO	Public Information Officer
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PSA	Public Service Announcement

R

RACES	Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services
RAPID	Recovery Assistance Programs Information and Delivery
RCAC	Red Cross Assistance Center
RFI	Request for Information
RFP	Request for Proposal
RNA	Rapid Needs Assessment
RSC	Radiation Safety Committee

S

SIP	Shelter in Place
SME	Subject-Matter Expert
SNS	Strategic National Stockpile
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure

U

UC	Unified Command
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USAMRIID	US Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USGS	United States Geological Survey

V

VAL	Voluntary Agency Liaison
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W

WHO	World Health Organization
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WTO	World Trade Organization

APPENDIX D:

Important Terms

AGENCY FOR TOXIC SUBSTANCES AND DISEASE REGISTRY (ATSDR):

An agency that is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, serving the public by using the best science to take responsive public health actions, and provide trusted health information to prevent harmful exposures and disease related to toxic substances.

AIRBORNE INFECTION: A mechanism of transmission of an infectious agent by particle, dust, or droplet nuclei suspended in the air.

ANTIBODY: Protein molecule formed by exposure to a “foreign” or extraneous substance (e.g., invading microorganisms responsible for infection or active immunization).

ANTIGEN: A substance capable of inducing specific immune response. Introduction of an antigen may be by the invasion of infectious organisms, immunization, inhalation, or ingestion.

ASYMPTOMATIC: Presenting no symptoms of disease.

BACTERIA: Small living organisms made of only one cell. Some bacteria cause diseases.

BEHAVIORAL EPIDEMIC: An epidemic originating in behavioral patterns (as opposed to invading microorganisms or physical agents).

BIOLOGICAL PLAUSIBILITY: The criterion that an observed, causal association fits previously existing biological or medical knowledge.

BIOSAFETY LEVEL 3: Safety measures required for work with infectious agents causing serious or potentially lethal diseases as a result of exposure by the inhalation route.

BIOSAFETY LEVEL 4: Safety measures required for work with dangerous and exotic agents posing a high individual risk of aerosol-transmitted laboratory infections and life-threatening disease.

BIOSECURITY: Biosecurity refers to policies and measures taken to protect this nation’s food supply and agricultural resources from both accidental contamination and deliberate attacks of bioterrorism.

BIOTERRORISM: Intentional use of biological agents or toxins to cause a public health emergency or to threaten the integrity of the food and agricultural system.

CARRIER: A person or animal harboring a specific infectious agent in the absence of discernible clinical disease and constituting a potential source of infection.

CLUSTERING: A closely grouped series of events or cases of a disease or other health-related phenomena, with well-defined distribution patterns in relation to time, or place, or both.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE: An illness due to a specific infectious agent or its toxic products transmissible from an infected person, animal, or reservoir to a susceptible host, either directly or indirectly.

CONTACT (OF AN INFECTION): A person or animal that has been in physical association with an infected person or animal or contaminated environment, allowing the opportunity to acquire the infection.

CONTAGION: The transmission of infection by direct contact, droplet spread, or contaminated fomites.

CONTAGIOUS: Transmitted by contact.

CONTAMINATION: The presence of an infectious agent on a body surface; also on clothes, bedding, surgical instruments, or other inanimate articles or substances; also the undesirable deposition of a chemical, biological, or radiological material on the surface of structures, areas, objects, or people.

CROSS-CONTAMINATION: The transfer of harmful substances or disease-causing microorganisms to food by hands, food-contact surfaces, sponges, cloth towels and utensils that touch raw food, are not cleaned, and then touch ready-to-eat foods.

DECONTAMINATION: The reduction or removal of a chemical, biological, or radiological material from the surface of a structure, area, object, or person.

DISASTER MORTUARY SERVICE TEAMS (D-MORT): Team responsible for advising and assisting local and state personnel with a mass-fatalities incident in their locality.

DISEASE, PRECLINICAL: Disease with no signs or symptoms, because they have not yet developed.

DISEASE, SUBCLINICAL: A condition in which disease is detectable by special tests but does not reveal itself by signs or symptoms.

ENCEPHALITIS: An acute inflammatory process of the brain and central nervous system, most commonly caused by a virus carried by mosquitoes.

EPIDEMIC: The occurrence in a community or region of cases of an illness or other health-related events clearly in excess of normal expectancy.

EPIDEMIOLOGIST: An investigator who studies the occurrence of disease or other health-related conditions or events in a defined population. Also known as a disease detective.

EPIDEMIOLOGY: The study of the distribution and determinants of health-related states and events in populations, and the application of this study to the control of health problems.

EPIZOOTIC: An outbreak (epidemic) of disease in an animal population (often with the implication that it may also affect human populations).

ERADICATION (OF DISEASE): Termination of all transmission of infection by extermination of the infectious agent through surveillance and containment.

ERYTHEMATOUS: Abnormal reddening of the skin due to capillary congestion.

EXPOSURE (RADIOLOGICAL): A quantitative measure of gamma or x-ray radiation at a certain place based on its ability to produce ionization in air.

FALSE NEGATIVE: Negative test result in a subject who possesses the attribute for which the test is conducted.

FALSE POSITIVE: Positive test result in a subject who does not possess the attribute for which the test is conducted.

FOMITES: Objects or articles conveying infection to others because they have been contaminated by pathogenic organisms. Examples include dishes, door handles, and toys.

FOODBORNE ILLNESSES: Illnesses caused by pathogens (disease-causing microorganisms found in food, usually bacteria, fungi, parasites, protozoans, and viruses) that enter the human body through foods.

