

## **Risk Communication Program**

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Anyone actively involved in Emergency Management understands the concepts of risk management. The common person however may not fully realize why it is important to set specific goals for their Risk Communication Program. Setting these goals is important because you need something tangible to aim for and finally a means to measure your result with established standards in order to evaluate your program and know if it is effective in conveying the message you wish to send. More importantly it tells you if the program is being positively received by the people involved and implemented.

Even though a risk is considered a mere possibility we have to accept the idea that people could be hurt and property damaged. That in a nut shell is why it is no vital that we develop a good plan and have it firmly in place just in case it is necessary to activate it. Michael Lindell in his book entitled, Introduction to Emergency Management stated that the people needed to be informed about whatever hazards that their community was exposed to. Therefore, setting goals for risk communication provides you with an effective means by which you can see where you bean and how you may be able to improve your program. It allows you to develop a concept of what you are required to do. An example of this would be in the case of hurricanes. A reasonable goal for your program could be to ensure that all the residents fully understand what causes the hurricanes, their probability of a hurricane striking over a specific number of years along with the associated threats that the hurricanes bring with it.

There are typically five tasks which must be completed to implement a risk communication program. These particular steps are listed as follows:

- \* Strategic analysis
- \* Operational analysis
- \* Resource mobilization
- \* Program development
- \* Program implementation

As we can see from the above list strategic analysis is the first task. This task is where you as a manager understand who would be placed at risk and realize the various hazards which can ta place. The operational analysis contains another five steps within its category. Those specific steps involved are identify and assess those feasible hazards present and the adjustments necessary, identify the assorted ways that you can provide incentives, identify the various risk communication sources, identify the channels available for risk communication, and identify specific the specific audience involved. It stands to reason that when completing these tasks all of the people involved are put first. Next we encounter resource mobilization which also is composed of five sub-topics identified as obtaining support of the appointed and elected officials, enlisting the

participation of additional government agencies, enlisting participation from nongovernmental as well as the private sector organizations, working with the media and working and coordinating with neighborhood associations. Resource mobilization involves doing your footwork and working with organizations in order to keep them informed. The fourth task on our list involves implementing the risk communication by way of program development. This is nothing more than developing the actual programs in conjunction with the people. The five tasks within this section are staff and train your crisis team, establish the necessary procedures to be employed during an emergency, develop your comprehensive risk program to completion, make appropriate plans to effectively use the informal communication networks established and develop procedures for obtaining vital feedback from the public and the news media and social networks. It is critical that a manager realize the value and role that social media has in risk communication. Social media aids the managers greatly. In the unlikely event that someone has no television service they can readily pull up related information on their cell phone. Your final step will be the program implementation. This is where you will need to create credible sources, employ a host of different channels so you can disseminate the accumulated hazard information, describe the community hazard adjustments, identify possible household adjustments and ultimately evaluate the program's effectiveness.

I would like to mention one other critical point at this time about social media. You need the internet and cell service in order for social media to be of use to you. When these services are down during a disaster they are useless until such times as service has been restored. During Hurricane Katrina there was no cell or internet thus the people involved were essentially blind to events taking place around them. When the services were restored messages could get through. Super Storm Sandy created the same situation.

In concluding the process is extremely realistic with appropriate steps developed within the complete process. All the various steps simply fall into place in a natural manner.