



Module 9-B Dealing with Controversies and Crises: Working with the News Media



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Learners' Objectives

- To gain an overview of media relations basics, an important foundation when dealing with controversies or crises.
- To understand how to deal with reporters during interviews related to food safety incidents and to provide training through scenario examples.

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Topics

- Media basics
- Real world media coverage examples from agent and grower perspectives
- Early warning systems
- Elements of a crisis communications plan
- Message development

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Module 9-B for Farmers

PPT 9-1B: Dealing with Controversies and Crises: Working with the News Media

Welcome to this session! We're going to spend some time looking at how to work effectively with the news media, particularly when it comes to dealing with crises.

PPT 9-2B: Learners' Objectives

No notes

PPT 9-3B: Topics

No notes

Why Work with the Media?

- It's a good way to get important messages out to the public.

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What Are Your Concerns in Dealing with the News Media?

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Media Basics

- Tell the truth. If you don't know, say so.
- Say it for the record.
- Avoid no comment.
- Know the media's role.
- Be prepared and respond promptly.
- Identify key points.

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PPT 9-4B: Why Work with the Media?

- The media provide excellent, inexpensive ways to reach lots of people.
- The public wants and needs to know about what you do to minimize risks when it comes to providing a safe food supply.
- As key public information sources, the media help shape public perceptions. It's important to share with them measures you have in place regarding good agricultural practices and food safety.
- Even if an outbreak occurs in another state, it can have implications for you and other North Carolina growers. It's important to share key messages with the news media on what you have in place to reduce risks.

PPT 9-5B: What Are Your Concerns in Dealing with the News Media?

Trainer: This is a good time to ask participants what their concerns are in dealing with the news media. What frustrates them or concerns them when dealing with the news media?

Write items down on flip chart and address as you go through the points in presentation, particularly the media basics points.

This session will focus on dealing with crises, but let's first take a few minutes to review some media basics, which will serve you well in any situation when dealing with the news media. We will address many of your concerns as we talk about the basics.

Trainer: At this point review some of the basics of working with the media.

PPT 9-6B: Media Basics

- Tell the truth. Never lie. Always tell the truth. If you don't know or aren't sure, say so and don't guess. Your credibility is at stake (and so is the organization's). Being truthful does not mean telling all you know. Use good judgment.
- Say it for the record. Anything you say to a reporter is fair game for a story. If you don't want it reported, don't say it. Asking a reporter to go "off the record" is not appropriate. Don't ask reporters not to print something after you say it. If a reporter asks you to go off the record, do not do so.
- Avoid no comment. "No comment" sounds suspicious. If you really can't comment, explain why. "We're gathering that information and will provide it when it's


PPT 9-6B (continued)

finalized.” Or “According to the FDA, North Carolina tomatoes are not implicated in the latest outbreak.” Or, “Our policy doesn’t allow us to comment on personnel matters.” It’s okay to say you don’t know and offer to find out.

- The media’s role. Objectively telling all sides of a story is the media’s job, even if views are unpopular. Don’t expect reporters to present only your perspective, and never tell a reporter how to report a story. Don’t expect a reporter to make you look good; make yourself look good by providing clear, concise information. Never ask a reporter to show you his or her article before it is published.
- Be prepared and respond promptly. Doing your homework makes you a better source and less nervous. Before an interview, anticipate possible questions and think through answers. Ask yourself: Is this a controversial or sensitive topic? How will my answers be perceived? How can I best explain this? Gather background materials for the reporter that help reinforce details. If you are caught off guard by a phone call from the news media, find out what they want to know and ask if you can call them back in 10 to 20 minutes. This can give you time to collect your thoughts and compose yourself. Make sure you call back! Dodging a reporter won’t make the story disappear; it just will be reported without your perspective.
- Key points. Lead with the bottom line. Before interviews, identify the three main points you want to make and share them first. For each point, develop three responses that support or help communicate that point. Work on making key points in 20 seconds or less. Come up with a couple of 10-second-or-under responses. Your key message can get lost in too much detail and technical information. In a few minutes, we’re going to look at a Message Map Template that will help with this.

More Media Basics

- Respect deadlines.
- Know who is calling.
- Remember: Short, sweet, stop.
- Dump the jargon.
- Know the potential pitfalls.
- Don’t assume reporter knowledge.



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PPT 9-7B: More Media Basics

- Respect deadlines. Reporters live by unbending deadlines. If a reporter calls for immediate comment, try to help or point them to someone who can. (If sending to someone else, make every effort to send to an N.C. Cooperative Extension expert. Only send outside of system if we have no one qualified or available.)
- Know who is calling. When a reporter calls, ask some questions to determine who you’re talking to and what he or she needs. If you don’t know a reporter, get his/her name, employer and phone number. Clarify what information he/she is seeking from you. If you need to call back later to

PPT 9-7B (continued)

clarify a point you made, you will have the contact information. The contact information is also useful when there is a need to track media placements.

- Short, sweet, stop. Keep your answers brief. Your main message gets lost unless you discipline yourself to provide concise answers. Radio or TV reporters often must tell an entire story in 20 seconds to a minute. Answer the question and stop talking. Don’t keep talking to fill the silence. Listen to questions and think about your answers before you start talking. Don’t ramble. It’s okay to pause briefly to gather your thoughts before answering.
- Dump the jargon. Technical terms and acronyms are confusing or meaningless to the public. Be a translator by using everyday language and examples. Relay your information in ways everyday folks can appreciate why is this important and what does it mean to their lives, community, families, farms or livelihoods?

PPT 9-7B (continued)

- Summarize thoughts. After discussing the subject, concisely summarize key points in everyday language. "My major points are: 1. . . . 2. . . . 3. . . ." This may plant the idea of a story outline in the reporter's mind.
- Potential pitfalls. Always have the facts before commenting. Stick to what you know even if this disappoints a reporter. If you are unprepared or unqualified to answer, refer reporters to someone who can help. Avoid personal views or speculation. Don't let reporters put words in your mouth. Reporter: "So you're saying . . ." You: "No, let me clarify. . ." Do not repeat inaccuracies, even to correct them.
- Feedback. It's okay to tell reporters when they do a good job. If they make a mistake, weigh what's at stake. If it's a major error in fact, tell the reporter or editor, but don't quibble over minor misunderstandings. Remember, you're building long-term relationships.
- Don't assume reporter knowledge. Don't assume that a reporter is knowledgeable just because he/she is covering the story. Most reporters are generalists who cover diverse topics and have little time to background themselves on breaking stories before reporting them. Provide simple information to help out.

Provide "Making Your Point: A Media Relations Checklist" as a useful guide. The points we've just reviewed provide you with the media basics, so let's turn to dealing with the media during a crisis or controversy.



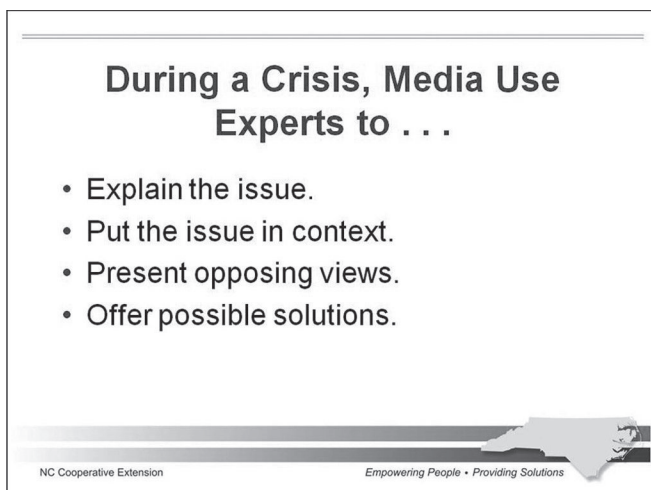
PPT 9-8B: Name Your Crisis

Activity: Give the audience a chance to participate.

Many of us have dealt with controversies or crises. What is a crisis that you were part of or close to?

Trainer: Write down responses on a flip chart or blackboard. These events or controversies can be useful examples during the instruction.

Let them name crisis.



PPT 9-9B: During a Crisis, Media Use Experts to . . .

Because controversial issues and crises are often complex, reporters may look to university and Extension sources to explain issues and put them in context. They may also seek to interview local producers about the food supply in North Carolina. This is an opportunity to explain:


- the good agricultural practices you have in place on your farm
- how you train your workers
- how it could affect you and other North Carolina workers

PPT 9-9B (continued)

and why you're watching the situation closely. (You are concerned about everyone anytime there are reported illnesses. You want to make sure you're doing what you can to minimize risks.)

During Crises, Farmers Should Be Seen As . . .

- Credible
- Knowledgeable about GAPs and fresh produce safety
- Empathetic and concerned



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PPT 9-10B: During Crises, Farmers Should Be Seen As . . .

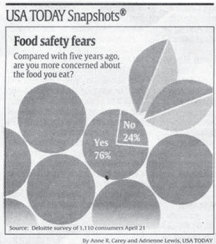
Being interviewed by the news media is an opportunity to show your professional expertise. You need to be viewed as credible when it comes to the information you provide. You will come across as much more credible when you can provide information on good agricultural practices that you have in place on your farm. Be specific. Talk about why this is important to fresh produce safety.

PPT 9-10B (continued)


It's also important to be empathetic and concerned. Food-borne illnesses can send people to the hospital and can cause death. It's important to express your concern for all involved. Yes, we realize loss of income can be quite serious to your livelihood and the ability to provide jobs to others. But, first and foremost, express concern that the source of contamination is found, even if your farm is not implicated. Share steps you put in place to help ensure food safety.

Why Are Good Agricultural Practices Critical?

- Public safety
- Concerned consumers



USA TODAY Snapshots®
Food safety fears
Compared with five years ago, are you more concerned about the food you eat?
Yes 76% No 24%
Source: DePalle survey of 1,110 consumers April 21
By Anne R. Carey and Adrienne Lewis, USA TODAY



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PPT 9-11B: Why Are Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) Critical?

Surveys show that the public is much more concerned about the food they eat. In this survey earlier this year (2008), 76 percent of those surveyed say they are more concerned about the food they eat than they were five years ago. Perhaps that's because of more news coverage of outbreaks, some that resulted in several deaths (the *E. coli* outbreak in 2006). Tainted products from China also raise concerns and fears.

This certainly underscores the importance for those of us working with the North Carolina agricultural industry to: (1) educate farmers about good agricultural practices, and (2) inform consumers of those practices that local farmers put in place.

Again, factual information is important.

You Shouldn't Touch the Topic with a 10-foot Pole When . . .

- Your knowledge of the issue is inadequate.
- You lack experience to support your views.

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When Working with the Media on Fresh Produce Issues:

- Don't speculate.
- Provide information on measures you have in place to minimize food safety risks.

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Working with the News Media



- Agent perspective
- Grower perspective

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PPT 9-12B: You Shouldn't Touch the Topic with a 10-Foot Pole When . . .

Often reporters call out of the blue and you may not be aware of the current controversy in the news. Refrain from comment until you do understand the issue. If needed, direct the media to someone else who might help them, such as your local Extension agent or your commodity group contact.

PPT 9-13B: When Working with the Media on Fresh Produce Issues:

There's no room for guessing and speculating. Don't let the media draw you into speculating about whether other farms may be the culprit or whether the problem may be on your farm. If regulators or investigators are checking your farm, be open in providing that information. Communicate that you are cooperating fully with investigators and that it is of utmost importance that you minimize food-safety risks of any produce grown on your farm. Be clear that your farm has not been implicated (if it hasn't). Let the media know that it's important for all in the farming community to implement good agricultural practices and that you cannot speculate on what other farms may or may not be doing.

PPT 9-14B: Working with the News Media

Here's how an N.C. Cooperative Extension agent worked with a local grower during the *Salmonella* on tomatoes outbreak. The second article is from another grower's perspective. Both are examples of how the agent and growers turned an unfolding crisis into positive news coverage.

Handout: "Workshop Teaches Safe Handling of Food," *Salisbury Post*, June 13, 2008. Darrell Blackwelder is an agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension, Rowan County Center. Let's look at an example of how he worked with the news media during the recent *Salmonella* outbreak on tomatoes.

Note: pass out copies of article about Darrell Blackwelder's training program.

Go to next slide.

Workshop teaches safe handling of food
Friday, June 13, 2008 7:58 AM

Eliazar Figueroa (left) and Darrel Blackwelder demonstrate proper hand-washing techniques. Blackwelder, an agent with the Cooperative Extension Service in Rowan County, with the help of coordinator Miriam Basso, took workers at Patterson Farms on Wednesday about food safety. The workers just completed an annual food safety workshop on handling of vegetables. Photo by Ann C. Lerner, Salisbury Post.

Eliazar Figueroa (left) and Darrel Blackwelder demonstrate the proper hand-washing techniques. Blackwelder, an agent with the Cooperative Extension Service in Rowan County, with the help of coordinator Miriam Basso, took workers at Patterson Farms on Wednesday about food safety. The workers just completed an annual food safety workshop on handling of vegetables. Photo by Ann C. Lerner, Salisbury Post.

