

A large tree with a massive root system lying on a grassy field under a blue sky. The tree's trunk and branches are light-colored, contrasting with the dark, exposed roots. The background shows a clear blue sky with some light clouds and other trees in the distance.

**PRINCIPLES OF
RISK COMMUNICATION**

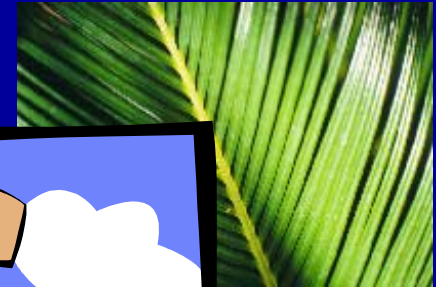
What is a risk?

Definition

- Probability of loss, damage or injury

Dimensions

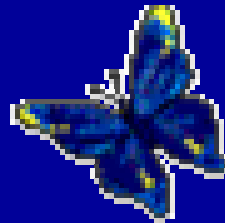
- Probability - chance of occurring
- Size - magnitude



Other Dimensions of a Risk

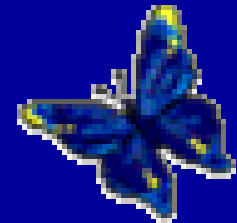
LESS RISKY

- Voluntary
- Familiar
- Controllable
- Fair
- Detectable
- Known to science
- Not in my backyard



MORE RISKY

- Involuntary
- Unfamiliar
- Uncontrollable
- Unfair
- Undetectable
- Unknown to science
- In my backyard



Public Behavior Toward Risk

- Perceive risk as bi-polar: *safe vs. not safe.*
- Any activity with a risk should not be undertaken unless its outcome can be predicted *fully* in advance.
- Give more importance to the *moral*, rather than the scientific issue of risk.
- See and hear what they believe, not the other way around.



What is risk communication?



***A science-based* approach for communicating effectively about issues that are :**

- **Of high concern to the stakeholders**
- **Emanating from sources with low trust**
- **Sensitive**
- **Controversial**

(Covello, 2001)

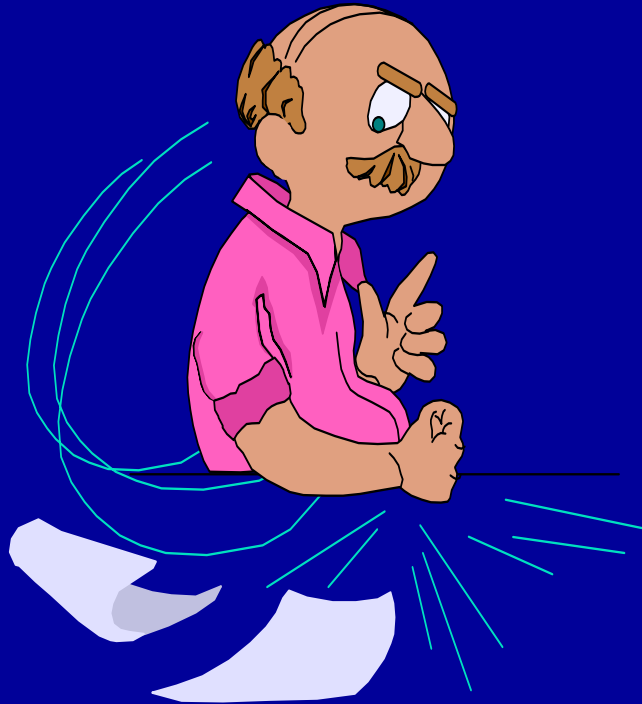
Features of Risk Com



- Interactive
- Democratic
- Exchange of information

among the affected publics or stakeholders in *assessing the risk* and *developing the risk guidelines*

Democratic Principle of Risk Com



- No single party can claim to have *the* solution to a risk nor dictate others on the actions to take.

Goals of Risk Com

- Enable the affected publics to make *informed* decisions and actions
- Give the public a *chance to think* rather than reasons to panic



Goals of Risk Com



Promote:

- *Mutual understanding*
 - *Communal responsibility*
- in assessing the risk and determining the corresponding policies and actions



“I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think they are not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the solution is not to take it away from them, but to inform them.”

