[PRACTICE]

D8.13 PRODUCTION OF COMMUNICATION USER MANUAL/TOOLKIT

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Summary Work Package WP8

The objective of WP8 is to improve public knowledge and awareness of CBRN incidents by providing a toolbox of information, procedures and processes to understand the human and societal factors that influence the impact of and response to CBRN incidents, as well as reduce the impact of CBRN incidents on society and individuals. The effectiveness of the 'human and societal' toolbox will be tested (via WP6) with members of the public and professional responders in an exercise at a conference/shopping centre in Birmingham in August 2013.

The output will include tools and measures (i) to inform, educate and prepare the mindset of the EU citizen for a CBRN event, (ii) to provide guidance about protective behaviour and to aid the identification of relevant information sources during events, (iii) to mitigate the societal impact on communities and individuals post event, and (iv) to identify solutions aimed at recovery.

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1. Executive Summary

Clear and efficient communication is crucial to prevent and mitigate crises and therefore crisis communication managers play a key role in crisis management. This Communication Manual serves as a guide for effective risk and crisis communication preparation and delivery during CBRN events. It contains evidence-based advice that will guide crisis communication managers, and others involved in crisis communication, step-by-step through crises involving CBRN substances. It is based on state-of-the art scientific knowledge and the experience of practitioners in both crisis communication and crisis management.

The Communication Manual is divided into four parts: (i) Preparation for Crisis Communication, (ii) Crisis Communication Response, (iii) Post Crisis Responsibilities and (iv) Post-Crisis Learning. It is important that strategic leaders and crisis communication officers are involved in strategic decision-making to increase crisis management effectiveness in all phases.

In respect to preparation, crisis communication must be embedded in the crisis management process. Crisis communication can be used across many levels of the organization in order to facilitate the appointment of and allocation of resources, manage intelligence, and to train staff on specific scenarios and their ability to improvise, something that has been shown to be of great importance at major crises.

During the response phase, crisis communication is used to provide crisis-related information, identify target groups, distribute warning messages, collaborate within the response network, and communicate with the media and the public in multiple channels and communication modes. It is important to use two way and interactive communication to gather information and to get a better understanding of different experiences, perceptions, knowledge and communication needs to ensure an effective crisis communication.

During the post event phases, one of the most important issues is to communicate compassion towards the victims and their families, and to communicate responsibility for the organizations actions during the event. Officers responsible for crisis communication have an important task to communicate what happened and which actions will be taken to help victims and their families, as well as what will be done to prevent similar events in the future. Post-crisis learning is an important phase after CBRN events since the frequency is relative low. Crisis communication also plays a key role in this last phase in so far that it can be used to gather experiences through interactive communication, and communicate lessons learned to different target groups.

In the Annex there is a checklist for quick reference during an emergency.

2.   Introduction

The objective of PRACTICE is to improve the preparedness and resilience of the EU member states and associated countries to an attack from a terrorist group using non-conventional weapons such as CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and/or Nuclear) materials. This tool, D8.13 CBRN Communication Manual for Strategic Leaders, is part of WP8, which is intended to reducing the impact of CBRN incidents on society and individuals by providing a toolbox of information, procedures and processes to inform the understanding of the human and societal factors that influence the impact of and effectiveness of response to CBRN incidents.

Communication is critical in order to improve the public response to CBRN releases, and increase public resilience. People react according to their perceptions of threat, risk, and the knowledge, experience and information that they possess (Olofsson, 2007a,b, 2011). To manage communication effectively in a complex and uncertain situation demands knowledge and preparation of both the public, first responders and strategic leaders (cf. PRACTICE reports D8.11, D8:12).

This report contains a CBRN Communication Manual for Strategic Leaders, intended to serve as a guide for effective risk and crisis communication before, during, and after a CBRN event. It is based on the latest research results and interviews with strategic leaders and representatives of the public. Thus it contains unique and up to date information and advice on how strategic leaders successfully can prepare for and communicate within the strategic crisis management network, with the public and the media.

