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# **Risk and Crisis Communications**

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**Public Health WORKS Speaker Series**

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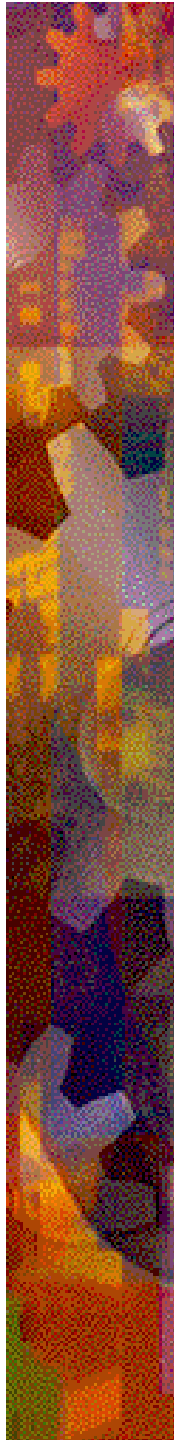
HARRIS  
USA

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RISK  
MANAGEMENT

J. HARRIS

"Be carefull! All you can tell me is 'be careful?'"





# Risk and Crisis Communications

“The transmission of information about health and environmental risks, their significance, and the policies aimed at managing them.”

~ Proceedings of the National Conference on Risk Communication, Washington, D.C., 1986.



# Risk and Crisis Communications


“... the goal is not to change people’s opinions about controversial environmental issues. The goal is to change the way we discuss these issues, make the discussions accurately reflect the risks we face and the available options, and enable us to make effective decisions.”

~ Christopher J. Daggett, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, quoted in the Role of Risk Communication in Environmental Gridlock, Effective Risk Communication, p. 35, Plenum Press 1989, Covello, McCallum, Pavlova eds.



## Rules for Ethical Risk Communications

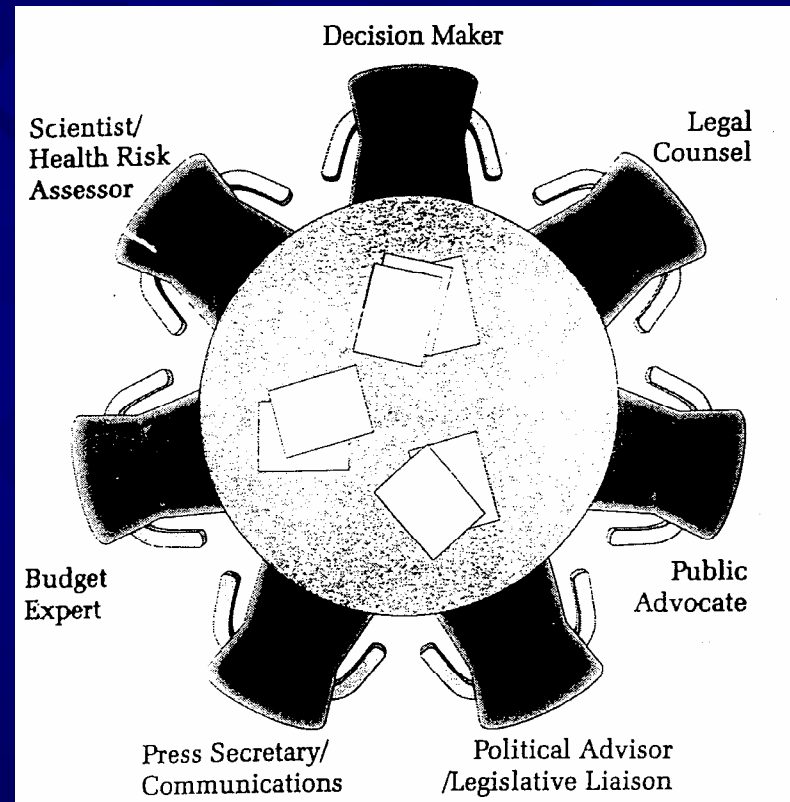
- Do not use risk communications to tell untruths.
- Don't say what you don't believe.
- Respect the ability of your listener to make decisions.
- Tell a balanced story – fair and accurate.




“Trust is in a sense more fundamental than risk communications. If you have trust, you do not need elaborate communication. If you do not have trust, any form of message is unlikely to be successful.”

