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Addressing the Common Challenge: Communication Turning "Can you Hear me Now?" into "Do you Understand What I am Saying?"

Will Moorhead

All Clear Emergency Management Group

Ginny Schwartzer

All Clear Emergency Management Group

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Addressing the Common Challenge: Communication

Turning “can you hear me now?” into
“do you understand what I’m saying”

William M. Moorhead, JD
March 21, 2013
DRU



Overview

- Introductions
- Examples of communication frustration
- Identifying factors contributing to frustration
- Overcoming communication hurdles
- Discussion of best practices

Objectives

- Review and understand common examples of communication frustration
- Determine at least three factors contributing to communication frustration
- Establish at least three practical steps to overcome communication frustration
- Utilize the collective expertise to determine best practices

Introductions

By show of hands:

- Type of agency
- Experienced a communication frustration
- Experienced a communication success
- Been responsible for a communication success

Communication as a Scapegoat

- Thought of as strictly a “hardware” issue
- Addressed primarily following major incidents with funding and infrastructure expansion
 - Not a bad thing
- But are we being honest with ourselves?
 - Could a lack of communication training contribute to these downfalls?

Examples of Communication Frustration

We cite communication as a frustration during:

- Planning and preparedness activities
- Response activities
- Recovery planning and implementation

Complete the Loop

Communication requires a sender, a message, and a recipient, although the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication; thus communication can occur across vast distances in time and space.



Complete the Loop

Communication requires that the communicating parties share an area of communicative commonality.

The communication process is complete once the receiver has understood the message of the sender.

What Contributes to the Frustration?

- Communications resources and devices
- Personal habits
- Agency culture
- Agency process

Resources and Devices

- Lack of availability
- Technological issues
- Difficult to use
- Insufficient planning for utilization
- “Just in Time” training
- Lack of training
- Accessibility for repair

Personal Habits

- Creatures of comfort
- Operating outside of chain of command
- Letting ego get in the way
- Lack of practice of communicating effectively
- No initiative to correct

Agency Culture and Process

- Thinking or operating in silos
- Not practicing during small incidents
- No emphasis on relationship building or networking
- Agency “centric”
- Chain of Command
- Inter-agency briefing

Planning and Preparedness Activities

- Do your plans include/address how to communicate with other agencies?
- If you are at the center of the communication process do your plans address you being a subordinate agency?
- Are your plans realistic and do they address training?
- Do your plans address a surge to the communications network?
- Are HAM/ARES and social media integrated?

Overcoming Communication Hurdles

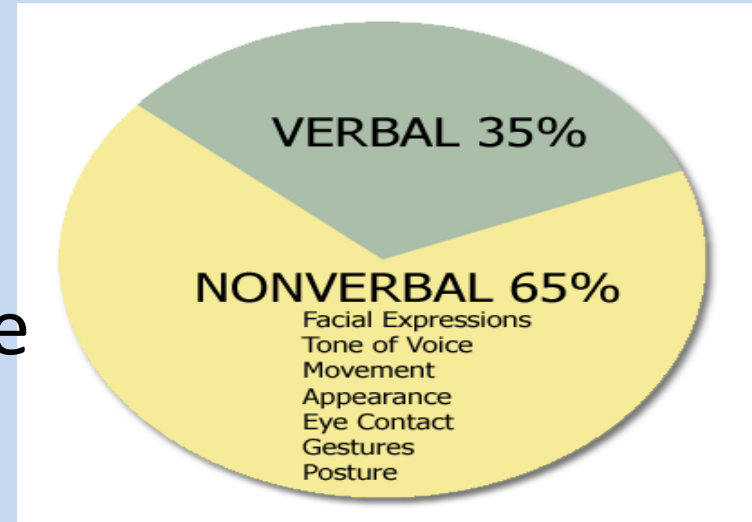
- Identifying partners
 - Who you work with
 - Who you may work with
- Identifying individual agency needs
 - How do they receive information
 - Does this work for them and will it work in a crisis?
- Identifying personal needs
 - Consider personalities, stress levels

Overcoming Communication Hurdles

- Implement internal communication practice
 - Improve communication day-to-day
 - Expand the idea of who else needs to know the information
- Implement external communication practice
 - Actually doing what you say you will do or exercising plans
 - Can be fixed sometimes by addressing personal habit or agency culture
- **Constantly ask the key question**

How Often Do You Practice?

- Practice to play ratio
- Benefits of conscious practice
 - OK to make mistakes
- Recognize mistakes on the small scale
 - AAR/Improve
- Communication effectiveness depends on:
 - 15% on the words
 - 20% on the tone of voice
 - 65% on body language



Clear Communications Using Electronic Devices

- Know your hardware
 - Capability
 - Dead Spots
 - Functions
- Clear and concise is key
- Paint a clear picture

Clear Communications Using Electronic Devices

- Remember basic radio operations
 - Noisy environment
 - Poor radio position
 - Microphone placement
- Develop a good communications plan (ICS-205)

Best Practice

- How have you been successful?
- Describe why minor changes may or may not make a significant difference.
- Explain other hurdles and hindrances to improving communication.

Questions and Input

All Clear Emergency Management Group, LLC

336-802-1800

Will Moorhead

WillM@AllClearEMG.com

Ginny Schwartzer

GinnyS@AllClearEMG.com