Thomas Jefferson

Risk Com is not Marketing

- **Not a one-sided communication to encourage people to embrace what we think is right or for them to behave in a particular way we like.**



Stakeholders and their Roles in the Risk Com Process

- *Risk bearers* - victims
- *Risk generators* - create opportunities for the risk to happen
- *Risk advocates* - amplify the issues and champion the cause of the victims



Stakeholders and their Roles in the Risk Com Process



- *Risk mitigators* - experts who scrutinize the risk and propose how to lessen or avoid it
- *Risk arbiters* - bring actors in dispute for negotiation and consensus
- *Risk informers* - messengers of risk information

Varying Viewpoints of Risk Among Stakeholders



- Victims -- Socio-cultural
- Mitigators/Researchers -- Scientific
- Advocates (NGOs) -- Moral
- Arbiters - Legal
- Generators -- Economic
- Informers/Media -- Multi-perspective

Roles of a Risk Communicator



- Process initiator
- Facilitator
- Listener
- Synthesizer or
- Integrator

How do we communicate risk?



Know your audience.

- *Upset*
- *Distrustful*
- *Difficulty hearing and processing information.*
- *Limited attention and ability to process information*

How do we communicate risk?



Develop messages that are:

- *believable*
- *convincing*
- *clear and concise*
- *positive*

How do you make message believable?

- *Empathy and caring (50%)*
- *Dedication and commitment (15-20%)*
- *Honesty and openness (15-20%)*
- *Competence (5-10%)*

How do you make the message convincing?

Credibility Ladder

- *Establish trust through a third party*

“A source with a lower credibility takes on the credibility of the highest credible source who agrees with the position on an issue.”

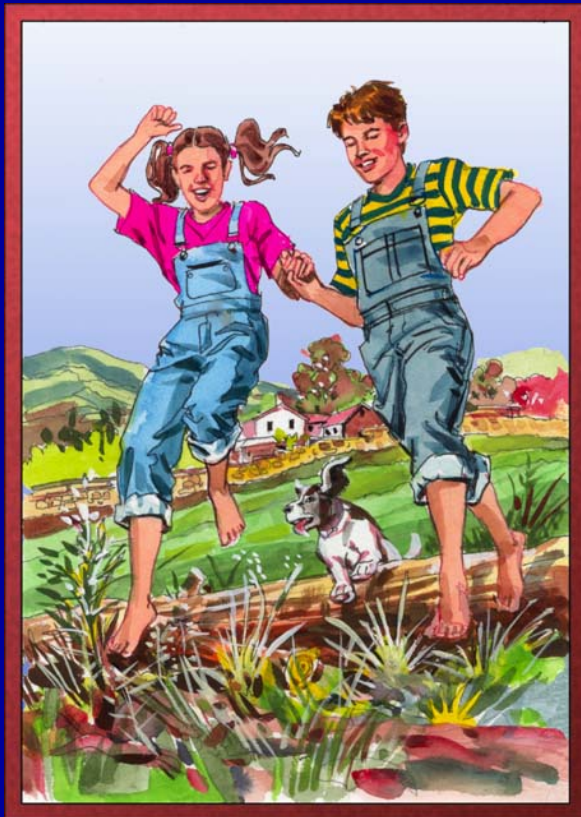


How do you make the message convincing?

**Beware of credibility reversal.
*If you attack an information
source with higher credibility
than you, your credibility
goes even lower than it
was before.***



How do you make the message clear and concise?



- Limit the number of messages to three.
- Repeat the message at least twice.
- Use simple , 12-year old language.

Why should you make your message positive?

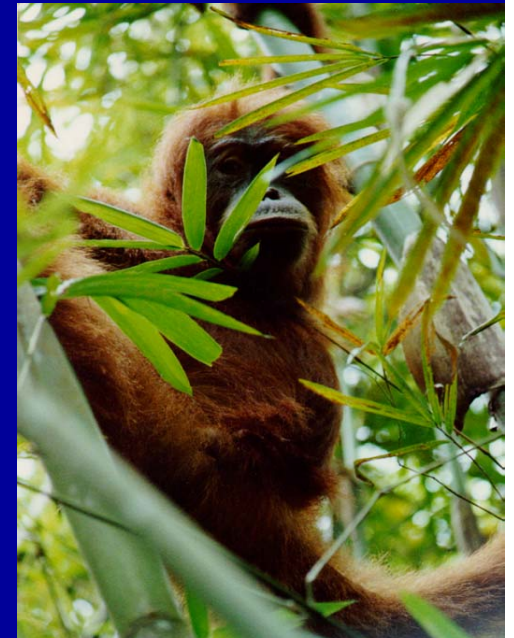
Repetition of a negative (e.g. allegation or accusation) even when refuted, results in reinforcement of the negative.



Overcoming Negative Dominance

- Use at least three positive messages.
Rule of thumb: 1 negative = 3 positives
- Avoid using no, never, not, nothing, none, can't, don't.

An upset audience would not take no, never, can't for an answer.



Thank you!