~ Paul Slovic, Risk Assessment and the Public Trust in Regulating Risk, International Life Sciences Institute, Itasca, Illinois 1993, page 79.

# The 'Six Chair' Approach to Risk Management




~ Thomas A. Burke, *Regulating Risk: The Challenges Ahead*, in *Regulating Risk International Life Sciences Institute*, Itasca, Illinois 1993, page 100.



## Six basic principles to inform the development of an effective media relations program:

1. Good communications cannot overcome bad judgement.
2. Practice media relations regularly.
3. Provide information from a credible source.
4. Understand legal restrictions and obligations.
5. Practice media relations professionally and ethically (Chapter three).
6. You cannot manage the media.



“We should distinguish two kinds of risk assessment: ‘hazard assessment’ and ‘outrage assessment’. We should try to develop a risk management process that legitimizes both and considers both.”

~ Peter M. Sandman, Definitions of Risk: Managing the Outrage, not just the Hazard in Regulating Risk, International Life Sciences Institute, Itasca, Illinois 1993, page 6.



# Public Perceptions of Risk

## 'Outrage Factors'

### UNACCEPTABLE RISK

1. Involuntary risks (e.g. being exposed to air or water pollutants).
2. Risks not under personal control (e.g. travelling as a passenger in a plane, train or car).
3. Risks affecting some people more than others (siting landfills, NIMBY phenomenon.)
4. Catastrophic events (i.e. injuries and deaths occurring grouped together in time and space such as airplane crashes.)
5. Unfamiliar risks, such as depletion of the ozone layer, or AIDS in the mid-1980's.

### ACCEPTABLE RISK

1. Voluntary risks (e.g. smoking or sunbathing.)
2. Controlled risks (e.g. driving a car oneself.)
3. Risks affecting everyone.
4. More scattered or random (such as smoking or automobile deaths.)
5. Familiar risks, such as household accidents.



# Public Perceptions of Risk

## 'Outrage Factors'

### UNACCEPTABLE RISK

6. Ethically objectionable (pollution, leaks from nuclear reactors are inherently evil, regardless of the real risks involved.)
7. Artificial risks (chemical spills 'Acts of Man').
8. Risks that are associated with other recent, memorable events (Bhopal, Three Mile Island).
9. 'Dreaded' risks, such as nuclear accidents, cancer-causing chemicals.
10. Risks people can't detect (threats to drinking water or carbon monoxide fumes).
11. Disputed, incomprehensible information.

### ACCEPTABLE RISK

6. Ethically neutral, such as an outbreak of communicable disease.
7. Natural risks (tornadoes, 'Acts of God').
8. Less memorable, timely events (e.g. current flu outbreaks are rarely related to the Flu Epidemic of 1919).
9. 'More common' risks, such as the risk of injury in an auto accident.
10. Risks they can detect (fire).
11. Information scientists can agree on and explain.

# Communications Strategies

## Public Perceived Risk

High

Proactive

Crisis

Low

Reactive

Allay Fears

Σ0-Π-ω0Π-Π-ω0Σ

- 
- Government
  - Health
  - Industry
  - Media
  - Special Interest Groups
  - University



# Hierarchy of public credibility

- Health
- Universities
- Media
- Special Interest Groups
- Industry
- Government



# Hierarchy of public credibility (detailed)

- Local citizens perceived to be neutral
  - Non-management employees
  - Nurses and doctors
  - Safety/emergency professionals (fire, police, ambulance)
  - Professors/educators, especially from respected local institutions
  - Non-profit, voluntary health agencies
  - Professional societies
- 
- Media
  - Environmental groups
  - Government (Canada only)
- 
- Industry officials
  - Federal (U.S.) government officials
  - Environmental consultants from 'for profit' firms