The report is divided in three sections: 1) Introduction – containing previous research, methods and results concerning CBRN risk and crisis communication, 2) Communication Manual – intended for use before and during a CBRN event, and 3) Checklist – with main headlines for quick reference during an emergency. All headlines in the checklist refer to sections in the Communication Manual. The Communication Manual is divided into four parts: (i) Preparation for Crisis Communication, (ii) Crisis Communication Response, (iii) Post Crisis Responsibilities and (iv) Post-Crisis Learning.

CBRN incidents may pose severe threats to human lives and well-being. Effective CBRN communications includes communication within the response team, network of other response organizations and with the public and the media, and reduces risks of physical or mental injury of the involved members of the public. Inversely, communication that is not sufficiently prepared and executed during an emergency response situation can result in unnecessary casualties and severe damage. Studies show that misperceptions about the likelihood of exposure are associated with higher levels of worry and greater likelihood of engaging in behaviours that might be harmful to public health (Pearce et al 2013). Rogers & Pearce (2013) show in their study how different target groups interpret the same messages differently. Getting messages right can mean the difference between a successful or failed response, as shown during the evacuation of Tower 2 at the World Trade Centre attack (Rogers & Pearce, 2013).

An effective CBRN risk and crisis strategy involves preparing for, responding to and learning from events. This includes communication in all stages:

- **In the pre-event stage:** to embed communication as a fundamental element/ tool in overall crisis preparation and response, to conduct research and prepare, plan, and train regarding communication content (messages), communication staff and responsibilities, media relations for different scenarios, target audience(s), social media use, and more
- **During the event**: to set up an organizational structure for integrated crisis management and communication; communicate using one-way and two-way communication modes through multiple channels, and more
- **In the post-event stage:** to communicate compassion, learn from mistakes, and more.

3.   Objective

The objective of WP8 Deliverable D8.13 is to produce a Communication User Manual/Toolkit to aid preparedness, response and to mitigate for CBRN events. This includes development of a strategy for communicating with a heterogeneous, multi-cultural public and a manual for communication between first responders and different levels of decision makers to improve knowledge and awareness, as well as guidance about effective response procedures and management.

Who is this manual for? This manual contains general information for strategic leaders; that is leaders of first responder organizations, and decision makers and policy makers in municipalities, authorities and other organizations; to support them when communicating with the public prior to, during and after a CBRN incident.

For what purpose? The information included in this CBRN communication manual will prepare strategic leaders for using effective communication during chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents involving a large number of affected casualties. Preparedness is increased by creating a communication structure that include communication before and during CBRN incidents and responding to the information demands held by both effected and non-effected members of the public. Effective communication with the public can improve their understanding of the CBRN incidents through the provision of advice about how to respond/positive health behaviors, and can increase the likelihood of members of the public becoming active partners in the emergency response process, resulting in improved health outcomes (Pearce et al., 2012; Rogers, Amlôt & Rubin, 2013).

What is in it? The manual contains information designed to improve the strategic leaders' understanding of how to prepare to and how to communicate with the public during a typical CBRN incident.

How to use it? The manual can be used as guidance when preparing crisis communication plans and strategies involving CBRN incidents, and as a checklist during an incident, on what, how and why to communicate with members of the public. It can also be used as an assessment tool after a CBRN incident in order to facilitate the improvement of existing crisis communication plans and strategies. This document, or elements of this document, could be prepared as a hard copy or displayed on the websites of emergency response organizations, local authorities, and other institutions.

When to use it? This manual is principally designed to be used as guidance when preparing a crisis communication plan and strategies before an incident occurs, when communicating with the public during an incident and as an assessment tool after an incident.

Important disclaimer: Please note that it is important to adapt the manual to your local cultural and institutional environment and to the CBRN risk or threat that it will be used for.

Questions? Additional information about the information contained within this manual can be found on the PRACTICE website (www.practice-fp7-security.eu/).

3.1 Communication Manual targets

This Communication Manual/Toolkit is aimed at strategic leaders responsible for crisis communication during a CBRN event. The manual has been developed with a few basic values in mind.