And as Blackwelder demonstrated with the fluorescent dye and black light, careful hand-washing with hot water and soap is crucial to keeping food safe.

"It was surprising the way salmonella can get into stuff and how easily it spreads," Figueroa said.

Blackwelder does demonstrations about food safety at about five farms in Rowan County with the help of Miriam Basso, a program education coordinator from the Rowan-Salisbury Extension System who translates for Spanish-speaking workers.

Making sure farm workers wash their hands frequently

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PPT 9-15B: *Salisbury Post* Example 1

Ask participants to break into small groups of four to five people in each group. Spend a couple of minutes reading the article.

1. What were their impressions about the article?
2. Was the response effective? Why or why not?
3. If you were in this situation, how would you respond?

Trainer: Point out that the proactive work to get this informative article in the newspaper changed a negative situation into a means to educate the public on how Extension helps growers minimize food-safety problems.

Local growers worried tomato recall could hurt business
Tuesday, June 10, 2008 11:01 PM

Local growers and restaurants remove tomatoes from their produce bins and menus, local growers say a nationwide consumer alert about a salmonellosis outbreak has the potential to hurt them.

But the local growers emphasize that N.C. tomatoes, which haven't been picked yet, will be safe and profitable within the next few days.

"Hopefully there's the U.S. Food and Drug Administration get to the bottom of this and we can get behind us," said Doug Patterson, who operates Patterson Farms in Rowan County.

"We shouldn't be implicated or put in with this outbreak. We're guilty by association."

The FDA has issued a 17-state salmonella outbreak to red plum, red Roma and ripened tomatoes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said that since mid-April, 167 people have been affected by salmonellosis, and 23 hospitalizations have occurred.

The Associated Press has reported that a death in Texas may be related to a man being sickened by the salmonella bacteria after eating one of the recalled, Florida-based tomatoes, in Mexican restaurant.

The FDA is trying to find the source of the outbreak. It initially warned consumers in Texas and New Mexico June 3, but expanded that warning Wednesday.

Salmonella is a bacteria living in the intestinal tracts of humans and other animals, and the bacteria are usually transmitted to humans by eating foods contaminated with animal feces.

Ann Winkler, one of the owners of Patterson Farms in Woodstock, said the well-publicized salmonellosis outbreak "won't be a positive thing for a while," even though health officials in among 18 states where tomatoes have not been associated with the outbreak. (How and when were they?)

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PPT 9-16B: *Salisbury Post* Example 2

Trainer: Ask participants to stay in their groups. Hand out the news article that quotes the grower, "Local Growers Worried Tomato Recall Could Hurt Business," *Salisbury Post*, June 10, 2008. Ask them to take a look at the article and comment on how questions regarding *Salmonella* on tomatoes was handled and whether anything might have been done differently.

Growers are often in a difficult position. They may not have all the details about a outbreak. Any business person would want to clear his or her own operation and others in the state, and they don't want to jeopardize the industry as a whole. This is a tough position. What is a good way to respond?

When Is it Your Crisis?

- Most crises spring from events, controversies.
- Many controversies find their roots in disputed issues.
- Most issues or crises can be anticipated.

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PPT 9-17B: *When Is It Your Crisis?*

All crises spring from two sources: Either something bad has happened or someone has taken exception to something you've said or done. Even an outbreak on a farm in another state can affect your bottom line and result in a crisis for you. If the outbreak is on your farm, you have an even more serious crisis on your hands. This is the type of situation where it helps if you have a crisis communications plan in place, which we will talk about in a couple of minutes.

Most crises can be anticipated.

Plan for Crisis

- Be “crisis prepared,” not “crisis prone.”
- Plan for the worst, hope for the best.
- Manage response.

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PPT 9-18B: Plan for Crisis

“Crisis prone” refers to organizations that plan only for the crises they’ve already had. “Crisis prepared” refers to groups that take the time to consider what can go wrong and make plans for dealing with events such as farm accidents, manure spills, chemical spills in water used for irrigation, poor hygiene of workers handling produce, and food-borne illness outbreaks.

You can’t prevent or predict all potential crises, but you can put some basic plans in place for how you react to them. Think about the worst things that can happen and then think about what can be done about them. Managing crisis response is

PPT 9-18B

not about finding a spokesperson and the right words to make the problem go away. It’s about getting your points across and communicating with all stakeholders while you also try to resolve whatever it was that made it a crisis.

The next section refers to the elements of planning for a crisis. Then we’ll talk about how you manage them publicly.

Consequences of a Mishandled Crisis

- Loss of reputation
- Loss of goodwill
- Economic loss

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PPT 9-19B: Consequences of a Mishandled Crisis

Ask the audience for examples of mishandled crises. Can you think of a mishandled crisis?

You don’t have to look too far to find examples of mishandled crises: use of steroids among baseball players, John Edwards’ handling of his extramarital affair, Exxon’s belated response to the Valdez spill, Hurricane Katrina and FEMA.

On the other hand, Tylenol is often mentioned as the case study for exceptional handling of media and public confidence during the poisoned pill crisis. The company framed its response to show that they cared more about their customers’ safety than corporate profits and immediately put measures in place, such as tamper-evident packaging, to demonstrate that. Not only did they keep their product and brand afloat, they actually increased consumer confidence and loyalty.

The Death Strategy

- Deny
- Delay
- Deceive

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PPT 9-20B: The Death Strategy

The three behaviors listed in the slide will kill you in a crisis.

When you have a crisis:

- Acknowledge that you have one. The very act of saying you have a problem and you are going to fix it signals that you aren't going to play the denial game. It communicates that you aren't going to drag your feet.
- Don't think about how to get people out of a burning building; get them out. Take action. Don't be slow to react. (Good example: Johnson & Johnson pulled Tylenol off the shelf before the company knew what the problem was.)
- Engaging in deceitful sounding language is very damaging. Statements do not need to be filled with jargon.

Show the videos to demonstrate good and bad examples of how to handle media interviews.

Effective and Not-so-effective Ways to Respond to Media

<http://safety.cfans.umn.edu/ERPIQ/videos.html>

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21

PPT 9-21B: Effective and Not-So-Effective Ways to Respond to Media

Show DVD that includes Scenario 1 and Scenario 2 of effective and not-so-effective ways to respond to the media. Ask participants to discuss how being knowledgeable and aware of issues made a difference in how the farmers responded during the interviews.

Build Your Early Warning System

- Environmental scanning
- Networking
- Brainstorming for debacle



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PPT 9-22B: Build Your Early Warning System

By far, the best way to manage a crisis is to avoid one in the first place. Most crises can be anticipated, and anticipation is the only thing that will help you either avoid a crisis or be prepared for one. One of the things you'll need to do when you leave this session is to hold your own crisis-identification exercise.

Environmental scanning, or looking for problems and potential issues, is one way to anticipate a crisis. Talking with other producers, reading trade magazines and staying abreast of news reports is part of this.

Elements of a Crisis Communications Plan

- Alert authorities if the crisis is on your farm.
- Consult other sources: CES, Farm Bureau, commodity groups.
- Find facts.
- Select spokesperson depending on type of crisis.

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PPT 9-23B: Elements of a Crisis Communications Plan

The basic elements of a crisis communications plan are as follows:

- Know who needs to be alerted both within and beyond your farm operation. (Some things, such as manure spills, must be called into the appropriate state agency within a certain time.) Make sure your employees are aware of the chain of command and have those names, office, home and cell numbers and e-mail addresses handy. Some situations may demand lawyers, and that's a management decision. Who would you include on the crisis team for your farm operation? Is it

PPT 9-23B (continued)

just you, or do you have a farm manager and others who need to be involved? Who will serve as the spokesperson? Some people make good spokespeople. Others don't. The people with primary responsibility for managing crises usually shouldn't be the spokesperson. But sometimes they should. Now's the time to determine how to decide and who can do it.

- Remember: Audiences and stakeholders will vary depending on the crisis. All stakeholders are audiences, but not all audiences are stakeholders.
- Design the message last. You need to know what's going on, who cares and how they like to be reached. Decisions will need to be made about going public or not, and with what information.

The Crisis Communications Plan Goes into Action

- Designate a spokesperson.
- Determine key messages.
- Respond quickly.

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PPT 9-24B: The Crisis Communications Plan Goes into Action

These steps are provided in the event you must deal with a crisis. It's important to think through possible scenarios and plan for them.

**“Always do right.
That will gratify some people
and astonish the rest.”**

Mark Twain

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**PPT 9-25B: “Always do right. That will gratify some people and astonish the rest.”
—Mark Twain**

When in doubt, do the right thing.

F² Principle

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PPT 9-26B: F² Principle

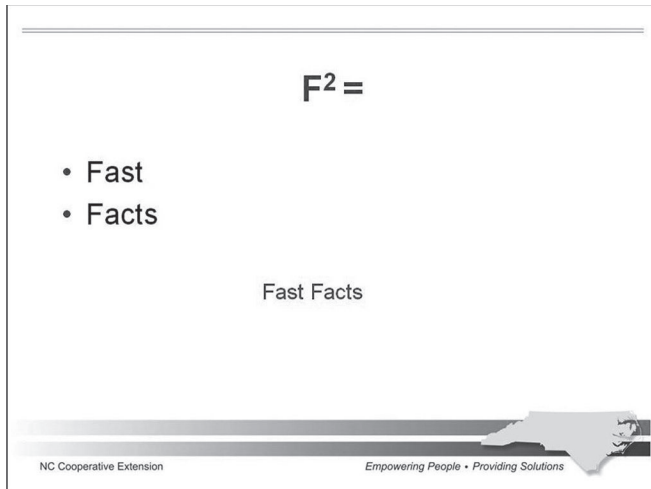
The F² Principle is something that’s essential and easy to remember when dealing with a controversy or crisis.

This is everything you need to know about crisis communications: Act fast. Be ready to communicate within one hour of a crisis occurring. Having a plan helps. Most organizations find this very difficult to do, and only a few accomplish it. Fact sheets on fresh produce will help. These will be provided by N.C. Cooperative Extension. A crisis dramatically changes the speed at which the media “comes after you.” Acting fast signifies that you have the situation under control. It helps minimize panic. Corollaries to panic are rumors and gossip.

PPT 9-26B (continued)

This one-hour recommendation was inspired by the news cycle. If you could communicate within one hour it would minimize damage. The news cycle is now around the clock but communicating within one hour is still very effective.

F² is the best media strategy: The media reports news in the form of stories, and in the story there is a good guy and a bad guy. F² removes the possibility that you will be the villain. Be upfront with facts. That often stops the media frenzy. Why? Because the media needs you. It won’t mean you will get a happy story but it will have more facts from you.



PPT 9-27B: F² = Fast Facts

Credibility is everything in a crisis. Facts are your friends. Sometimes “I don’t know” is your fact. The fact that you don’t know is a fact, so, what are you doing to find out? What are you doing to address the problem? Stick to facts.

Communicating about things that are not corroborated facts is extremely dangerous.

Do not speculate.

Have an active plan to stop rumors as soon as they are heard.

FAST FACTS is simplified because you can’t remember things in a crisis.

PPT 9-27B (continued)

Why Facts Are Your Friends:

1. The more information that comes from you, the less information will be reported by your critics and adversaries. (The more from you, the more you can help shape the story.) Provide factual information that reporters can use. If they don’t get information from you they will get information elsewhere and it may not be factual.
2. People deal with bad news far better than they deal with uncertainty.
3. Facts fill space that damaging rumors, negative speculation or unanswerable questions would otherwise fill . . . and trained reporters absolutely must have the facts.
4. The winning strategy is full disclosure. If any information, good or bad, is ultimately going to be revealed, it should come from you first.

All of these points are important for public institutions, in particular. You may want and need to talk with legal counsel before speaking with the news media, particularly if your farm is implicated.



PPT 9-28B: Message Development

We’ve covered the basics on dealing with controversies and crises.

A helpful tool in developing clear and concise messages is a message map.

Trainer: Distribute the handout “Prepare Clear and Concise Messages” which includes “A Five-Step Model for Preparing Messages and a “Message Map Template.”

Review the Five-Step Model. Note: this is one model from one risk management expert. Others use message maps but may not limit the key message to 27 words and 9 seconds. Use your judgment in this area based upon other guidelines.

Take a look at the sample Message Map that has been completed.

It's Your Turn!

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PPT 9-29B: It's Your Turn

Trainer: Allow 20 to 30 minutes for this exercise.

We have developed some possible scenarios, some pulled from actual events, to help you put to work some of the principles we've covered today. We want you to break into four groups.

Scenario 1

Group 1 will play the role of organizational representatives or groups dealing with a particular issue. Use the Message Key template to guide you in developing your messages.

Group 2 will play reporters and develop questions that might be asked of Group 1.

Scenario 2

Divide according to directions above.

Give time for groups to discuss and then ask for them to report back to entire group. Use the instructor's notes to provide useful comments.

In Summary . . .

- Media can help get research-based information out on controversial issues and in the event of a crisis.
- Stick to the facts and be credible.
- Act quickly.
- Incorporate a crisis communications plan in your overall food safety plan.