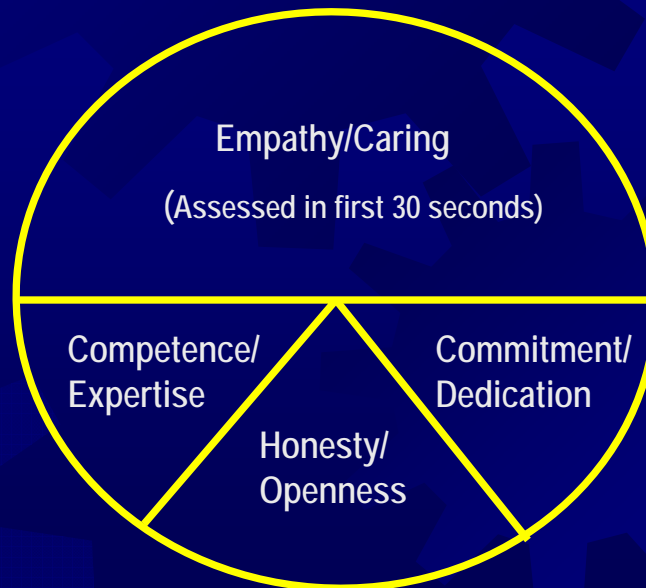
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# Trust and Credibility Factors and Measures

- Caring & Empathy 50%
- Competence & Expertise 15 – 20%
- Honesty & Openness 15 – 20%
- Dedication & Commitment 15 – 20%

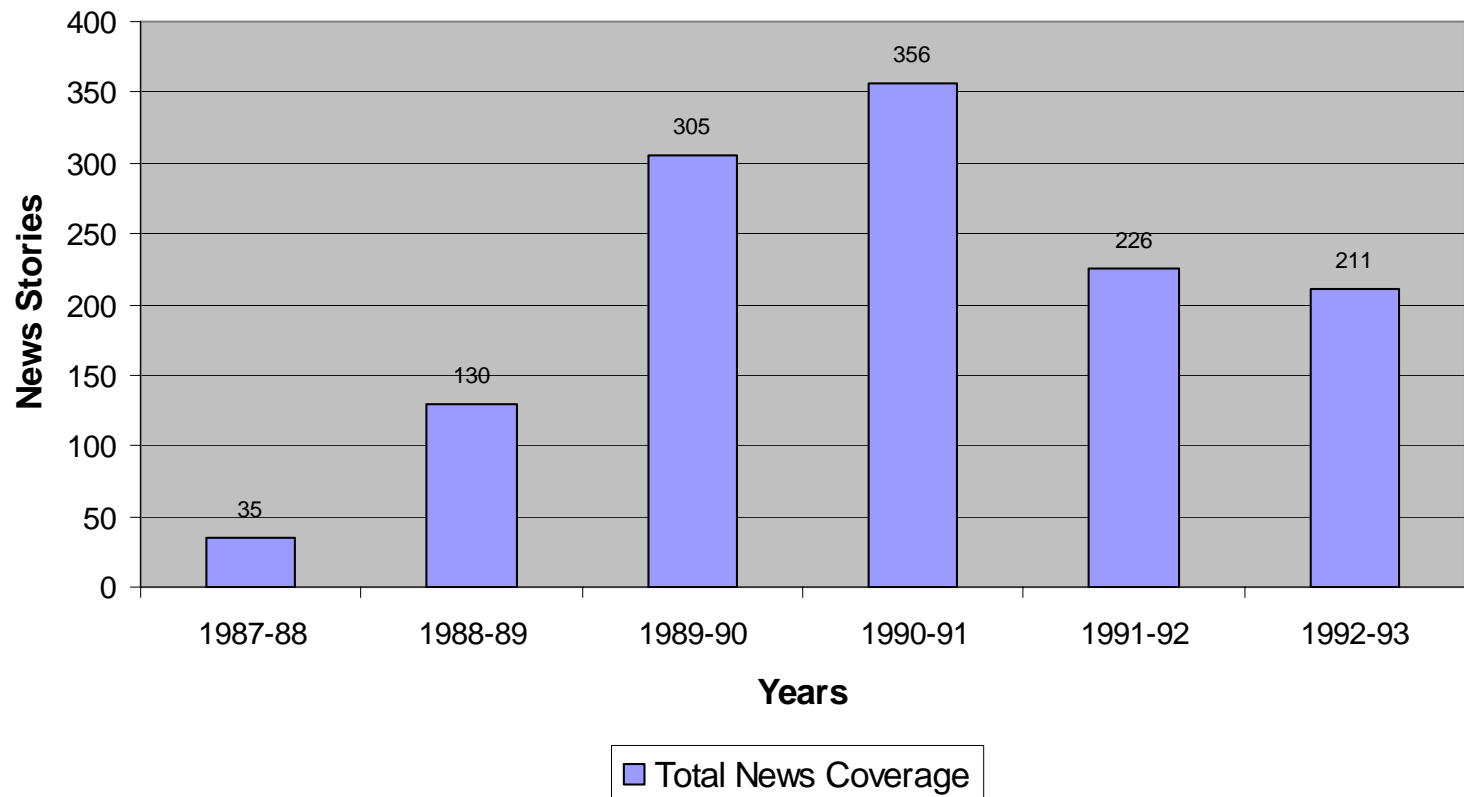
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# News Coverage