First, the highest priority during such an event is the heterogeneous publics, and this must be reflected in how crisis communication is managed and executed – every step of the way (Krieger et al., 2014; Olofsson, 2007a,b, 2011). The central issue is to meet the publics' needs and demand for information, in an effort to reduce injuries, improve public resilience, and accelerate the recovery process. Crisis communication can both mitigate and aggravate crises depending on how it is performed.

Second, because no crisis situations are alike, this Communication Manual/Toolkit serves as a general guide for best practices in CBRN risk and crisis communication. This guide utilizes an all-hazards approach, which emphasizes crucial issues that must be kept in mind and addressed when communicate with the public during CBRN incident.

Third, this guide is aimed at individuals who have a strategic leadership role during crises and are responsible for CBRN risk and crisis communication. Since communication is critical in risk and crisis response management, communication officers play a key role and must be involved in the decision making process from an early stage. Their role is not merely to disseminate information from top-level management and forward it to the public. In order to create trust and ensure public resilience, they need to build and maintain strong relationships with stakeholders and the public through two-way communication. A relationship built on trust, understanding, credibility, satisfaction, cooperation and agreement, is a strong relationship; and such characteristics could mean the difference between success and failure, life and death during a CBRN event (cf. D8.15, Danielsson et al., 2006; Krieger et al., 2014; Rogers et al., 2007; Vrbanjac et al., 2006).

By integrating crisis communication strategies in decision-making processes, communication issues will be addressed accurately in the planning and responding to a crisis. If communication issues are not handled effectively it is likely that information from other sources will fill the void, thus increasing the risk of misinformation being distributed. When the needs of key audiences are taken into account as part of the decision-making process, the crisis management team can make better decisions (Seeger 2006).

4. About CBRN events

A CBRN-event can be an accident, a planned attack as well as a disaster caused by a natural phenomenon. CBRN events can have fatal consequences, are rare and each event is unique elements which make them more difficult to prepare for and respond to. This kind of event has the potential to cause substantial fear among the public (Hyams et al., 2002). Depending on the cause of the threat, people may respond with more or less panic, even though the consequences of the threats are very similar. A terrorist attack can for example be seen as a bigger threat than a natural disaster with similar consequences. A reason to this is that terrorist attacks are often perceived as being further away from society's control (Wester, 2009). CBRN events provoked by terrorist attacks are particularly threatening because they are man-made, unknown and have a potential to create massive destruction (Becker, 2004; Rogers et al., 2007).

An essential issue to improve public resilience and reduce harm in CBRN events is to satisfy the publics' need and demand for information. Most publics have little knowledge about CBRN materials and their effects, and perceive CBRN situations as very uncertain. This can influence individuals' willingness to accept and follow communicated advices from strategic leaders (Etchegary, 2008; Pearce et al., 2013). This situation creates challenges for those who manage communication with the public during CBRN incidents. Strategic leaders should take into account public perceptions of such an event when communicating with the public. A common assumption among public authorities concerns public panic in case of crisis. However, research shows that the majority of public behaviours are rational, pro-social and helping (Quarantelli, 2001; Rogers & Pearce, 2013; Sheppard et al. 2006). Knowing this, communication during CBRN incident is crucial minimizing contamination of CBRN release.

Communicators need to be able to provide information rapidly in a form that is easily understood and in a format that is likely to be attended to. Trust plays a crucial role in ensuring that people attend to messages (Rubin et al., 2012). CBRN messages should be communicated by spokespersons that are trusted by the public, via multiple sources. These trends in CBRN communications are similar to public response to emergency warnings in general.

Communicating with the public during a CBRN event should answer the what, why, when, and where as well as how any precautionary actions should be taken for protection or reduce of harm (Coombs, 2014; Krieger et al., 2014). Based on past events that have involved CBRN materials, the public liked to have had information on what material they were exposed to, what protective actions were being recommended and how they should be performed, how one might become exposed, what the symptoms of exposure are, how to distinguish symptoms from other illnesses and how to tell if medical attention is necessary (Krieger et al., 2014; Rubin et al., 2012; Rogers et al., 2013). Both the communication and the information that are communicated need to be adjusted to the target group, e.g. the general public, low-risk patients and those immediately involved (cf. PRACTICE reports D8.8; D8.11). The information contained in this manual will aid the preparation of communications targeted at members of the general public during CBRN incidents.