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PPT 9-30B: Summary

PPT 9-31B: Acknowledgments

No notes

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Presentation adapted from "Media Relations Made Easy" curricula, Association for Communication Excellence; training by Eric Mower & Associates, CIT News and Publishing of University of Nebraska-Lincoln; "Effective Media Communication During Public Health Emergencies: A World Health Organization Handbook," and experience in issues management and crisis communications.

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39

Resources:

- University News Services, N.C. State University. Contact: Mick Kulikowski, Assistant Director for News and National Media Coordinator, mick_kulikowski@ncsu.edu, 919-515-8387 (office) or 919-218-5937 (mobile)
- Department of Communication Services, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, N.C. State University. Contacts: Dee Shore, Department Head, dee_shore@ncsu.edu or 919-513-3108; Natalie Hampton, News Editor/Media Specialist, natalie_Hampton@ncsu.edu or 919-513-3128
- Program for Value-Added & Alternative Agriculture, N.C. State University. Contact: Leah Chester-Davis, Coordinator of Communications & Community Outreach, and Extension Communications Specialist, Department of Communication Services, leah_chester-davis@ncsu.edu or 704-617-0502
- Agricultural Communications, School of Agriculture, N.C. A&T State University. Contact: Robin Adams, Director, radams@ncat.edu or 336-334-7047

Resources used to develop this module:

- *Media Relations Made Easy* curricula, Association for Communication Excellence in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Life and Human Sciences
- Workshop by Eric Mower & Associates, Charlotte, NC
- CIT News and Publishing of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- *Effective Media Communication During Public Health Emergencies*, A World Health Organization Handbook
- Public Relations Society of America teleseminar on Media Training for Media Trainers: *Improve Your Effectiveness as a Media Coach and Trainer*
- Professional experience in handling controversies and crises

Handouts

Module A for Agents

1. "Making Your Point: A Media Relations Checklist"
2. "Workshop Teaches Safe Handling of Food" (from *Salisbury Post*, June 13, 2008)
3. "Local Growers Worried Tomato Recall Could Hurt Business," *Salisbury Post*, June 10, 2008
4. "Prepare Clear and Concise Messages"
5. Message Map Template (blank one)
6. Message Map Template (one that is filled out as example)
7. Media Basics: When a Reporter Calls
8. Eight Questions the Media Always Ask
9. Scenarios for Module A (note section blank)
10. Scenarios for Module A (note section filled in for instructor guide)

Handout 1A

Making Your Point: A Media Relations Checklist

- Do you know to whom you are talking?**
Ask the reporter questions to determine who you're talking to and what he or she needs. Get the name, employer and phone number. Clarify what information the reporter wants from you.

- Does the reporter need the information right away?**
Ask the reporter when his or her deadline is. Can you call back later, at a time that's more convenient for you? Can you buy yourself some time to compose your thoughts into talking points and anticipate questions? If you promise to call back, do so by the agreed upon time.

- Are you knowledgeable enough to provide an expert opinion?**
If so, gather your thoughts and respond. If not, don't be afraid to say so—and point the reporter to an individual (preferably within Extension) who might be able to help. Always avoid personal views or speculation.

- Have you clearly identified yourself?**
Does the reporter have your name, your title and your company or agency name?

- Have you made your three key points?**
If you have time to prepare to respond, identify three main points you want to make and, during the interview, make sure you emphasize those points. It will help if you've prepared key points that are 20 seconds or less.

- Can you provide anything in writing that will help the reporter understand your points?**
If possible, try following up with a brief e-mail restating your main talking points or pass along an appropriate fact sheet or publication.

- Remember the Department of Communication Services is a resource.**
Professionals in the department are available to guide you in working with the media.

Developed by Dee Shore, Head, Department of Communication Services, N.C. State University, dee_shore@ncsu.edu or 919-513-3108.

Handout 2A

Workshop Teaches Safe Handling of Food

By Sara Gregory, *Salisbury Post*, June 13, 2008

Eleazar Figueroa's hands looked clean after he washed them in cold water. But under a black light, Figueroa's hands lit up with "contaminants."

Figueroa's hands were covered with orange florescent dye to demonstrate how easy it is for *Salmonella* and other bacteria to spread.

He was one of about 35 Patterson Farm workers Tuesday who heard from Darrell Blackwelder, a Co-operative Extension agent, about safe food-handling practices.

And as Blackwelder demonstrated with the florescent dye and black light, careful hand washing with hot water and soap is crucial to keeping food safe.

"I was surprised the way *Salmonella* can get into stuff and how easily it is spread," Figueroa said.

Blackwelder does demonstrations about food safety at about five farms in Rowan County with the help of Miriam Basso, a migrant education coordinator from the Rowan-Salisbury School System who translates for Spanish-speaking workers.

Making sure all farm workers wash their hands frequently and thoroughly is the most important step in keeping food safe for consumers, Blackwelder said.

"You're handling food for people," he said. "You're the first step before it goes to people's plates."

Tuesday's lesson was planned weeks before the *Salmonella* outbreak that has sickened people in 17 states.

"It has really affected tomato production in the U.S.," Blackwelder told the workers. "If the food is not safely handled, then you can't sell it." And if farms can't sell their produce, then workers won't be able to keep their jobs, either.

At Patterson Farm, Melissa Roach, who supervises the packing house, says the farm already emphasizes safety. Workers wash their hands after using the restroom and then use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and put on gloves and hairnets before touching the tomatoes. The farm also shows workers videos about food safety and has monthly meetings to discuss safe practices, Roach said. "They know how it is from start to finish," she said.

Contact Sara Gregory at 704-797-4257 or sgregory@salisburypost.com.

Scenario Exercise: Dealing with Controversies and Crises – Working with the News Media Contacts: Leah Chester-Davis, leah_chester-davis@ncsu.edu; Natalie Hampton, natalie_hampton@ncsu.edu; Dee Shore, dee_shore@ncsu.edu, N.C. State University.

Handout 3A

Local growers worried tomato recall could hurt business

By Mark Wineka, *Salisbury Post*, June 10, 2008

As grocery stores and restaurants remove tomatoes from their produce bins and menus, local growers say a nationwide consumer alert about a salmonellosis outbreak has the potential to hurt them.

But the local growers emphasize that N.C. tomatoes, which haven't been picked yet, will be safe and plentiful within the next week or two.

"Hopefully they'll (the U.S. Food and Drug Administration) get to the bottom of this and we can put it behind us," said Doug Patterson, who operates Patterson Farms in Rowan County.

"We shouldn't be implicated or put in with this outbreak. We're guilty by association."

The FDA has linked a 17-state *Salmonella* outbreak to red plum, red Roma and round red tomatoes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said that since mid-April, 167 people have been affected by salmonellosis, and 23 hospitalizations have occurred.

The Associated Press has reported that a death in Texas may be related to a man being sickened by the *Salmonella* bacteria after eating pico de gallo, a tomato-based condiment, at a Mexican restaurant.

The FDA is trying to find the source of the outbreak. It initially warned consumers in Texas and New Mexico June 3, but expanded that warning nationwide Monday.

Salmonella is a bacteria living in the intestinal tracts of humans and other animals, and the bacteria are usually transmitted to humans by eating foods contaminated with animal feces.

Artie Watson, one of the owners of Wetmore Farms in Woodleaf, said the well-publicized salmonellosis outbreak "won't be a positive thing for a while," even though North Carolina is among 19 states whose tomatoes have not been associated with the outbreak. (See list in related story.)

At Wetmore Farms, 15 acres of tomatoes are about a week to 10 days away from being ready to pick.

Patterson has 300 acres of tomatoes that represent 80 percent of the farm's income. His tomatoes are mostly sold in North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia, but his overall market extends from Puerto Rico to Canada.

Workers will begin picking the Patterson tomatoes in about two weeks.

"When 'Good Morning America' comes out and says don't eat tomatoes, that hurts everybody," Patterson said.

He added that when people see restaurants such as McDonald's or Subway not putting tomato slices on their sandwiches, it also sends a signal to these consumers that they shouldn't be buying them in grocery stores, farmers markets or other retail outlets.

That shouldn't happen, Patterson said. He added that his

farm, for example, is NOTE: please do not make any changes to articles from newspapers) certified by the state, meaning it follows good agricultural practices in making sure workers receive training and follow recommended hygiene practices.

The same kind of guilt by association hurt tomato growers in the past when the country had a salmonellosis scare with lettuce, Patterson said. When people quit eating salads for a time, it naturally hurt tomato sales.

Meanwhile, Salisbury-based grocer Food Lion took action Monday to take any suspect tomatoes out of the produce departments of its 1,300 stores in the mid-Atlantic and Southeast regions.

The company contacted its vendors and suppliers and put out a recall notice for the three varieties in question.

"Safety is of primary importance to us," said Karen Peterson, corporate communications manager for Food Lion.

Any consumer who bought tomatoes that have since been recalled can bring them back to Food Lion stores for a full refund, she added.

Other grocery chains across the country also have pulled from their produce departments the three types of tomatoes identified by the FDA.

Peterson noted that federal authorities have said cherry tomatoes, grape tomatoes and tomatoes with the vine still attached are safe and not associated with the outbreak. The same goes for homegrown tomatoes.

The Patterson and Wetmore farms have been selling local greenhouse-grown tomatoes. Again, they are safe and not affected by the *Salmonella* scare.

Darrell Blackwelder, horticulture agent for the Cooperative Extension Service in Rowan County, said he had received calls Tuesday from people just wondering if they could eat any tomatoes at all, even ones they have grown in their own gardens.

Blackwelder was holding a meeting at 7 p.m. Tuesday for Farmers Market vendors on safe food handling.

He also will conduct three separate sessions Thursday at Patterson Farms and, using a Spanish translator supplied by the Rowan-Salisbury Schools, go over the importance of cleanliness and food safety practices among the farm's migrant workers, who will be picking the tomatoes.

Blackwelder said Patterson Farms relies on third-party audits of its food safety practices and that companies such as Wal-Mart and Food Lion will only buy produce from these kinds of certified growers.

"The Pattersons have been doing this for years—and the other growers, too," Blackwelder said. "Everybody gets the training."

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Scenario Exercise: Dealing with Controversies and Crises – Working with the News Media

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Handout 4A Prepare Clear and Concise Messages

A key step in effective media communication is to develop clear and concise messages that address stakeholder questions and concerns. In addition to generating a large number of questions and concerns, controversies and crises are also likely to generate strong feelings of anxiety, anger, frustration, fear and outrage. Messages that address stakeholder concerns should therefore be based on what the target audience most needs to know or most wants to know.

One way to develop clear messages is to brainstorm with a message-development team consisting of a subject-matter expert, communication specialist, policy/legal/management expert and a facilitator. Such sessions typically produce a set of talking points and key messages.

A message map helps in the development of messages. It also serves as a “port in a storm” when questioning by journalists or others becomes intense or aggressive. Message maps allow organizations to develop messages in advance of emergencies.

A Five-Step Model for Preparing Messages	
Answers should:	By:
1. Express empathy, listening, caring or compassion as a first statement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using personal pronouns, such as “I” “we” “our” or “us” • Indicating through actions, body language and words that you share the concerns of those affected by events • Acknowledging the legitimacy of fear and emotion • Using a personal story, if appropriate (for example, “My family...” • Bridging to the key messages.
2. State the key messages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting the total number of words to no more than 27 • Limiting the total length to no more than 9 seconds • Using positive, constructive and solution-oriented words as appropriate • Setting messages apart with introductory words, pauses, inflections.
3. State supporting information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using three additional facts • Using well-thought out and tested visual material, including graphics, maps, pictures, video clips, animation, photographs and analogies • Using a personal story • Citing credible third parties or other credible sources of information.
4. Repeat the key messages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarizing or emphasizing the key messages.
5. State future actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listing specific next steps; and • Providing contact information for obtaining additional information, if appropriate.

Source: *Effective Media Communication During Public Health Emergencies*, A World Health Organization Handbook, by Randall N. Hyer, World Health Organization and Vincent Covello, Center for Risk Communication.

Handout 5A

Message Map Template		
Stakeholder:		
Question or Concern:		
Key Message 1	Key Message 2	Key Message 3
Supporting Information 1-1	Supporting Information 2-1	Supporting Information 3-1
Supporting Information 1-2	Supporting Information 2-2	Supporting Information 3-2
Supporting Information 1-3	Supporting Information 2-3	Supporting Information 3-3

The top section of the message map identifies the stakeholder or audience for whom the messages are intended as well as the specific question or concern being addressed. The next layer of the message map contains the three key messages that can function individually or collectively as a response to a stakeholder’s question or concern. These key messages are intended to address the information needs of a wide variety of audiences. Remember the rule of threes: It’s often important to make three main points.

The final section of the message map contains supporting information arranged in blocks of three under each key message. This supporting information amplifies the key messages by providing additional facts or details. Supporting information can also take the form of visuals, analogies, personal stories or citations of credible information sources.

A message map provides multiple benefits. It provides a handy reference for leaders and spokespersons who must respond swiftly to questions on topics where timeliness and accuracy are critical. It minimizes the chance of “speaker’s regret” at saying something inappropriate or not saying something that should have been said. A printed copy of the message map allows a spokesperson during interview to “check off” the talking points they want to make in order of their importance.