Edmonton Journal and Edmonton Sun  
Total News Coverage 1988-1993



# News Coverage

Table One: Media Analysis, 1988 – 1993, by corporate division

News stories in the Edmonton Sun and Edmonton Journal Citing the Edmonton Board of Health

Division	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90	1990/91	1991/92	1992/93
Environmental Health	--	62 (48%)	157 (51%)	212 (60%)	91 (40%)	81 (38%)
Communicable Disease	--	32 (25%)	47 (15%)	43 (12%)	54 (24%)	43 (20%)
Other	--	11 (8%)	36 (12%)	45 (13%)	39 (17%)	14 (7%)
Health Promotion	--	6 (5%)	28 (9%)	24 (7%)	4 (2%)	14 (7%)
Nursing	--	6 (5%)	13 (4%)	8 (2%)	23 (10%)	34 (16%)
Home Care	--	4 (3%)	10 (3%)	7 (2%)	3 (1%)	12 (6%)
Dental	--	--	--	4 (1%)	2 (1%)	1 (.5%)
Medical	--	6 (5%)	6 (2%)	12 (3%)	3 (1%)	12 (6%)
Speech	--	3 (2%)	8 (3%)	1 (.5%)	7 (3%)	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>211</b>



# Why Media?

- Audience
- Impact
- Cost
- Awareness
- Legitimization
- Public Support



# Why Not Media?

- Lack of control
- Brevity of impact
- Lack of depth
- Desire for conflict
- Dramatization
- Bad press



# The Media List

## News Releases

- Newspapers: Daily (City Editor, Lifestyle Editor, Editorial Board, Food Editor, Health beat reporter, Environment beat reporter, Columnists), Weekly (Editors, Columnists), Specialty (Farm, Seniors, Native)
- Radio: News (News Director), Talk Show (Producer)
- Television: TV News (Assignment Editor), Talk Shows (Producer), Cable TV (Station Manager)

## Public Service Announcements

- Newspapers: Daily, Weekly, Specialty (PSA Editor)
- Radio: PSA Editor
- Television: News, Talk Shows (PSA Editor), Cable TV (Community Billboard)

## Television

- CRN: All Northern Alberta, mainstream adult. No. 1 in area
- ITV: All Northern Alberta, younger audience (25-40) No. 2
- CBC: All Northern Alberta, mainstream No. 3
- A Channel: Very young audience, teens to 25, too early for relevant ratings
- CBC French: French, popular among French immersion students as well as Francophone population
- ACCESS TV: The Education Station, but does local news and features

## Newspapers

### **Dailies -**

- Journal, Daily, Middle class, number 1 distribution (250,000). Editorial Left
- Sun: Daily, Blue/Pink Collar Heavily skewed to males (85,000). Editorial Right

### **Community Weeklies -**

- Examiner Weekly, direct delivery 180,000 residences (including exurbs, excluding highrises, downtown. Six to eight separate versions
- Millwoods, Beverly Page, Beacon, Sherwood Park, St. Albert, etc.

### **Specialty -**

- Seniors: Many, conflicting claims of success
- Ethnic/Language: French (two), Chinese (three), Jewish (two), native (six), Italian (two), Ukrainian, Vietnamese
- Entertainment
- Sports
- Business

Note: See Yellow Pages under Newspapers!!

### Wire Services

!! Canadian Press !! All media except weeklies subscribe to this service.