Finally, for the public to understand the recommended actions during CBRN events, they must rely on background knowledge and information that is rarely possessed by the public. Pre-event communication can go a long way in addressing this knowledge gap.

4.1 CBRN Crisis communication management

It is impossible to foresee all possible crisis scenarios, which is why an all hazards approach in crisis management is commonly used. With an all hazards approach every crisis is handled with similar management strategies. A crisis consists of several phases, which all require different actions to be taken. Crisis management is not only about responding to a crisis event, but also to take measures to prevent, prepare for, and learn from crises. In general terms a crisis can be broken down to three separate phases: pre-crisis-, crisis event-, and post crisis-stages.

During the pre-crisis phase, efforts are made to prevent and minimize damage as well as to reduce the risks of possible crises (Mitigation and Preparation). Crisis managers should take precautions pre-disaster to prevent CBRN incidents from occurring, to identify warning signs for a possible hazard and to create processes for organizational members to actively search for known risk factors. If done correctly, it is sometimes possible to prevent a crisis, and oftentimes to reduce harm caused by the crises. To avoid risk of physical and mental injuries from CBRN releases, it is of importance to, before the impact, inform the general public to take precautionary steps to avert being contaminated. This means, getting the messages right, using relevant channels, encouraging appropriate actions, reducing rumours and increase trust and confidence (Becker, 2004, Rogers et al., 2007).

The crisis event phase is when crisis management respond and react to the crisis by making efforts to prevent the damage from spreading and limit the duration of the crisis. This phase also includes the time it takes for affected stakeholders to recover and return to a state where their operations are back to normal. In this phase, it is crucial to communicate where not to go, what kind of exposure there is, how to protect oneself, what symptoms to look for and how to determine if medical attention is necessary.

The post crisis-phase takes place after a crisis, when efforts have been made to return to a normal state by reconstructing and restoring critical functions in an organization, infrastructure or society. During the post-crisis phase, crisis managers evaluate and critique their crisis management efforts. Of importance in this phase is to integrate the public's view on both if and how the communication strategies worked, and integrate changes accordingly in the communication plan and strategy. Did all groups in society have a chance to involve themselves in the communication with relevant public authorities and did relevant CBRN information reach all target groups?

These three phases should be seen as an ongoing process, where evaluation and implementing of improvements increase the ability to find and identify warnings signs.

5.   Results – Communication User Manual/Toolkit

This manual is based on previous research, best practice, and interviews with representatives of the public and with strategic leaders to provide guidelines for effective crisis communication with the public and within the crisis organization and its strategic network during a CBRN event.

Scientific crisis communication literature, preceding PRACTICE WP8 reports and research reviews: D8.4, D8.5, D8.7, D8.8, D8.9, D8.11, D8.12 and D8.15 have been integrated, as well as interviews with strategic leaders in crisis communication, and focus group interviews with representatives of the public in two European countries, the UK and Sweden during 2013. To gain insight in how different public groups obtain, respond to and interpret crisis information/communication related to CBRN events, groups with different demographic characteristics where interviewed. In Sweden three groups, representing a heterogeneous multi-cultural public, were interviewed, consisting of elderly, refugees and students respectively. In the UK, two groups were interviewed consisting of Red Cross volunteers, active during the ARDEN exercise. A total of seven interviews with strategic leaders and communication officers were conducted in Sweden and three in UK. These leaders have executive capabilities in their respective organizations and represent authorities that have responsibilities towards the public during crises. The interviews conducted in the UK were performed in relation to the WP6 exercise ARDEN. The results from the interviews have been integrated in the following Communication Manual.

The Communication Manual is divided into four parts: Preparation for Crisis Communication, Crisis Communication Response, Post Crisis Responsibilities and Post-Crisis Learning. Attached is a checklist with main headlines for quick reference during an emergency. All headlines in the checklist refer to sections in the Communication Manual.