Source: Effective Media Communication During Public Health Emergencies, A World Health Organization Handbook, by Randall N. Hyer, World Health Organization and Vincent Covello, Center for Risk Communication.

Handout 6A Sample message map

Message Map Template		
Stakeholder: News Media/Consumers Question or Concern: North Carolina tomatoes have not been implicated in the recent <i>Salmonella</i> outbreak, but the state’s tomato industry may be hurt by association. It’s important for consumers to understand what the FDA warning really means.		
Key Message 1	Key Message 2	Key Message 3
North Carolina is not among the 19 states whose tomatoes have been associated with the outbreak.	Growers implement GAPs to minimize risks.	Tomato growers in North Carolina and other states outside the outbreak area can be hurt by this crisis.
Supporting Information 1-1	Supporting Information 2-1	Supporting Information 3-1
North Carolina’s commercial tomatoes are still two weeks away from being ready for market.	Workers who handle fresh market produce are taught to wash hands after using the restroom.	All tomato growers suffer when major media advise consumers not to eat tomatoes.
Supporting Information 1-2	Supporting Information 2-2	Supporting Information 3-2
Therefore, North Carolina’s commercial tomatoes have not been implicated in the outbreak by FDA.	Produce workers use alcohol-based hand sanitizer to kill germs when handling tomatoes.	When people see major restaurant chains leaving tomatoes off sandwiches, they may believe that tomatoes are unsafe.
Supporting Information 1-3	Supporting Information 2-3	Supporting Information 3-3
The state’s tomato crop is expected to be safe and plentiful within the next one to two weeks.	Produce workers wear gloves and hairnets when touching the tomatoes.	If farms can’t sell their produce because of consumer concerns, workers may lose their jobs.

The top section of the message map identifies the stakeholder or audience for whom the messages are intended as well as the specific question or concern being addressed. The next layer of the message map contains the three key messages that can function individually or collectively as a response to a stakeholder’s question or concern. These key messages are intended to address the information needs of a wide variety of audiences. Remember the rule of threes: It’s often important to make three main points .

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Handout 7A

Media Basics: When a Reporter Calls

Preparation is key to becoming comfortable with media calls and interviews.
The following tips should help you prepare to work effectively with reporters.

- **Tell the truth. Never lie.** Always tell the truth. If you don't know or aren't sure, say so and don't guess. Your credibility is at stake. Being truthful does not mean telling all you know. Use good judgment.
- **Say it for the record.** Anything you say to a reporter is fair game for a story. If you don't want it reported, don't say it. Asking a reporter to go "off the record" is not appropriate. Don't ask reporters not to print something after you say it.
- **Avoid no comment.** "No comment" sounds suspicious. If you really can't comment, explain why. "We're gathering that information and will provide it when it's finalized." Or, "Our policy doesn't allow us to comment on personnel matters." It's okay to say you don't know and offer to find out.
- **The media's role.** Objectively telling all sides of a story is the media's job, even if the views are unpopular. Don't expect reporters to present only your perspective and never tell a reporter how to report a story. Don't expect a reporter to make you look good; make yourself look good by providing clear, concise information.
- **Be prepared.** Doing your homework makes you a better source and less nervous. Before an interview, anticipate possible questions and think through answers. Ask yourself: Is this a controversial or sensitive topic? How will my answers be perceived? How can I best explain this? Gather background materials for the reporter that help reinforce details.
- **Key points.** Before interviews, identify the three main points you want to make. For each point, develop three responses that support or help communicate that point. Work on making key points in 20 seconds or less. Come up with a couple of 10-second or under responses.
- **Respect deadlines.** Reporters live by unbending deadlines. If a reporter calls for immediate comment, try to help or point them to someone who can. But beware of giving a "quickie" response if you have inadequate information.
- **Know who's calling.** When a reporter calls, ask some questions to determine whom you're talking to and what they need. If you don't know a reporter, get his/her name, employer and phone number. Clarify what information she/he is seeking from you.
- **Respond promptly.** Return media calls promptly. If a reporter catches you unprepared, find out what he/she is looking for and offer to call back in a few minutes. Gather your thoughts, anticipate questions, plan your response and call back quickly. If you have an appointment for an interview, be there. Dodging a reporter won't make the story disappear; it just will be reported without your perspective.
- **Lead with the bottom line.** Remember to provide key facts or points first. Add details if time allows. Your key message can get lost in too much detail and technical information.
- **Talk slowly.** Reporters will write furiously as you talk. Some will use tape recorders. Talk slowly and be clear. Leave nothing to chance.
- **Short, sweet, stop.** Keep your answers brief. Your main message gets lost unless you discipline yourself to provide concise answers. Radio or TV reporters often must tell an entire story in 20 seconds to a minute. Answer the question and stop talking. Don't keep talking to fill the silence.
- **Don't babble.** Listen to questions and think about your answers before you start talking. Don't ramble. It's okay to pause briefly to gather your thoughts before answering.

continued next page

When a Reporter Calls: Media Basics, page 2

- **Dump the jargon.** Technical terms and acronyms are confusing or meaningless to the public. Be a translator by using everyday language and examples. Relate your information in ways everyday folks can appreciate—why is this important and what does it mean to their lives, community, families or livelihoods?
- **Be proactive.** Answer reporters' questions and volunteer information to make key points. Reporters may welcome another angle or idea, but offer ideas as suggestions, not directives. Reporters aren't likely to let you see a story before it appears, but always invite them to call back for help or clarification.
- **Summarize thoughts.** After discussing the subject, concisely summarize key points in everyday language. "My major points are: 1. ... 2. ...3. ..." This may plant the idea of a story outline in the reporter's mind.
- **Potential pitfalls.** Always have the facts before commenting. Stick to what you know even if this disappoints a reporter. If you are unprepared or unqualified to answer, refer reporters to someone who can help. Avoid personal views or speculation. Don't let reporters put words in your mouth.
Reporter: "So you're saying ..."
You: "No, let me clarify ..."
Do not repeat inaccuracies, even to correct them.
- **Identify yourself.** Don't assume a reporter knows who you are or what you do just because they've called. Provide your name, title, company or agency name and names of other people or programs you're discussing.
- **Feedback.** It's okay to tell reporters when they do a good job. If they make a mistake, weigh what's at stake. If it's a major error in fact, tell the reporter or editor, but don't quibble over minor misunderstandings. Remember, you're building long-term relationships.
- **Don't assume a reporter's knowledge.** Don't assume that a reporter is knowledgeable just because he/she is covering the story. Most reporters are generalists who cover diverse topics and have little time to background themselves on breaking stories before reporting them. Provide simple information to help out.

Prepared by CIT News and Publishing, Communications and Information Technology, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Phone 402-472-3030; fax 402-472-3093; e-mail ianrnews@unlnotes.unl.edu

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Handout 8A

Eight Questions the Media Always Ask

1. What happened?
2. Who is in charge?
3. Has this been contained?
4. Are victims being helped?
5. What can we expect?
6. What should we do?
7. Why did this happen?
8. Did you have forewarning?

Questions the Crisis Team Must Ask Itself

1. What happened?
2. How do we know?
3. Who is responsible?
4. Why did it happen?
5. Who is affected?
6. What should we do?
7. Who can we trust?
8. Who needs to hear from us?
9. What should we say?
10. How should we say it?

Sources:

"Eight Questions the Media Always Ask," from University of Iowa Study
"Questions the Crisis Team Must Ask Itself," from Eric Mower & Associates Workshop, June 2008.
(Handout prepared for N.C. Cooperative Extension workshop on "Dealing with Controversial Issues – Working with the News Media.")

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Handout 9A Instructor's Guide

It Could Happen To You

This is designed to use at the end of the PPT presentation, before the summary and wrap-up of session on “Dealing with Controversial Issues – Working with the News Media.” Allow 20 to 30 minutes.

Ask participants to break into groups of about eight to 12 people per each scenario. For each scenario, half of the group (Group 1) serves as organizational representatives working on how to address an issue. The other half of the group (Group 2) serves as reporters, crafting questions to ask of group 1.

Activity for Group 1 (for each Scenario): Craft messages with the objective of addressing and reducing outrage, and providing factual information.

- Discuss the scenario in groups of three to four people.
- Choose a spokesperson.
- Determine interview objectives and structure message accordingly.
- Anticipate and list potential pitfalls and responses.
- Create three to four key points that reinforce your objective and avoid outrage escalators.
- Determine who will contact your communications office—a good idea in any crisis.

Activity for Group 2 (for each Scenario).

- Think about what a reporter might want to know and develop questions to ask Group 1.
- At the assigned time, serve as reporters and ask Group 1 questions.
- There is no need to designate one person to ask the questions. You may treat the Q&A period as a news conference with several reporters asking questions. But not all at once!

Handout 10A Instructor's Guide

<p>Scenario One</p> <p>You are the county Extension director in a county that grows quite a bit of lettuce and for the bagged salad greens market, a \$3 billion a year industry. There are reports that several consumers have become sick from eating greens believed to have been grown in your county. National news media have descended on nearly every lettuce field in the county, and now they are at your front door. How do you reassure the public and protect the integrity of the local industry, while being appropriately cautious with regard to public health? Which members of your staff would you involve?</p>	<p>Notes:</p> <p>The county director should stick to Extension's role of educating growers and consumers about produce safety. Choose three messages you want the public to hear.</p> <p>They might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We are all very concerned about this and we, like everyone else, are waiting for the FDA to complete its investigation. ▪ Farmers in this county implement good agricultural practices to minimize risks. ▪ Some examples of good agricultural practices are: <p>Reporters will want to focus on risks, on how this could have happened. They will try to get the county director to speculate. Do not speculate.</p> <p>Reporter: "We've heard that Cool Springs Farms is the source of contamination. Do you think that's possible?" You may need to redirect the question. Ex. "I'm not in a position to speculate. But I can tell you what farmers do to ensure a safe food supply." (List 3 talking points).</p>
<p>Scenario Two</p> <p>The news media have learned that a food-borne illness can be traced back to a farm in your county. A representative from the local health department has made statements to the news media that lead the public to believe that every farm in the area has contaminated produce. You have facts that indicate otherwise, that the contamination is contained to one farm. The news media continue to cover the story and most likely will be interviewing county colleagues in other departments. What do you do?</p>	<p>Agent: Take care not to point fingers at the single farm. Use phrases such as, "under investigation," "isolated incident." Urge caution until more is known.</p> <p>Reporters will try to find out which farm is implicated and how authorities know this. They will want to know what they are trying to hide.</p> <p>Let the news media know you are available to discuss good agricultural practices implemented by local farmers. As part of the interview remind viewers/listeners/readers that at this point the investigation is ongoing and by all indications this contamination is not widespread and does not implicate all farms in the county. Make it clear that jumping to conclusions before all the facts are in damages all of the farms involved and is not a public service.</p>

Handout 10A (continued)

<p>Scenario Three</p> <p>A <i>Salmonella</i> outbreak in another state has resulted in local news media wanting to head out to local farms to talk with farmers and get video footage. Your concern is that the news story may appear to implicate the local farmer. How would you handle this?</p>	<p>Agent: Be careful about statements like “Our produce is safe.” Refer to the FDA status: “Our state is not in the FDA’s outbreak area.”</p> <p>In the recent <i>Salmonella</i> on tomatoes outbreak, North Carolina tomatoes were not being harvested at the time of the outbreak so North Carolina was not implicated. Therefore, it was important to get this out to the local news media.</p> <p>Reporters will want to find out how safe the local produce really is.</p>
<p>Scenario Four</p> <p>Food safety is utmost in people’s minds as the news media cover another <i>Salmonella</i> outbreak in another state. Local media want to know what Cooperative Extension is doing to train farmers in providing a safe food supply. What do you tell them?</p>	<p>Agent: Stick to the facts, especially what’s happening in your county. What has been done in your area to train growers and farm workers?</p> <p>Reporters will have lots of questions about the risks and how to prevent fresh produce contamination. Be prepared with your three talking points.</p>
<p>Scenario Five</p> <p>A sprinkler that is applying liquid cow manure from your dairy farm gets stuck and sends thousands of gallons of manure down a drain tile and into a nearby creek. You’re staging containment equipment and preparing to pump it out when a neighbor calls the state environmental agency and the local radio station. At 11:50 a.m., the reporter is on the phone with you. Think fast.</p>	<p>Instructor Notes</p> <p>Make arrangements to call the reporter back while you gather your thoughts.</p> <p>Consider acknowledging the error and outlining the measures you are taking to correct the problem and what you will do to make sure it doesn’t happen again.</p> <p>Call the reporter back.</p>

Handout 10A (for participants)

<p>Scenario One</p> <p>You are the county Extension director in a county that grows quite a bit of lettuce and for the bagged salad greens market, a \$3 billion a year industry. There are reports that several consumers have become sick from eating greens believed to have been grown in your county. National news media have descended on nearly every lettuce field in the county, and now they are at your front door. How do you reassure the public and protect the integrity of the local industry, while being appropriately cautious with regard to public health? Which members of your staff would you involve?</p>	
<p>Scenario Two</p> <p>The news media have learned that a food-borne illness can be traced back to a farm in your county. A representative from the local health department has made statements to the news media that lead the public to believe that every farm in the area has contaminated produce. You have facts that indicate otherwise, that the contamination is contained to one farm. The news media continue to cover the story and most likely will be interviewing county colleagues in other departments. What do you do?</p>	
<p>Scenario Three</p> <p>A <i>Salmonella</i> outbreak in another state has resulted in local news media wanting to head out to local farms to talk with farmers and get video footage. Your concern is that the news story may appear to implicate the local farmer. How would you handle this?</p>	

Handout 10A (for participants, continued)

<p>Scenario Four</p> <p>Food safety is utmost in people’s minds as the news media covers another <i>Salmonella</i> outbreak in another state. Local media want to know what Cooperative Extension is doing to train farmers in providing a safe food supply. What do you tell them?</p>	
<p>Scenario Five</p> <p>A sprinkler that is applying liquid cow manure from your dairy farm gets stuck and sends thousands of gallons of manure down a drain tile and into a nearby creek. You’re staging containment equipment and preparing to pump it out when a neighbor calls the state environmental agency and the local radio station. At 11:50 a.m., the reporter is on the phone with you. Think fast.</p>	

Handout 11A Issues Management Plan

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Issues Management Plan

Purpose:

This plan outlines procedures for collecting and conveying information to internal and external audiences during or immediately following a major news story for which we have university experts that can provide factual information. The news story is such that an issues management team may need to be formed to address questions from both internal and external stakeholders. Issues management teams are particularly important when N.C. State University experts need to take an active role in ensuring that factual information is provided to stakeholder groups and partners to equip them to more knowledgeably deal with specific issues.