### Radio Stations

- CBC-AM Radio: Information
- CBC-AM Radio Morning Show: Information
- CBC-AM Radio Noon Show: Information
- CBC-AM Radio Drive Home Show: Information
  - Separate Fax Lists
- CFBR-FM Classic Rock, 18-49 year olds (skewed toward males)
- CFCW-AM Country, 25 – 54, Number one overall.
- CFRN-AM Nostalgia, 50+
- CHED-AM Full Service (mainly information, sports) 35-54
- CHED-AM Rutherford Show
- CHED-AM Jerry Bellika Show
- CHFA-AM Multivariee, Tous
- CHQT-AM Soft AC (Adult Contemporary), 35-44
- CIRK-FM Mainstream, 25-49
- CISN-FM, Contemporary Country, 25-54
- CJCA-AM Gospel, All
- CKER-AM, Ethnic/Multilingual (Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Polish, German, Ukrainian, East Indian, Greek, Arabic, Croatian, Dutch, Polish, Portuguese, (Note: they will do translations for you.)
- CKNG-FM CHR (Contemporary Hot Rock) 12-34
- CKRA-FM 'Hot' Adult Contemporary, 25-44
- CKUA-FM, Mixed, 30+

**Note: Each claims to be number one in its market.**



# What is News?

- Dramatic/Emotional
- Local/Local angle
- Topical/Timely
- Conflict
- Relevant to Readers
- Odd or unusual
- Universal



# What is Not News?

- Egostroking
- Glorified Advertising
- Technical/Jargony
- Irrelevant to Readers
- Late/Dated
- Not Written to Formula
- Boring



# Approaching the Media

- News release
- News conference
- News event (conference, protest)
- Editorial boards
- Talk shows
- Feature news/hard news
- Featured columnists
- Your column
- Advertising feature
- Media sponsorship
- Advertorials

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# Media Policy 'Edmonton Board of Health'

- EBH shall continue its policy of co-operation and accessibility to the media in Edmonton, consistent with EBH policy on client confidentiality, labor/staff relationships, budget and legal issues.



# Commenting on Investigations in Progress


- Incidents of communicable disease outbreaks or environmental health issues should not be commented on until the investigation is complete.
- At that time, staff may talk to the media about the incident.



Always respond to reporters' calls!

But .....

Whenever possible, set the agenda for the media.



Don't say anything to the media you wouldn't say to the public.

Don't say anything to the public you wouldn't be willing to say to the media.



# Ground Rules for Media Interviews

- Determine and agree on topic (be specific).
- Agree on time limit for interview (20 minutes or less, especially for risk topics).
- Ask for reporter's deadline and take one quarter of the time for preparation.
- Arrange logistics (sit down interview versus stand up interview or behind desk).

# Preparation for Media Interview

## Key Messages

- Prepare 2 or 3 key soundbites
- Maintain a key attitude that you know what's important that the audience needs to know