5.1   Prepare for an effective CBRN crisis communication
Use this section during pre-disaster to prepare for communication during a CBRN attack

Best Practices in crisis communication - preparations
The aim of the CBRN communication *preparations* is to:

- Promote integration of communication strategies into organizational decision-making processes, crisis preparation and as a guide for the handling of the event itself.
- Collaborate and coordinate with credible inter-organizational sources.
- Base planning upon accurate knowledge of different kinds of threats and of likely human responses.
- Include knowledge of the public's general understanding of risks and effects of exposure of hazardous materials, preparedness level and opinions on the emergency plans through opinion polls and direct feedback from the public in crisis response planning.
- Prepare specific messages for plausible CBRN scenarios, based on tested knowledge of the public's views, concerns, and knowledge of the issue.

5.1.1 Select and train a CBRN crisis management team

It is important to put together a Crisis Management Team (CMT) responsible for the preparation and management of a CBRN crisis. Depending on resources of the organization, it is preferable to have different teams for different kinds of threats. In this way they can specialize in the specific threat.

CMTs should be selected carefully based on their experience, functionality and ability to create and fulfil the requirements of both the crisis management plan and the crisis communication plan. People with communication training and competence in risk and crisis communication should always be regarded as core members of the CMT, since communication is a core activity of crisis management.

Train the crisis management team and the internal organization together with credible inter-organizational sources within each area of responsibility. Train them by means of continuous collaboration and coordination exercises in order to build common crisis preparedness. Make every effort to test the crisis communication plan in the absence of crisis, in order to identify and, if necessary, correct weaknesses. Inform and educate the CMT in public response to CBRN and characteristics of CBRN treats.

5.1.2 Create and implement a CBRN crisis communication plan

Guidelines:
- Create a specific CBRN annex for management and communication
- Construct a crisis portfolio to address particular CBRN risks and potential crisis situations
- Organize a list of CBRN risks and potential crises

Create a specific CBRN annex for management and communication
The aim of crisis communication preparation is to promote the integration of communication strategies into crisis preparation and organizational decision-making processes as well as being a guide for the handling of the crisis itself. The aim of the CBRN annex is to prepare for and pay attention to the specific circumstances that can emerge in CBRN incidents.

If the organization has a crisis management team it should be responsible for creating and implementing an adapted crisis management plan including a crisis communication plan. If not, the responsible leader has to develop the plan(s). When a crisis occurs, the plan is a roadmap that needs adaptation rather than a blueprint, and the CMT must be able to adapt and continuously re-evaluate their actions depending on the crisis scenario.

Include those who will be involved in handling the crisis and a wide range of credible internal and external sources in the development of the crisis communication plan. Research shows (Combs, 2014), that it is not the plan itself that is important, but the process of developing and implementing the plan. By including relevant actors in the process they will be prepared through the actual process of making the plan.

Construct a crisis portfolio to address CBRN risks and crisis situations

Factors that are causing CBRN-events are natural disasters, malevolence (product tampering, terrorism), technical-error accidents, technical error product harm (when a product supplied by an organization is harmful due to a defect), human-error accidents, and human-error product harm. Base the plan upon existing knowledge of different kinds of threats and of likely human responses.

Prepare specific messages for all plausible risks and crisis scenarios, based on tested knowledge of the publics' views, concerns and knowledge over the issue.

Strive for feedback: use opinion polls, estimate the public's general understanding of risks and preparedness level as well as their opinion of the emergency plan.

Organize a list of CBRN risks and potential crises

It is impossible to prepare for all potential crises, but by categorizing CBRN risks and potential crisis situations it is possible to develop a basis for a crisis management plan and a crisis communication plan for each category, based on concrete analysis of the area of responsibility.

The recommendation is to select and create a crisis management plan for at least one crisis within each crisis type of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats. What is specific for each type of threat and what is equally important to communicate? Crises are selected according to their *vulnerability rating*, which are constructed on the basis of the vulnerabilities of a particular organization and crisis type, and in regard to a heterogeneous society.

Consider collateral damage, activities and operations in close proximity that can affect your own organization.