Issues:

An issue or controversy is defined as an occurrence that prompts significant, often sustained, news coverage and public scrutiny. Examples of issues management that N.C. Cooperative Extension personnel might be involved in would likely deal with risk to public health or North Carolina economy when it comes to animals, produce, dietary substance, or the environment. For example, salmonella outbreak on tomatoes, E.coli outbreak on spinach, mad cow disease, are all examples where the university will form issues management teams.

The Department of Communication Services in conjunction with Department Extension Leaders and Extension Program Leaders will brainstorm possible “issues” that may arise in the news, identify

appropriate issues management team members, identify available NCCE experts to talk with the news media about the issue and develop action plan based on the following steps. Teams may consist of members from several departments. At least one member from the Department of Communication Services will participate on every team to facilitate and help implement both internal and external communications plans with employees, media and others.

Team Members:

Fresh Produce Safety – *Salmonella* and Tomatoes (example)

Issues Management Team: Ben Chapman*, Department of 4-H Youth Development and Family and Consumer Sciences; Diane Ducharme*, N.C. Market Ready; Chris Gunter*, Department of Horticultural Science; Trevor Phister*, Department of Food, Bioprocessing and Nutrition Sciences*; Ed Estes, Department of Agricultural Resources and Economics; Keith Baldwin, N.C. A&T State University; Leah Chester-Davis, N.C. MarketReady & Department of Communication Services; Natalie Hampton, Department of Communication Services.**

* Members of Fresh Produce Safety Task Force

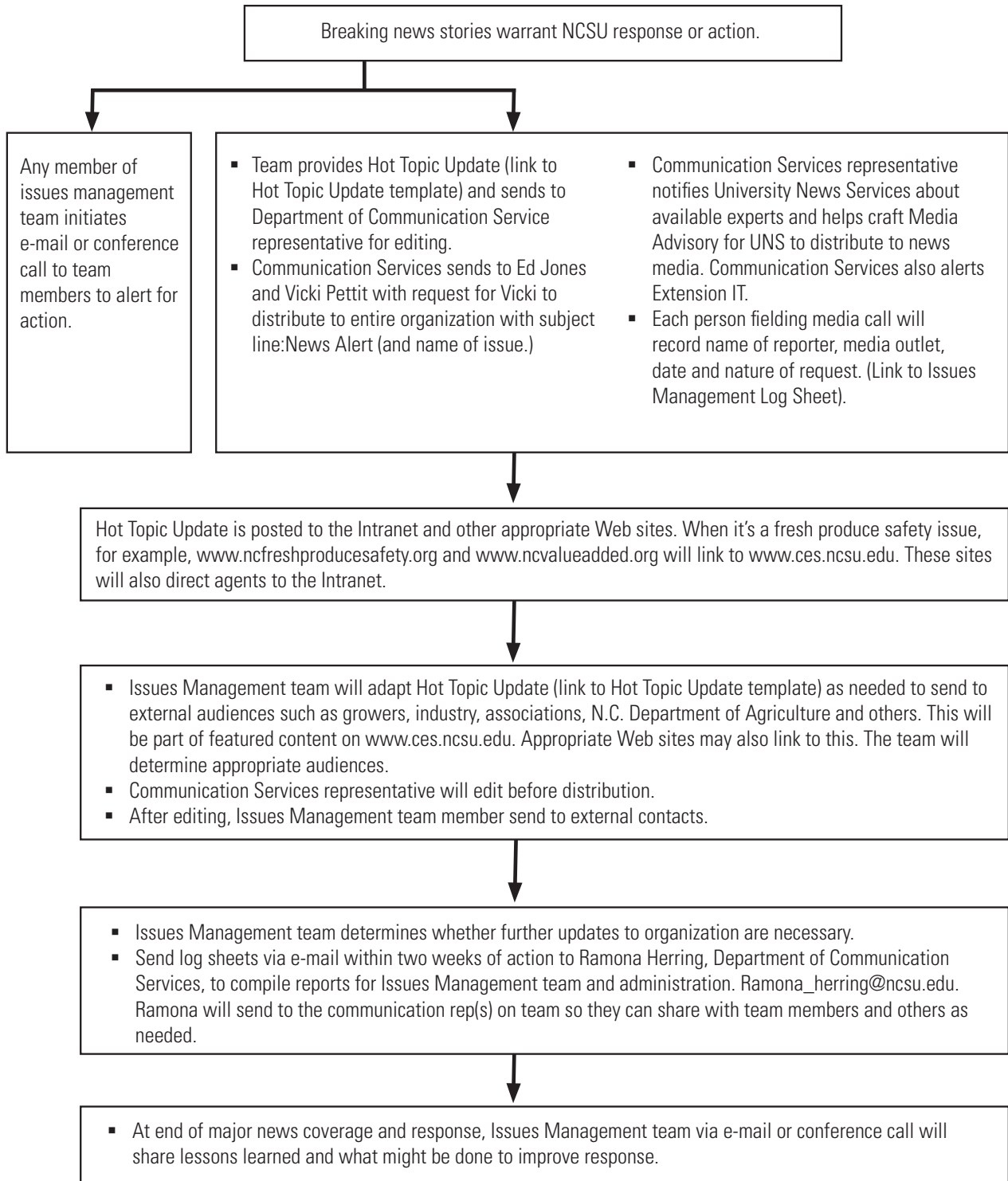
** Back up for anyone in Communications Services (including Leah) is someone on writing team.

Handout 11A (continued)

Issues Management Response

1. Employee on issues management team first learning of outbreak should initiate e-mail or conference call to other team members.
2. Material for a Hot Topic Update is pulled from files and team members add updated info, if necessary, most likely from current FDA Web site.
3. Leah or Natalie notifies University News Services about available experts and help craft Media Advisory for UNS to distribute to news media. The Media Advisory is posted to Online News Rooms on N. C. MarketReady Web site, Fresh Produce Safety Web site, Department of Communication Services Web site.
4. Hot Topic Update is sent by Communications representative on Issues Management team to Ed Jones and Vicki Pettit, with request to Vicki Pettit to distribute to entire organization. If Vicki is not available, Communications representative sends the material to Helen Crane to distribute. (Note: the Hot Topic Update may mention that a Media Advisory has been sent to news media but the Media Advisory will not be distributed other than by University News Services.)
Web sites may want to direct agents to the Intranet. For example, the N.C. MarketReady and Fresh Produce Safety Web sites will direct agents to the Hot Topic Update on the Intranet if it's a fresh produce issue.
5. Hot Topic Update information may need to be adapted to send to external audiences such as growers, task force members, associations and others. Issues management team members will adapt as needed; Communication Services representative on team (Leah and/or Natalie) will edit before distribution. Designated member of Issues Management Team will send to external contacts. Note: we request that the letterhead for Hot Topic Updates be used when providing information to both internal and external groups as it clearly identifies that the information is being provided by N.C. State University/NC Cooperative Extension and positions NCSU/NCCE as providers of research-based information. The external Hot Topic Update will be part of the featured content on www.ces.ncsu.edu. Other web sites may link to it.
6. Issues Management Team will determine when and how often to provide updates to organization and to University News Services.
7. Subject matter specialists and associates will serve as experts. The Hot Topic Update information has been provided so that agents can respond to media calls. Reporters may either call the expert directly or go through Communication Services (this includes Leah, part of CS and also member of N.C. MarketReady team) or University News Services to reach the expert.
8. At beginning of dealing with a controversy in the news media, the communications representative on the Issues Management team will remind team members to make sure they follow step 10 below.
9. Each person fielding a call will record name of reporter, media outlet, date and nature of request. This information will be sent via e-mail to Ramona Herring in the Department of Communication Services, ramona_herring@ncsu.edu to compile for reports to administration, Fresh Produce Safety Task Force and others. Ramona will send to the communication rep(s) on team so they can share with team members and others as needed.
10. Issues Management team via e-mail or conference call will share lessons learned and what might be done to improve response.

Handout 11A (continued)



Handout 12A Crisis Communications Plan

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Crisis Communication Plan

for the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service
(adapted from Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service)

Purpose

This plan outlines procedures for collecting and conveying information to the public during or immediately following an emergency or crisis. How communication is handled in the first few hours and days during a crisis is critically important in terms of maintaining credibility and confidence with the public.

Crisis

A crisis is defined as a significant event—natural, accidental or intended—that prompts significant, often sustained, news coverage and public scrutiny and potentially could cause harm to Cooperative Extension’s image or reputation—or both. A crisis could be precipitated by an emergency (see below) or some other event of a catastrophic or controversial nature. Examples of the latter are civil disturbances, political controversies or employee misconduct, and potential partners may include: emergency management team, health department, commodity or grower groups, schools, research stations or others involved in dealing with the emergency locally.

Emergency

An emergency is defined as fire, explosion, tornado, criminal act resulting in injury or severe property damage, or other events where police, fire, emergency medical, animal health or homeland security personnel are involved. When an emergency occurs, Extension personnel are urged to contact 911 and ensure the safety of anyone who has been harmed.

Note: An emergency could, but will not always, lead to crisis.

Controversial Issue

A controversial issue is an issue on which people hold conflicting views. Often, Cooperative Extension professionals in counties and on campus are called on by news media to comment on such issues, and they are also called upon to comment on crises in other states and locations. In these cases, the Issues Management Plan (and not this Crisis Communication plan) applies.

Assumptions

During a crisis, much of what the public learns about the event is through news media. Negative news coverage can potentially damage an organization’s reputation; however, a crisis also offers an opportunity to demonstrate excellence in response and accountability and to communicate desired messages.

Crisis Communication Team

At the onset of a crisis, the State Extension Director will appoint a Crisis Communication Team (CCT) that includes at least one member from Communication Services, one from Extension Information Technology and one from the county or department experiencing the crisis. The CCT will evaluate the crisis and, if appropriate, immediately activate a crisis Web page and crisis hotline for media inquiries. All media inquiries will receive a response and be logged.

(CommServ member)

(Extension IT member)

(County/Dept. representative)



Empowering People • Providing Solutions

Handout 12A (continued)

Crisis Prevention

Program Leaders, Department Heads, Department Extension Leaders, District Extension Directors and County Extension Directors will maintain regular contact with the Director and also with Communication Services to advise them of developing issues within Cooperative Extension that potentially could escalate and lead to a crisis. The Director or designee will determine when it is appropriate to notify the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences or higher level university officials. Communication Services will determine when it is appropriate to notify University News Services.

Maintain Emergency Contacts

The crisis communications plan for county centers and departments should be kept in a notebook where employees can access it if the need arises. A staff member in each unit should be responsible for updating employees' personal contact information annually and including it in the notebook. In addition, someone should be responsible for compiling office and after-hours contact information for potential local partners in the event of a crisis. Someone at the state level will provide counties with personal contact information for key state administrators and update the information annually. Personal contact information should be considered privileged information and used only in the event of a crisis (Note: Contact sheet provided).

Public Comments Policy

Part of this plan's purpose is to ensure that the appropriate person or persons represent and speak on behalf of the Cooperative Extension Service during a crisis. Extension employees are discouraged from speaking to the media during a crisis without clearing it with the Director or the Head of Communication Services.

Expansion of Concepts

Temporary Spokesperson

The temporary spokesperson, typically an Extension administrator, makes initial comments to the news media. This person may or may not be designated the permanent spokesperson.

