Crisis communication in the academy: What can we contribute?

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Overview

1. A Crisis and Risk Communication Approach
2. Crisis Features
3. Risk Communication: Pre and Post Event
4. Risk Communication Elements and Activities
5. Ten best practices
University Crises

- Shootings
- Sudden employee / Student deaths
- Natural Disasters
- Sexual misconduct
- Protests / Disruptions
- Disease Outbreaks
- Bomb Threats
- Fires
Features of a Crisis

• “Surprising” “Unanticipated” “Uncertain”
• Threatening to high priority goals
• Requiring rapid response
• Complex & Cascading
• Multiple “causes”
A crisis is . . .

not a bad hair day
predictable in its evolution
precipitated by multiple factors
an event with a shape and structure
CERC Lifecycle

- Risk messages
- Warnings
- Preparations
- Build and test communication systems

- Uncertainty reduction
- Self-efficacy
- Reassurance

- Ongoing uncertainty reduction
- Self-efficacy
- Reassurance

- Updates regarding resolution
- Discussions about cause
- Discussions of new risks/new understandings of risks

- Discussions of adequacy of response
- Consensus about lessons learned
- New understandings of risks
Pre Event

- Developing key relationships
- Monitoring and identifying risks
- Promote understanding of risks
- Preparation for adverse events
- Develop consensual response strategies
- Changes in behavior to reduce risk
Developing Key Relationships

• Campus Security
• Exercises
• Student Participation
• Media Relations
• Debrief
Preparation / Education

Shooting

• Call, Hide, Fight

Hockey pucks at Oakland University

Arming Teachers and Staff

• Call, Assess, Shelter, Evacuate
Pre-Event Failures in Monitoring and Risk Identification

1. Risk Recognition
2. Signal to Noise Ratio
3. Privacy Considerations
4. Network Deficiencies and Upward Communication
Pre-Event Planning

• Planning as Necessary / Not Sufficient
• Planning as a Process not a Product
• Who is at the Table
• Developing the Plan
• Plan Characteristics
• Physical Form
Risk Communication & Post Event

• Designated spokespersons, channels, methods
• Promote understanding circumstances, consequences, & anticipated outcomes
• Accommodating disruptions
• Questions of cause, responsibility, accountability, blame
• Memorializing
Risk Communication & Post Event

• Promote understanding of crisis responses
  What we are doing.
  Why we are doing it.
  What you should do.
  Why you should do it.
  What others are doing.
  How you should do it.
Challenges

- Uncertainty
- Speed
- Social media
- Clutter
- Risk Fatigue
- Rumors and “Fake News”
- Social Amplification of risks
Questions and More Questions
Additional Resources

CERC:  http://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/