5.1.3 Select and train spokespersons and CCT for CBRN Communication

Guidelines:

- Aim for high credibility
- Establish a Crisis Communication Team (CCT)
- Carry out media training

Aim for high credibility

Select spokespersons, for example the responsible communication officer, with sufficient training and ability to interact with the media and the general public in a proper way. A spokesperson must be able to effectively disseminate and deliver content in a well-presented way.

How the spokesperson's credibility is defined and perceived by the general public and concerned target groups is of highest importance. Spokespersons could include senior fire officers, police, senior politicians or other formal leaders. However, public groups differ in whom they trust.

This is particularly important in a heterogeneous society comprised of inhabitants with differing values, cultural beliefs and experience with authorities and mass media in different countries. Depending on previous experiences, some people who are new to the country could place less trust in information from the police, while others could be sceptical towards information that has any political connection.

In order to ensure credibility and trust it is therefore important to analyse the concerned target group or groups when choosing a spokesperson beforehand.

Establish a Crisis Communication Team

In order to evaluate incoming information and create effective information directed at the public, media and concerned parties, it may be necessary to appoint a Crisis Communication Team (CCT). It is not possible for one individual to be ready to step in 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is therefore important to prepare for the establishment of a team of spokespersons. This will also give the CMT an opportunity to choose the person best suited for a particular incident.

If the crisis is long-lived several spokespersons may need to work in shifts. Since many crises are complex, several spokespersons can be involved using complementary skills. The media often seek information from several authoritative sources within the same organization, and no single person can be expected to be an authority on every subject. This is especially valid since CBRN incidents are rare, and can have fatal consequences; at this kind of incident it is crucial that the public get information from different sources.

The team will also be responsible for cooperating with representatives from the communication network created before the crises occurred, coordinating information between different authorities (cf. Johansson et al., 2013) and communicating with the media, which is one of the most important information sources for the public, particularly during incidents with severe consequences.

Carry out media training focused on CBRN relevant issues

Spokespersons are individuals who are skilled in rhetorical strategies and have extensive professional experience. Training should be carried out periodically in order to enhance their ability to phrase, deliver and repeat messages. Training should also serve to increase awareness of body language and become comfortable in the media spotlight.

Successful media relationships are dependent on media training and the identification of spokespersons as part of pre-event crisis planning.

5.1.4 Prepare for effective CBRN communication

Guidelines:

- Establish strategic partners for different risks and crisis scenarios
- Develop a communication plan and policy for CBRN communication
- Create a common glossary of terms
- Inform the organization and its strategic network
- Carry out simulations to strengthen the ability to handle crises

Select and establish strategic partners for different risks and crisis scenarios

To effectively coordinate messages and responses, a strategic partnership network should be established prior to any crisis. This allows for coordination and collaboration between authorities, organizations and other credible sources, which is an essential step prior to launching an effective crisis response (Johansson et al., 2013). From our focus group interviews we learned that some ethnic groups find their religious leader to be the most credible source, other groups relied more on the emergency managers.

Build networks and continuously update information about experts and networks for each CBRN crisis type. Identify the authorities that will be involved in this kind of crisis management and their spokespersons.

Develop a communication plan and policy for CBRN communication

Improve preparedness both within the organization and the network of response organizations through developing a policy for CBRN communication that can be adapted to different risks and crisis scenarios and to different organizations. Crises often require authorities at different levels to cooperate with each other and with others. It is vital that responsibilities, tasks, and the coordination of communication efforts are properly structured and discussed beforehand among those involved in the crisis management process.

Create a common glossary of terms

Ensure consistency when communicating with the public by creating a glossary of terms for CBRN incidents that has been agreed upon by the organization, authorities, and CMT. If information from one authority contradicts information provided by another authority during a crisis it could lead to confusion and uncertainty as well as increase the risk of physical or mental injury.

Inform the organization and its strategic network

The strategic response network comprises individuals and organizations that require immediate information in order to participate in handling the crisis. It includes national and international organizations, decision-makers, authorities and volunteers. Target groups within the organization could be employees, clients and suppliers.