Permanent Spokesperson

The permanent spokesperson will be approved by the Director or designee in consultation with Communication Services. This person ideally will have good communication skills, high familiarity with facts related to the crisis, strong professional credentials and the ability to remain calm under pressure.

Web site

The crisis Web site will be prepared generically in advance of any crisis and will be activated by the CCT in consultation with the Director's office. Extension Information Technology will coordinate with the CCT to produce content and maintain the Web site in a timely manner.

Logging media inquiries

An existing phone number for Cooperative Extension will be designated for incoming media calls. A secondary number may also be established for incoming calls from the public. All calls will be responded to and will be logged with name of caller, caller's organization or business, date and time of call, nature of request (questions, request for interview, etc.). The date, time and nature of Extension's response also will be logged (Note: log sheets provided).

Internal Communications

The Crisis Communication Team (CCT) will regularly brief the Director and other appropriate administrators during the crisis. To reduce rumors, negative speculations and unwarranted concerns, the CCT will place a high priority on communicating to internal audiences. In consultation with the Director, decisions will be made on how best to communicate information about the crisis to college employees on campus and in other Extension offices throughout the state.

Procedures Following the Crisis

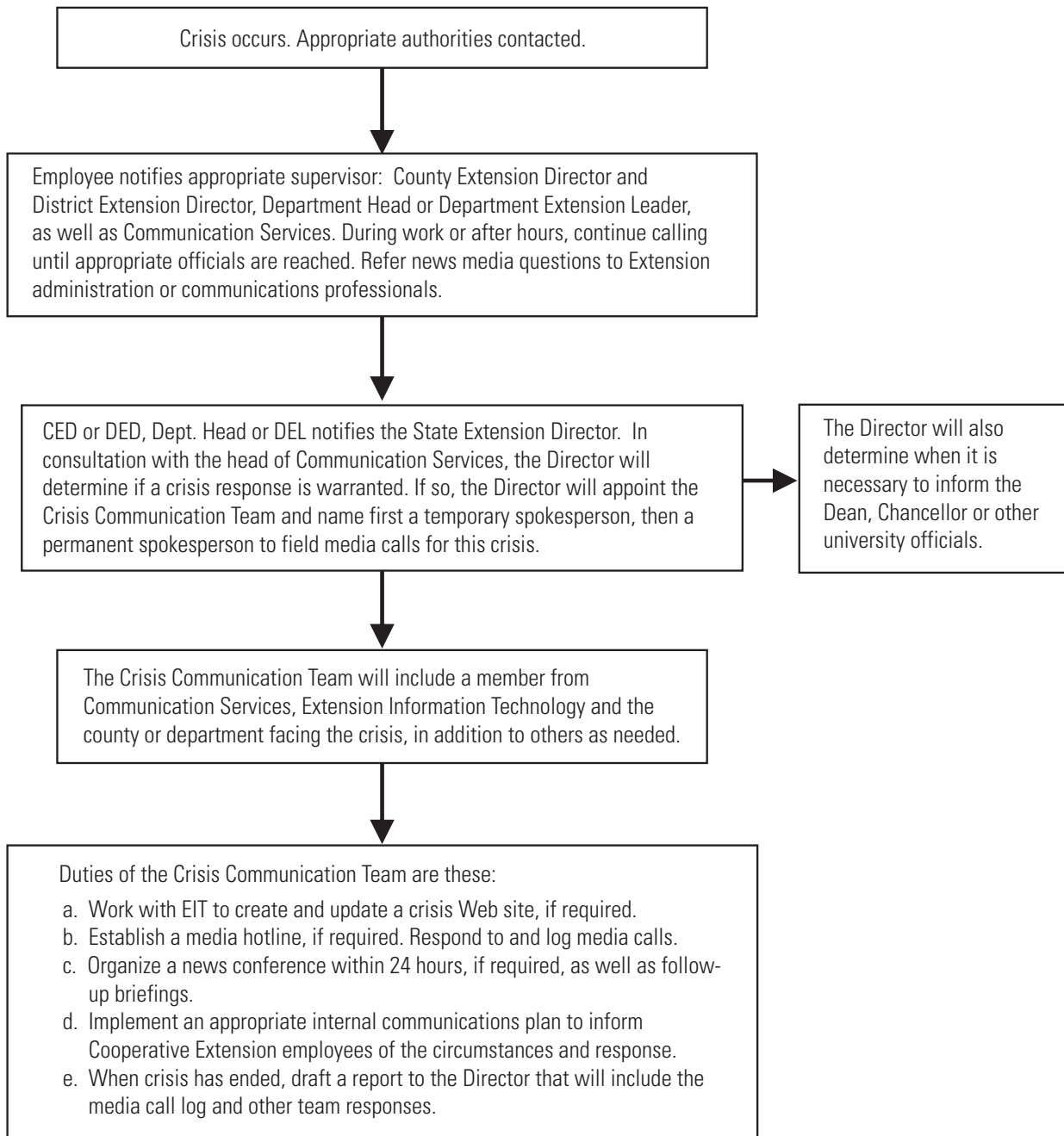
Communication Services will document news coverage surrounding the crisis, with help from field faculty when the crisis takes place away from Raleigh. When the crisis is over, documentation will be given to the CCT in order to evaluate the overall success of the crisis management effort. The CCT will then prepare and submit a crisis evaluation report to the Director.

Handout 12A (continued)

Crisis Response

1. Employee first encountering an emergency should immediately call 911 and, if safe and reasonable, provide comfort to the injured but not move them. On campus, University Police should be notified immediately.
2. Employee encountering an event should contact a supervisor immediately. Calling should not stop until a supervisor is successfully reached. After-hours numbers for key county Extension staff and departmental employees and for key state administrators will be included in the crisis communication plan and updated annually. This contact information also will be shared with important county partners.
3. Employee should also contact a Communication Services specialist. Calling should continue until a CommServ person is reached. Contact information is included in this plan.
4. Employee is asked to refer news media questions to Extension administration or communications officials.
5. Contacted supervisor should immediately call the Director of Cooperative Extension or a Program Leader if the Director not available.
6. For non-emergency events (disturbances, misconduct, controversies), supervisors should notify the Director or Program Leader promptly.
7. Director or Program Leader will notify the Dean, University Chancellor or Provost or other appropriate university official. At this time the situation will be evaluated to determine if a crisis response is warranted. If warranted, the Director will designate a temporary spokesperson. (*Note: Permanent spokesperson will be designated by the Director in consultation with Communication Services*).
8. If a crisis response is warranted, the Director will immediately appoint a Crisis Communication Team (CCT) including at least one member from Communication Services, one from Extension Information Technology and one from the county or department experiencing the crisis.
9. **Crisis Communication Team (CCT)** will evaluate crisis and, if appropriate, immediately activate a crisis Web page and crisis hotline for media inquiries. All media inquiries will receive a response and be logged.
10. In consultation with the Director or designee and Communication Services officials, the CCT may consider organizing a news conference within 24 hours of the start of the crisis and offer follow-up briefings, as needed.

Handout 12A (continued)



Handout 13A Hot Topic Update

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

June 11, 2008

Hot Topic Update

Salmonella saintpaul and Tomatoes

Dear Extension Colleagues:

Several of you have already received calls from the news media regarding the outbreak of *Salmonella saintpaul* food poisoning linked to fresh tomatoes. University News Services has distributed a Media Advisory to the news media to provide information that “currently, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not associate tomatoes from North Carolina in the nationwide outbreak.” They also provided information on faculty experts. Faculty on both the N.C. State University campus and the North Carolina Research Campus at Kannapolis has been handling media inquiries. Below is information to help you as you talk with the news media, the public or your local growers.

Tips for Talking with News Media on this Issue

In answering media questions, remember the following:

- Write down the reporters’ names, their media outlet and their phone number. This will help you know who to contact if you need to update the information you’ve given.
- Stick to what you know. Do not venture into information where you have no expertise, but refer media to other agents or specialists who may have the information (an experts list on this topic is listed below).
- Cooperative Extension is an educational organization, not a regulatory one. Discuss ways that Extension helps growers to safely grow and harvest produce. Discuss ways that Extension teaches consumers to store and prepare produce safely.
- Direct reporters to the FDA Web site for updates and regulatory information, and remember that regulatory information is not our area of expertise. <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hot-topics/tomatoes.html>
- For assistance in working with the news media, contact Dave Caldwell Dave_Caldwell@ncsu.edu or 919-513-3127 or Natalie Hampton Natalie_Hampton@ncsu.edu or 919-513-3128, both in the department of Communication Services.

Talking Points for Extension Agents on *Salmonella saintpaul* Outbreak

- U.S. Food and Drug Administration information on production, distribution patterns and traceback review do not associate tomatoes from North Carolina in the spreading nationwide outbreak. According to the FDA, tomatoes can be consumed safely if they come from outside the area associated with the outbreak. North Carolina is included in a list of states from outside the outbreak area.



Handout 13A (continued)

Hot Topic Update

Salmonella saintpaul and Tomatoes

- Although there may be some tomatoes being sold across North Carolina at this time, largely the tomato harvest here has not yet started.
- The FDA has preliminary data suggesting that raw red plum, raw red Roma or raw round red tomatoes are affected by the *Salmonella* bacteria.
- Cherry and grape tomatoes, and tomatoes sold with the vine still attached or tomatoes grown at individuals' homes have not been implicated.
- The bacteria causing the illnesses are *Salmonella* serotype saintpaul, an uncommon type of *Salmonella*.
- Check the FDA website for updates on illnesses and other information associated with the *Salmonella* outbreak. <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/tomatoes.html>
- When at a local farmers market or the supermarket, consumers should ask farmers or store owners where the tomatoes were grown. Again, according to the FDA, tomatoes can be consumed safely if they come from outside the area associated with the outbreak. North Carolina is included in a list of states from outside the outbreak area.

The following are not talking points for the news media but rather information (with helpful links) so that you can provide useful information to growers.

- The use of Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) in the field, at harvest and in the packing house can help growers identify and prevent most microbial pathogens of concern. As Cooperative Extension agents, you can provide growers and produce handlers with information about GAP practices. If you need more information, please contact Diane Ducharme, Extension Associate, horticulture and food safety, Program for Value-Added & Alternative Agriculture, at diane_ducharme@ncsu.edu or 704-250-5402.
- Contamination of tomatoes and other fresh produce can occur at many steps in the path from farm production to home consumption, including final preparation in the kitchen. Certain pathogens can survive on or in fresh fruits and vegetables, and in certain conditions bacteria can actually multiply. According to research on tomatoes, *Salmonella* can be transmitted from infected soil or water through tomato roots¹, small cracks in the skin, the stem scar on the fruit or through the plant itself². Tomato flowers that come into contact with the bacteria can go on to produce contaminated fruit¹. Once the fruit has been contaminated, bacteria are extremely difficult or impossible to eliminate³.
- The most effective strategy to protect against contamination is to keep the produce free from these harmful pathogens in the first place. Cooperative Extension is looking at the best pre- and post-harvest practices for growers and consumers to enable North Carolina to have fresh and safe quality fruits and vegetables.

Handout 13A (continued)

Hot Topic Update

Salmonella saintpaul and Tomatoes

Economic Implications

- More than half of American consumers have stopped eating a certain food because of a recent recall. http://www.thepacker.com/icms/_dtaa2/content/wrapper.asp?alink=2008-14921-679.asp&stype=topnews&fb=
- Retailers, restaurants continue to pull tomatoes, regardless of what state originating in. http://www.thepacker.com/icms/_dtaa2/content/wrapper.asp?alink=2008-135617-319.asp&stype=topnews&fb=
- Roma prices slide since FDA alert; cherries surge. http://www.thepacker.com/icms/_dtaa2/content/wrapper.asp?alink=2008-165446-204.asp&stype=topnews&fb=

Documents Specific to Tomatoes

1. Commodity Specific Food Safety Guidelines for the Fresh Tomato Supply Chain issued from FDA in May 2006. <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/tomatsup.html>
 - a. David Gombas, United Fresh's senior vice president of food safety and technology, said the updated "Food Safety Guidelines for the Fresh Tomato Supply Chain" should be available by the end of June. He said the document will be available free of charge on the Web sites of United Fresh, the Maitland-based Florida Tomato Growers Exchange Inc., and the Fresno-based California Tomato Farmers cooperative.
2. Good Agricultural Practices for the Production and Handling of Tomatoes. <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/foodsci/ext/programs/producesafety/tomato1.pdf>
3. Tomato Good Agricultural Practices & Tomato Best Management Practices Questions and Answers From the Florida Tomato Exchange. http://www.floridatomatoes.org/FoodSafety/TOMATO_QA_on_T-GAP_and_T-BMP11-8-06.pdf
4. Tomato Good Agricultural Practices & Tomato Best Management Practices- T- GAPS and T-BMP. <http://www.floridatomatoes.org/FoodSafety/TOMATO%20GOOD%20AGRICULTURAL%20PRACTICES%20for%20rule%20adoption%20FINAL.pdf>
5. Key Points of Control and Management of Microbial Food Safety: Information for Producers, Handlers and Processors of Fresh Market Tomatoes. <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8150.pdf>

References on Salmonella on Tomatoes

1. Guo X, van Iersel MW, Chen J, et al. Evidence of association of *Salmonellae* with tomato plants grown hydroponically in inoculated nutrient solution. *Appl Environ Microbiol* 2002; 68:3639--43.
2. Guo X, Chen J, Brackett RE, et al. Survival of *Salmonellae* on and in tomato plants from the time of inoculation at flowering and early stages of fruit development through fruit ripening. *Appl Environ Microbiol* 2001; 67:4760--4.
3. Zhuang RY, Beuchat LR, Angulo FJ. Fate of *Salmonella* Montevideo on and in raw tomatoes as affected by temperature and treatment with chlorine. *Appl Environ Microbiol* 1995; 61:2127--31.