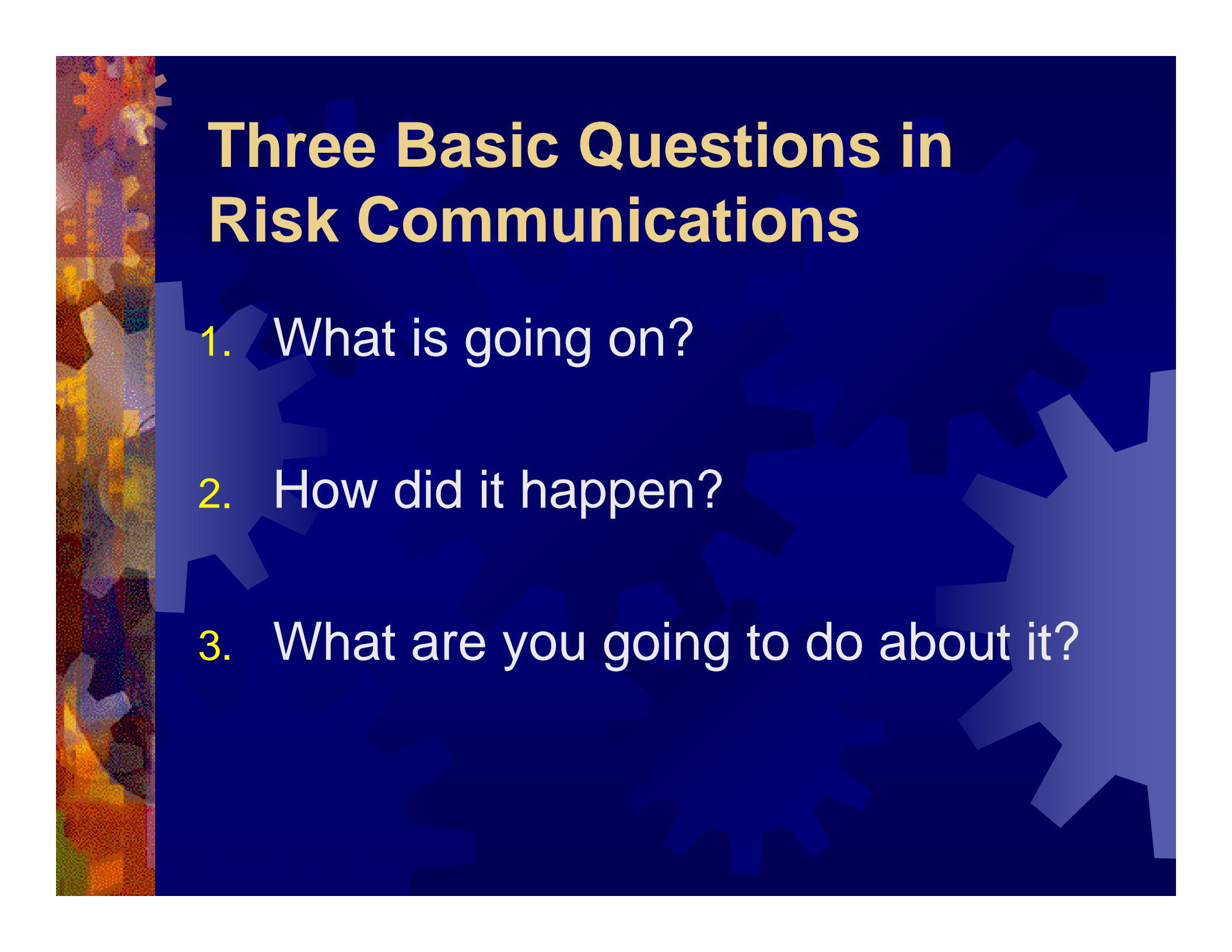
## Definition of Newsworthiness

- Controversy or conflict
- Unusual, atypical
- Human interest

## On Camera Tips

- Introduce yourself to camera crew
- Assume the camera/sound is always 'on'
- Ask for eye-level camera angle
- Ask for diffused light
- No white shirt, red tie
- Best location is outdoors

Journalists strive for accuracy, balance and fairness over time, not 'truth'.



# Three Basic Questions in Risk Communications

1. What is going on?
2. How did it happen?
3. What are you going to do about it?



# A Basic Response to Risk Questions

1. Show empathy
2. State the conclusion
3. State the facts which support the conclusion
4. Repeat the conclusion
5. State further action



# The Covello Model

## Level 6 Response

### 1. Express empathy and concern

- Differs for male/female
- Include personal story for enhancement

### 2. Provide conclusion

- Must be positive
- In a 7-12 word soundbite
- Framed or set off
- Address underlying concern

### 3. Provide first supporting fact

- Third party endorsement
- Story and/or analogy for one fact

### 4. Provide second supporting fact

- Use transition from supporting facts to conclusions

### 5. Repeat exact conclusion as stated before

### 6. Describe future action

- Describe your commitment to continuous improvement
- Indicate how to obtain more information

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# Your Role in the Media Interview

- **Accessible**
- **Accurate**
- **Rationale**
- **Authoritative**
- **Presentable**



**Be Your Professional Self !!!**

# Summary

## ~ Professional Relations with Media

Practice makes perfect and the best way to handle media relations from here on is to do it.

### A few summary points to keep in mind:

1. You have the support of the Board and Senior Management when you deal with media.
2. Media relations is a means of reaching the public with good health messages.
3. The basic rule of conduct is to behave with media as you behave with other professional groups.
4. Always return calls to reporters in good time.
5. You are responsible for the following:
  - Being available
  - Being accurate
  - Being authoritative
  - Providing a good argument
  - Making a good presentation
6. You are also responsible for enjoying yourself. You can get a lot of personal and professional satisfaction out of maintaining good relations with the media. If you do your job professionally, the media will do theirs and everyone will benefit.
7. If you need further advice or assistance, the Communications Consultant will be glad to help you.
8. And don't forget your media contact reports. Nothing is complete until the paper work is done.