All of these groups have varying information needs, which may also change during the course of the crisis. Initial information needs in terms of what is happening and who is involved, may at a later stage change into: who is responsible? Since CBRN incidents are rare, the communication with the public will probably increase in comparison to more familiar accidents. Therefore the information to those within the organization and strategic network is of crucial importance, e.g. if one needs to direct worried members of the public to appropriate and accurate sources of information, and when someone in the organization intends to communicate information and need reliable information that is agreed upon within the response network.

Carry out training/simulations to strengthen the general ability to handle a CBRN communication

Prepare and maintain an infrastructure that permits secure communication between decision makers during simulations and training programs. Simulations can strengthen understanding and cooperation within the response network. It is especially important to collect live experiences on those CBRN incidents that have occurred, to increase the public authority's capacity to handle these types of crisis. (cf. section 4.2 Post-Crisis learning, where the importance of collecting lessons learned is stressed.)

5.1.5 Prepare for communicating with the public

Guidelines:

- Identify target groups and their use of media
- Identify groups with special requirements and their use of media
- Monitor public perceptions of risks and understanding of the crisis
- Maintain an on-going dialogue with the public
- Prepare to communicate with the public through several channels
- Understand peoples' use of social media

Identify target groups and their use of media

To effectively communicate with the public, make sure that you know which groups are affected by the crisis, what concerns they may have and how they seek information. The general public is characterized as heterogeneous and differentiated by for example age, education, gender, housing area, social and cultural background. These factors influence use of media and information seeking habits during a risk- or crisis situation.

Depending on the type of CBRN crisis and its magnitude, the target group may be separated into additional target groups. Sometimes it is more relevant to direct crisis communication towards a smaller group of people who are directly affected in some way, e.g. a victim's relatives, close friends, relatives of employees or groups with certain needs. When a broader section of the general public is concerned, it becomes necessary to choose different communication channels to reach different target groups.

It is important to differentiate between the public directly involved or affected by the crisis and the general public. This manual is directed at the general public. To communicate with those directly involved, often at the scene of the incident, the D8.11 information booklet is a useful source.

Identify groups with special requirements and their use of media

Communication should be adapted to cater for the diversity found in society and made accessible for varying target groups with different needs. Important groups to address are people with disabilities affecting their ability to receive and understand information and who are dependent on visual or auditory presentations. Multiple sources of information are required to cover the need for information by groups with special requirements. Communication efforts should also be adapted to suit different language groups. (cf. D8.4, page 21 minority groups and 69 channels format)

Different groups of foreigners such as migrants, refugees and people who have recently arrived in the country are less acquainted with the culture and may not know which communication channels are reliable and used for this kind of incident. This group tends to consult friends for information in the first instance and may also turn local community organizations like the church or mosque where people assemble in times of crises. This group may have bad experiences of authorities, which should be considered as this has implications for trust, for example which sources of information and spokespersons are reliable.

Due to the risk of cross contamination, e.g. when tourists travel back home, it is of vital importance that policies, plans and procedures for reaching these groups are developed beforehand.

Monitor peoples' perception of risk and understanding of the crisis

Monitor peoples' perception of risk and their understanding of the crisis in order to understand how different groups in society think and act. It is often necessary for crisis managers to issue instructions or tasks during a crisis, allowing people to be aware and self-efficient. A common example of this is when providing advice about safe evacuation or sheltering procedures within an area. These activities require the target group to be aware of what they should do and to have confidence in their ability to follow the advice. Another example is to organize exercises involving the general public, or doing surveys (cf. D8.15)

During a CBRN attack the public's perception of the threat varies depending on the individual's situation and the nature of the incident. Factors that are likely to affect the public's expression of anxiety towards the crisis include level of familiarity and understanding, perceived catastrophic potential, voluntariness of exposure, fear, effects on children, manifestations of effect and reversibility Rogers *et al.*, 2007; Rogers & Pearce, 2013).

Other factors that influence the perception of risks and understanding of the crisis include the public's perception of responders (based on levels of trust, perceived competence, honesty, credibility, reliability etc.), the effectiveness of communication (appropriate communication in a timely manner) and perceptions of their own capability to undertake protective measures. The latter involves the public's confidence in recommended actions and also the cost to implement those actions) (cf. previous reports D8.3, D8.6, page 10-12, D8.7. D8.8, D8.11, D8.12, D8.13; Pearce *et al.*, 2012; Rogers & Pearce, 2013).