Handout 13A (continued)

Hot Topic Update

Salmonella saintpaul and Tomatoes

N.C. State University Experts Who Can Address This Issue

Trevor Phister, assistant professor, Department of Food, Bioprocessing and Nutrition Science, 919.513.1644 or trevor_phister@ncsu.edu, can talk about microbial pathogens: what are the pathogens, what symptoms might be exhibited, how pathogens might enter fruit.

Chris Gunter, assistant professor, Department of Horticultural Science, 919.513.2807 or chris_gunter@ncsu.edu, specializes in the vegetable industry in North Carolina, working with commercial vegetable growers to maintain a high quality of life through the use of integrated, economical and environmentally sound production practices. His main emphasis is with the Solanaceous (tomato, pepper) and Cruciferous (cabbage, broccoli) cropping systems. He is available to talk about tomato production issues.

Diane Ducharme, North Carolina Cooperative Extension associate, horticulture and food safety, N.C. MarketReady, North Carolina Research Campus at Kannapolis, 704.250.5402 or diane_ducharme@ncsu.edu, can discuss tomato production in North Carolina and steps that growers are using to prevent contamination. She also can discuss training for growers.

Edmund A. Estes, associate head of the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, 919.515.2607 or ed_estes@ncsu.edu, is an expert on the economics associated with the fruit and vegetable industry and can address the potential impact of the Salmonella outbreak.

N.C. A&T University Experts

Will list N.C. A&T experts, brief bio and contact information.



Note: Whomever takes the lead in developing the Hot Topic Update will list their department or program name first and include other cooperating departments. See example below.

Developed by the N.C. MarketReady in cooperation with the Departments of Horticultural Science, Food, Bioprocessing & Nutrition Sciences, and Communication Services. N.C. State University faculty are members of the NC Fresh Produce Safety Task Force.

Handouts
Module B for Farmers
Crisis Communications Module

1. Making Your Point: A Media Relations Checklist
2. Workshop Teaches Safe Handling of Food (from *Salisbury Post*, June 13, 2008)
3. Local growers worried tomato recall could hurt business, June 10, 2008
4. Prepare Clear and Concise Messages
5. Message Map Template (blank one)
6. Message Map Template (one that is filled out as example)
7. Media Basics: When a Reporter Calls
8. Eight Questions the Media Always Ask
9. Scenarios for Module B (note section blank)
10. Scenarios for Module B (note section filled in for instructor guide)

Handout 1B
Making Your Point: A Media Relations Checklist

- Do you know to whom you are talking?**
Ask the reporter questions to determine who you're talking to and what he or she needs. Get the name, employer and phone number. Clarify what information the reporter wants from you.
- Does the reporter need the information right away?**
Ask the reporter when his or her deadline is. Can you call back later, at a time that's more convenient for you? Can you buy yourself some time to compose your thoughts into talking points and anticipate questions? If you promise to call back, do so by the agreed upon time.
- Are you knowledgeable enough to provide an expert opinion?**
If so, gather your thoughts and respond. If not, don't be afraid to say so – and point the reporter to an individual (preferably within Extension) who might be able to help. Always avoid personal views or speculation.
- Have you clearly identified yourself?**
Does the reporter have your name, your title and your company or agency name?
- Have you made your three key points?**
If you have time to prepare to respond, identify three main points you want to make and, during the interview, make sure you emphasize those points. It will help if you've prepared key points that are 20 seconds or less.
- Can you provide anything in writing that will help the reporter understand your points?**
If possible, try following up with a brief email restating your main talking points or pass along an appropriate fact sheet or publication.
- Remember the Department of Communication Services is a resource.**
Professionals in the department are available to guide you in working with the media.

*Developed by Dee Shore, Head, Department of Communication Services,
N.C. State University, dee_shore@ncsu.edu or 919-513-3108.*

Handout 2B
Workshop Teaches Safe Handling of Food
By Sara Gregory, *Salisbury Post*, June 13, 2008

Eleazar Figueroa's hands looked clean after he washed them in cold water. But under a black light, Figueroa's hands lit up with "contaminants."

Figueroa's hands were covered with orange florescent dye to demonstrate how easy it is for *Salmonella* and other bacteria to spread.

He was one of about 35 Patterson Farm workers Tuesday who heard from Darrell Blackwelder, a Cooperative Extension agent, about safe food-handling practices.

And as Blackwelder demonstrated with the florescent dye and black light, careful hand washing with hot water and soap is crucial to keeping food safe.

"I was surprised the way *Salmonella* can get into stuff and how easily it is spread," Figueroa said.

Blackwelder does demonstrations about food safety at about five farms in Rowan County with the help of Miriam Basso, a migrant education coordinator from the Rowan-Salisbury School System who translates for Spanish-speaking workers.

Making sure all farm workers wash their hands frequently and thoroughly is the most important step in keeping food safe for consumers, Blackwelder said.

"You're handling food for people," he said. "You're the first step before it goes to people's plates."

Tuesday's lesson was planned weeks before the *Salmonella* outbreak that has sickened people in 17 states.

"It has really affected tomato production in the U.S.," Blackwelder told the workers. "If the food is not safely handled, then you can't sell it." And if farms can't sell their produce, then workers won't be able to keep their jobs, either.

At Patterson Farm, Melissa Roach, who supervises the packing house, says the farm already emphasizes safety. Workers wash their hands after using the restroom and then use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and put on gloves and hairnets before touching the tomatoes. The farm also shows workers videos about food safety and has monthly meetings to discuss safe practices, Roach said. "They know how it is from start to finish," she said.

Contact Sara Gregory at 704-797-4257 or sgregory@salisburypost.com.

Scenario Exercise: Dealing with Controversies and Crises – Working with the News Media
Contacts: Leah Chester-Davis, leah_chester-davis@ncsu.edu; Natalie Hampton, natalie_hampton@ncsu.edu; Dee Shore, dee_shore@ncsu.edu, N.C. State University.

Handout 3B

Local growers worried tomato recall could hurt business

By Mark Wineka, *Salisbury Post*, June 10, 2008

As grocery stores and restaurants remove tomatoes from their produce bins and menus, local growers say a nationwide consumer alert about a salmonellosis outbreak has the potential to hurt them.

But the local growers emphasize that N.C. tomatoes, which haven't been picked yet, will be safe and plentiful within the next week or two.

"Hopefully they'll (the U.S. Food and Drug Administration) get to the bottom of this and we can put it behind us," said Doug Patterson, who operates Patterson Farms in Rowan County.

"We shouldn't be implicated or put in with this outbreak. We're guilty by association."

The FDA has linked a 17-state *Salmonella* outbreak to red plum, red Roma and round red tomatoes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said that since mid-April, 167 people have been affected by salmonellosis, and 23 hospitalizations have occurred.

The Associated Press has reported that a death in Texas may be related to a man being sickened by the *Salmonella* bacteria after eating pico de gallo, a tomato-based condiment, at a Mexican restaurant.

The FDA is trying to find the source of the outbreak. It initially warned consumers in Texas and New Mexico June 3, but expanded that warning nationwide Monday.

Salmonella is a bacteria living in the intestinal tracts of humans and other animals, and the bacteria are usually transmitted to humans by eating foods contaminated with animal feces.

Artie Watson, one of the owners of Wetmore Farms in Woodleaf, said the well-publicized salmonellosis outbreak "won't be a positive thing for a while," even though North Carolina is among 19 states whose tomatoes have not been associated with the outbreak. (See list in related story.)

At Wetmore Farms, 15 acres of tomatoes are about a week to 10 days away from being ready to pick.

Patterson has 300 acres of tomatoes that represent 80 percent of the farm's income. His tomatoes are mostly sold in North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia, but his overall market extends from Puerto Rico to Canada.

Workers will begin picking the Patterson tomatoes in about two weeks.

"When 'Good Morning America' comes out and says don't eat tomatoes, that hurts everybody," Patterson said.

He added that when people see restaurants such as McDonald's or Subway not putting tomato slices on their sandwiches, it also sends a signal to these consumers that they shouldn't be buying them in grocery stores, farmers markets or other retail outlets.

That shouldn't happen, Patterson said. He added that his farm, for example, is NOTE: please do not make changes to the

newspaper articles.)certified by the state, meaning it follows good agricultural practices in making sure workers receive training and follow recommended hygiene practices.

The same kind of guilt by association hurt tomato growers in the past when the country had a salmonellosis scare with lettuce, Patterson said. When people quit eating salads for a time, it naturally hurt tomato sales.

Meanwhile, Salisbury-based grocer Food Lion took action Monday to take any suspect tomatoes out of the produce departments of its 1,300 stores in the mid-Atlantic and Southeast regions.

The company contacted its vendors and suppliers and put out a recall notice for the three varieties in question.

"Safety is of primary importance to us," said Karen Peterson, corporate communications manager for Food Lion.

Any consumer who bought tomatoes that have since been recalled can bring them back to Food Lion stores for a full refund, she added.

Other grocery chains across the country also have pulled from their produce departments the three types of tomatoes identified by the FDA.

Peterson noted that federal authorities have said cherry tomatoes, grape tomatoes and tomatoes with the vine still attached are safe and not associated with the outbreak. The same goes for homegrown tomatoes.

The Patterson and Wetmore farms have been selling local greenhouse-grown tomatoes. Again, they are safe and not affected by the *Salmonella* scare.

Darrell Blackwelder, horticulture agent for the Cooperative Extension Service in Rowan County, said he had received calls Tuesday from people just wondering if they could eat any tomatoes at all, even ones they have grown in their own gardens.

Blackwelder was holding a meeting at 7 p.m. Tuesday for Farmers Market vendors on safe food handling.

He also will conduct three separate sessions Thursday at Patterson Farms and, using a Spanish translator supplied by the Rowan-Salisbury Schools, go over the importance of cleanliness and food safety practices among the farm's migrant workers, who will be picking the tomatoes.

Blackwelder said Patterson Farms relies on third-party audits of its food safety practices and that companies such as Wal-Mart and Food Lion will only buy produce from these kinds of certified growers.

"The Pattersons have been doing this for years — and the other growers, too," Blackwelder said. "Everybody gets the training."

Contact Mark Wineka at 704-797-4263 or mwineka@salisbury-post.com.

Scenario Exercise: Dealing with Controversies and Crises – Working with the News Media

Contacts: Leah Chester-Davis, leah_chester-davis@ncsu.edu; Natalie Hampton, natalie_hampton@ncsu.edu; Dee Shore, dee_shore@ncsu.edu, N.C. State University.

Handout 4B Prepare Clear and Concise Messages

A key step in effective media communication is to develop clear and concise messages that address stakeholder questions and concerns. In addition to generating a large number of questions and concerns, controversies and crises are also likely to generate strong feelings of anxiety, anger, frustration, fear and outrage. Messages that address stakeholder concerns should therefore be based on what the target audience most needs to know or most wants to know.

One way to develop clear messages is to brainstorm with a message-development team consisting of a subject-matter expert, communication specialist, policy/legal/management expert and a facilitator. Such sessions typically produce a set of talking points and key messages.

A message map helps in the development of messages. It also serves as a “port in a storm” when questioning by journalists or others becomes intense or aggressive. Message maps allow organizations to develop messages in advance of emergencies.

A Five-Step Model for Preparing Messages	
Answers should:	By:
1. Express empathy, listening, caring or compassion as a first statement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using personal pronouns, such as “I” “we” “our” or “us” • Indicating through actions, body language and words that you share the concerns of those affected by events • Acknowledging the legitimacy of fear and emotion • Using a personal story, if appropriate (for example, “My family...” • Bridging to the key messages.
2. State the key messages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting the total number of words to no more than 27 • Limiting the total length to no more than 9 seconds • Using positive, constructive and solution-oriented words as appropriate • Setting messages apart with introductory words, pauses, inflections.
3. State supporting information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using three additional facts • Using well-thought out and tested visual material, including graphics, maps, pictures, video clips, animation, photographs and analogies • Using a personal story • Citing credible third parties or other credible sources of information.
4. Repeat the key messages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarizing or emphasizing the key messages.
5. State future actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listing specific next steps; and • Providing contact information for obtaining additional information, if appropriate.

Source: *Effective Media Communication During Public Health Emergencies, A World Health Organization Handbook*, by Randall N. Hyer, World Health Organization and Vincent Covello, Center for Risk Communication.