HEMORRHAGIC FEVER: A severe multisystem syndrome ("multisystem" because multiple organ systems in the body are affected) caused by a virus, such as the Ebola virus.

HEPA FILTER: High-Efficiency Particulate Air filters are used to filter out submicron-sized particles; they are not suitable for use in biological work, however.

HERD IMMUNITY: The immunity of a group or community. The resistance of a group to invasion and spread of an infectious agent, based on the resistance to infection of a high proportion of individual members of the group.

HOST: A person or other living animal, including birds and arthropods, affording subsistence to an infectious agent under natural conditions.

INCIDENCE: The number of instances of illness during a given period in a specified population.

INCIDENT RATE: A measure of the rate at which new events occur in the population.

INCUBATION PERIOD: The interval of time between invasion by an infectious agent and appearance of the first sign or symptom of the disease in question.

INDEX CASE: The first case in a family or other defined group to come to the attention of the investigator.

INFECTIOUSNESS: A characteristic of the disease concerning the relative ease with which it is transmitted to other hosts.

MICROORGANISM: A form of life that can be seen only with a microscope; including bacteria, viruses, yeast, and single-celled animals.

MORBIDITY: The relative incidence of a particular disease.

NEGATIVE-PRESSURE ROOM: A room in which air moves from adjacent spaces (e.g., a corridor) into the room. When negative pressure exists, a continuous air current enters the room under the door, which prevents airborne particles generated within the room from escaping out into the corridor.

NOSOCOMIAL INFECTION: An infection originating in a medical facility.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE: A disease that, by statutory requirements, must be reported to the public health authority.

PANDEMIC: An epidemic occurring over a very wide area and usually affecting a large proportion of the population.

PARASITE: An animal or vegetable organism living on or in another organism and deriving its nourishment from it.

PATHOGEN: An organism capable of causing disease.

PATHOGENICITY: The ability or degree to which an agent can cause disease.

PREVALENCE: The number of instances of a given disease or other condition in a given population at a designated time.

PRIMARY CASE: The individual who introduces the disease into the family or group under study.

PRION: An abnormal protein responsible for neurodegenerative diseases such as Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease or scrapie. Certain prion diseases have no known cause. Others are hereditary or transmitted between individuals or species by several means, including food.

PRODROMAL PERIOD: A period during which premonitory symptoms of disease are shown. In smallpox, it is a period of fever,

headache, backache, and myalgias, followed quickly by the appearance of a maculopapular rash.

PUSTULAR: Small raised places on the skin containing pus and having an inflamed base.

RADIATION SICKNESS: The symptom(s) characterizing radiation injury due to excessive exposure of the whole body to ionizing radiation.

RELATIVE RISK: The ratio of the risk of disease or death among the exposed to the risk among the unexposed.

RESERVOIR: The natural habitat of the infectious agent.

RISK ASSESSMENT: The process of estimating the severity and likelihood of harm to human health or the environment from exposure to a substance or activity.

SAMPLE: A selected subset of a population.

SURVEILLANCE: A system of monitoring the health of the population—human, animal or food.

TRANSMISSION OF INFECTION OR INFECTIOUS AGENTS: Any mechanism by which an infectious agent is spread through the environment or to another person.

TRIAGE: Sorting according to a system of priorities.

VECTOR-BORNE: Transmitted by a specific organism, such as an insect.

VESICULAR: Composed of fluid-filled sacs, such as blisters.

VIRULENCE: The degree of pathogenicity.

VIRUS: A minuscule cell parasite that penetrates a cell and reproduces itself, eventually contaminating other cells. Viruses can infect humans, animals, plants, and even bacteria.

ZOOZONOSIS: An infection or infectious disease transmissible under natural conditions from vertebrate animals to man.

APPENDIX E:

Federal Agency Contact List

United States Department of Agriculture

www.usda.gov
Communications Department
(202) 720-4623

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

www.aphis.usda.gov

Federal Emergency Management Agency

www.fema.gov
(202) 566-1600

Food and Drug Administration

www.fda.gov
(888) 463-6332

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov
(800) 311-3435

National Association for State Departments of Agriculture

www.nasda.org
(202) 296-9680

Center for Food Security and Public Health

www.cfsph.iastate.edu
(515) 294-7189

APPENDIX F:

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Special thanks to the New York and Utah Departments of Agriculture for sharing information that was adapted for use in this guide.

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APPENDIX G:

Suggested Reading

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Top Ten Ways To Avoid Communications Mistakes:

1. **BE PREPARED!** WORDS HAVE CONSEQUENCES—MAKE SURE THEY'RE THE RIGHT ONES.
2. **DON'T BABBLE.** KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY—AND SAY IT. THEN SAY IT AGAIN!
3. **IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, STOP TALKING!**
4. **FOCUS ON INFORMING PEOPLE, NOT IMPRESSING THEM.** USE EVERYDAY LANGUAGE.
5. **NEVER SAY ANYTHING YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE PRINTED ON TOMORROW'S FRONT PAGE.**
6. **NEVER LIE!** YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH IT.
7. **DON'T MAKE PROMISES OR GUARANTEES YOU CAN'T KEEP.**
8. **DON'T SAY "NO COMMENT!"** YOU'LL LOOK LIKE YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO HIDE.
9. **DON'T GET ANGRY.** WHEN YOU ARGUE WITH THE MEDIA, YOU ALWAYS LOSE—AND YOU LOSE PUBLICLY.
10. **DON'T SPECULATE, GUESS, OR ASSUME.** WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW SOMETHING, SAY SO.