Handout 5B

Message Map Template		
Stakeholder:		
Question or Concern:		
Key Message 1	Key Message 2	Key Message 3
Supporting Information 1-1	Supporting Information 2-1	Supporting Information 3-1
Supporting Information 1-2	Supporting Information 2-2	Supporting Information 3-2
Supporting Information 1-3	Supporting Information 2-3	Supporting Information 3-3

The top section of the message map identifies the stakeholder or audience for whom the messages are intended as well as the specific question or concern being addressed. The next layer of the message map contains the three key messages that can function individually or collectively as a response to a stakeholder’s question or concern. These key messages are intended to address the information needs of a wide variety of audiences. Remember the rule of threes: It’s often important to make three main points.

The final section of the message map contains supporting information arranged in blocks of three under each key message. This supporting information amplifies the key messages by providing additional facts or details. Supporting information can also take the form of visuals, analogies, personal stories or citations of credible information sources.

A message map provides multiple benefits. It provides a handy reference for leaders and spokespersons who must respond swiftly to questions on topics where timeliness and accuracy are critical. It minimizes the chance of “speaker’s regret” at saying something inappropriate or not saying something that should have been said. A printed copy of the message map allows a spokesperson during interview to “check off” the talking points they want to make in order of their importance.

Source: Effective Media Communication During Public Health Emergencies, A World Health Organization Handbook, by Randall N. Hyer, World Health Organization and Vincent Covello, Center for Risk Communication.

Handout 6B Sample message map

Message Map Template		
Stakeholder: News Media/Consumers Question or Concern: North Carolina tomatoes have not been implicated in the recent <i>Salmonella</i> outbreak, but the state's tomato industry may be hurt by association. It's important for consumers to understand what the FDA warning really means.		
Key Message 1	Key Message 2	Key Message 3
North Carolina is not among the 19 states whose tomatoes have been associated with the outbreak.	Growers implement GAPs to minimize risks.	Tomato growers in North Carolina and other states outside the outbreak area can be hurt by this crisis.
Supporting Information 1-1	Supporting Information 2-1	Supporting Information 3-1
North Carolina's commercial tomatoes are still two weeks away from being ready for market.	Workers who handle fresh market produce are taught to wash hands after using the restroom.	All tomato growers suffer when major media advise consumers not to eat tomatoes.
Supporting Information 1-2	Supporting Information 2-2	Supporting Information 3-2
Therefore, North Carolina's commercial tomatoes have not been implicated in the outbreak by FDA.	Produce workers use alcohol-based hand sanitizer to kill germs when handling tomatoes.	When people see major restaurant chains leaving tomatoes off sandwiches, they may believe that tomatoes are unsafe.
Supporting Information 1-3	Supporting Information 2-3	Supporting Information 3-3
The state's tomato crop is expected to be safe and plentiful within the next one to two weeks.	Produce workers wear gloves and hairnets when touching the tomatoes.	If farms can't sell their produce because of consumer concerns, workers may lose their jobs.

The top section of the message map identifies the stakeholder or audience for whom the messages are intended as well as the specific question or concern being addressed. The next layer of the message map contains the three key messages that can function individually or collectively as a response to a stakeholder's question or concern. These key messages are intended to address the information needs of a wide variety of audiences. Remember the rule of threes: It's often important to make three main points.

The final section of the message map contains supporting information arranged in blocks of three under each key message. This supporting information amplifies the key messages by providing additional facts or details. Supporting information can also take the form of visuals, analogies, personal stories or citations of credible information sources.

A message map provides multiple benefits. It provides a handy reference for leaders and spokespersons who must respond swiftly to questions on topics where timeliness and accuracy are critical. It minimizes the chance of "speaker's regret" at saying something inappropriate or not saying something that should have been said.

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Handout 7B

Preparation is key to becoming comfortable with media calls and interviews. The following tips should help you prepare to work effectively with reporters.

- **Tell the truth.** Never lie. Always tell the truth. If you don't know or aren't sure, say so and don't guess. Your credibility is at stake. Being truthful does not mean telling all you know. Use good judgment.
- **Say if for the record.** Anything you say to a reporter is fair game for a story. If you don't want it reported, don't say it. Asking a reporter to go "off the record" is not appropriate. Don't ask reporters not to print something after you say it.
- **Avoid no comment.** "No comment" sounds suspicious. If you really can't comment, explain why. "We're gathering that information and will provide it when it's finalized." Or, "Our policy doesn't allow us to comment on personnel matters." It's okay to say you don't know and offer to find out.
- **The media's role.** Objectively telling all sides of a story is the media's job, even if the views are unpopular. Don't expect reporters to present only your perspective and never tell a reporter how to report a story. Don't expect a reporter to make you look good; make yourself look good by providing clear, concise information.
- **Be prepared.** Doing your homework makes you a better source and less nervous. Before an interview, anticipate possible questions and think through answers. Ask yourself: Is this a controversial or sensitive topic? How will my answers be perceived? How can I best explain this? Gather background materials for the reporter that help reinforce details.
- **Key points.** Before interviews, identify the three main points you want to make. For each point, develop three responses that support or help communicate that point. Work on making key points in 20 seconds or less. Come up with a couple of 10-second or under responses.
- **Respect deadlines.** Reporters live by unbending deadlines. If a reporter calls for immediate comment, try to help or point them to someone who can. But beware of giving a "quickie" response if you have inadequate information.
- **Know who's calling.** When a reporter calls, ask some questions to determine whom you're talking to and what they need. If you don't know a reporter, get his/her name, employer and phone number. Clarify what information she/he is seeking from you.
- **Respond promptly.** Return media calls promptly. If a reporter catches you unprepared, find out what he/she is looking for and offer to call back in a few minutes. Gather your thoughts, anticipate questions, plan your response and call back quickly. If you have an appointment for an interview, be there. Dodging a reporter won't make the story disappear; it just will be reported without your perspective.
- **Lead with the bottom line.** Remember to provide key facts or points first. Add details if time allows. Your key message can get lost in too much detail and technical information.
- **Talk slowly.** Reporters will write furiously as you talk. Some will use tape recorders. Talk slowly and be clear. Leave nothing to chance.
- **Short, sweet, stop.** Keep your answers brief. Your main message gets lost unless you discipline yourself to provide concise answers. Radio or TV reporters often must tell an entire story in 20 seconds to a minute. Answer the question and stop talking. Don't keep talking to fill the silence.
- **Don't babble.** Listen to questions and think about your answers before you start talking. Don't ramble. It's okay to pause briefly to gather your thoughts before answering.

continued next page

When a Reporter Calls: Media Basics, page 2

- **Dump the jargon.** Technical terms and acronyms are confusing or meaningless to the public. Be a translator by using everyday language and examples. Relate your information in ways everyday folks can appreciate—why is this important and what does it mean to their lives, community, families or livelihoods?
- **Be proactive.** Answer reporters' questions and volunteer information to make key points. Reporters may welcome another angle or idea, but offer ideas as suggestions, not directives. Reporters aren't likely to let you see a story before it appears, but always invite them to call back for help or clarification.
- **Summarize thoughts.** After discussing the subject, concisely summarize key points in everyday language. "My major points are: 1. ... 2. ...3. ..." This may plant the idea of a story outline in the reporter's mind.
- **Potential pitfalls.** Always have the facts before commenting. Stick to what you know even if this disappoints a reporter. If you are unprepared or unqualified to answer, refer reporters to someone who can help. Avoid personal views or speculation. Don't let reporters put words in your mouth.
Reporter: "So you're saying ..."
You: "No, let me clarify ..."
Do not repeat inaccuracies, even to correct them.
- **Identify yourself.** Don't assume a reporter knows who you are or what you do just because they've called. Provide your name, title, company or agency name and names of other people or programs you're discussing.
- **Feedback.** It's okay to tell reporters when they do a good job. If they make a mistake, weigh what's at stake. If it's a major error in fact, tell the reporter or editor, but don't quibble over minor misunderstandings. Remember, you're building long-term relationships.
- **Don't assume a reporter's knowledge.** Don't assume that a reporter is knowledgeable just because he/she is covering the story. Most reporters are generalists who cover diverse topics and have little time to background themselves on breaking stories before reporting them. Provide simple information to help out.

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Handout 8B

Eight Questions the Media Always Ask

1. What happened?
2. Who is in charge?
3. Has this been contained?
4. Are victims being helped?
5. What can we expect?
6. What should we do?
7. Why did this happen?
8. Did you have forewarning?

Questions the Crisis Team Must Ask Itself

1. What happened?
2. How do we know?
3. Who is responsible?
4. Why did it happen?
5. Who is affected?
6. What should we do?
7. Who can we trust?
8. Who needs to hear from us?
9. What should we say?
10. How should we say it?

Sources:

"Eight Questions the Media Always Ask," from University of Iowa Study.
"Questions the Crisis Team Must Ask Itself," from Eric Mower & Associates Workshop, June 2008.
(Handout prepared for N.C. Cooperative Extension workshop on "Dealing with Controversial Issues – Working with the News Media.")

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Handout 9B Instructor's Guide

It Could Happen To You

This is designed to use at the end of the PPT presentation, before the summary and wrap-up of session on "Dealing with Controversial Issues – Working with the News Media." Allow 20 to 30 minutes.

Ask participants to break into groups of about 8 to 12 people per each scenario. For each scenario, half of the group (Group 1) serves as organizational representatives working on how to address an issue. The other half of the group (Group 2) serves as reporters, crafting questions to ask of group 1.

Activity for Group 1 (for each Scenario): Craft messages with the objective of addressing and reducing outrage, and providing factual information.

- Discuss the scenario in groups of three to four people.
- Choose a spokesperson.
- Determine interview objectives and structure message accordingly.
- Anticipate and list potential pitfalls and responses.
- Create three to four key points that reinforce your objective and avoid outrage escalators.
- Determine who will contact your communications office—a good idea in any crisis.

Activity for Group 2 (for each Scenario).

- Think about what a reporter might want to know and develop questions to ask Group 1.
- At the assigned time, serve as reporters and ask Group 1 questions.
- There is no need to designate one person to ask the questions. You may treat the Q&A period as a news conference with several reporters asking questions. But not all at once!

Handout 10B Instructor's Guide

<p>Scenario One</p> <p>The news media learned that a food-borne illness can be traced back to a farm in your county. A representative from the local health department has made a statement to the news media that leads the public to believe that every farm in the area has contaminated produce. You have facts that indicate otherwise -- that the contamination is contained to one farm. The news media continue to cover the story, and one TV station reporter calls and asks for an interview on your farm. What do you do?</p>	<p>Notes:</p> <p>You do not have to agree to the interview, but if you want to get the word out that the illness has been traced back to just a single farm. Explain the specific good agricultural practices that you and other farmers in your county use to ensure fresh produce safety.</p> <p>If you are concerned that TV footage will make it appear that your farm is a source of contamination, you can ask the TV videographer to take only shots that won't identify the farm. You may run the risk of alienating the TV station, so you need to weigh the risks and the benefits.</p>
<p>Scenario Two</p> <p>The national TV networks and others in the media report that <i>Salmonella</i> has been detected in lettuce grown in North Carolina. Federal officials narrow it down to your farm. What do you do?</p>	<p>Notes:</p> <p>Make it your priority to take steps to remedy the problem, work with the appropriate officials to address their concern and stop the contamination as soon as possible. Then you can answer reporter questions. Acknowledge the error and express concern for those who were sickened. Explain what you are doing to fix the problem.</p>
<p>Scenario Three</p> <p>An <i>E. coli</i> outbreak in another state has resulted in local news media wanting to head out to local farms to talk with farmers and get video. You are one of the ones they call. You are concerned that the news story may appear to implicate your operation as being the cause of the outbreak. How would you handle this?</p>	<p>Notes:</p> <p>Keep the reporter focused on what you do everyday to reduce the risk of food-borne illnesses. State that it is a high priority on your farm. Emphasize that North Carolina is not in the FDA's outbreak area and avoid statements such as, "My produce and all the rest in our county is safe." That amounts to speculating – never a good idea in an interview.</p>
<p>Scenario Four</p> <p>Food safety is utmost in people's minds as the news media covers another <i>Salmonella</i> outbreak in another state. Local media want to know whether this outbreak from an unknown farm will affect local farms' bottom line. They also want to know what you are doing to train your workers in providing a safe food supply.</p>	<p>Remember not to speculate. Focus on what you do everyday to reduce the risk of food-borne illnesses, and explain what you are doing to train your workers to reduce the risk of such illnesses.</p> <p>While you don't know how much an effect the situation at hand will have, you can state that in the past, demand for produce has dropped following outbreaks of food-borne illness.</p>

Handout 10B (for participants)

<p>Scenario One</p> <p>The news media learned that a food-borne illness can be traced back to a farm in your county. A representative from the local health department has made a statement to the news media that leads the public to believe that every farm in the area has contaminated produce. You have facts that indicate otherwise -- that the contamination is contained to one farm. The news media continue to cover the story, and one TV station reporter calls and asks for an interview on your farm. What do you do?</p>	
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