Maintain an on-going dialogue with the public

Establish an on-going dialogue and a trusting relationship with the public. Dialogue is an essential tool in crisis preparation and when learning about heterogeneous groups and their needs.

Digital communication media (social media) and the extensive use of mobile phones has radically increased the possibility of establishing dialogue with the public and seeking necessary information from members of the public. For example, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and other social network sites make the exchange of text-based and visual information possible with people present at the CBRN location or area. Communicating with the public could include a number of activities including preparing an open access website as an open link between the public and public authorities (administrative/executive officials) (see below, "Understand people's use of social media").

During CBRN events preparing the public is important in order to prevent cross contamination causing problems. The public needs to understand what the rescue organizations are doing, the timescale that certain operations take, and what equipment is being used in order to avoid strong emotions such as fear or anxiety (cf. D8.11 Information booklet preparing the public at the scene what to do). It is equally important to inform the general public what to do, e.g. not moving into the contaminated area; how to avoid being contaminated; where to find additional information.

Prepare to communicate with the public through several channels

Communicate with the public through several types of media outlets. Radio and electronic media is superior in reaching people who are not in their homes. Printed media, on the other hand, can be distributed to places that lack electricity. Printed media cannot be updated as frequently as electronic media, which makes it better suited for the post-crisis stage rather than the emergency stage when timely information is of utmost importance.

Despite the rapid growth of social media, traditional media outlets still constitute the primary channel for communicating with important target groups of the public. The public also believe that traditional media such as television, radio and newspapers are reliable channels for highly important information and are therefore often used as primary sources for information when a crisis has occurred. Traditional media is to increasing extent digital and possible to access through smartphones, e-book readers and computers.

Understand peoples' use of social media
Use a broad range of media to reach the public. Social media is widely used by the public as a source of information during crises. Some people, particularly the elderly, have not become used to and do not rely on or use social media. They primarily turn to traditional crisis communication channels such as the radio, TV and newspapers.

Today people that are a part of the crisis situation can report real time about their experiences of crisis events through mobile phones. A majority of the public use the Internet and various social media on a daily basis and are therefore more inclined to initially turn to the Internet, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram or Facebook to find out what is going on. This also opens up the possibility to use websites belonging to national, regional and local authorities. A wide range of what is still defined as "traditional media" can be accessed through smartphones, e-book readers and computers, which means that an informed journalist may be responsible for the news in tomorrow's newspaper as well as today's news on the Internet.

When creating the crisis communication plan, decide when and which part of social media to use in order to reach different target groups.

5.1.6 Prepare for communication with the media

Guidelines:
- Target local, national, and global media
- Establish cooperation and long-term working relationships with journalists

Target local, national and global media
Depending on the CBRN threat, extension, and public interest, an incident will engage different media in reporting about the crisis: local, national and sometimes global media. Differences between national and local media can be noted. National media provides a higher quality news coverage, which includes a more prestigious image, better resources and a larger audience. Local media, on the other hand, is better suited to cover regional and local events and may be more willing to provide media coverage from the pre-crisis to the post-crisis phase in crisis-stricken areas. National media, on the other hand, is primarily interested in the immediate crisis phase, and the crisis effects. Global media become engaged in large-scale events, and demand information in English / other languages than the local language.

Establish cooperation and long-term working relationship with journalists
Approach media through open and honest communication and regard them as an asset and strategic resource rather than a liability during crises. Traditional media outlets with editorial staff are required to report news accurately and thoroughly, making them suitable for spreading and broadcasting messages to the public.

As a crisis communication manager, nurture a long-term working relationship with journalists and encourage them to inform the public about risks and how to prepare for a crisis. Personal meetings with reporters and editors can be important in establishing long-term relationships with representatives from media.

Prepare background information, such as questions and answers, that is easily accessible during crises and instruct journalists on how they can deliver life-saving messages.

Do not give exclusive information privileges to journalists. Information should be regarded as free and be available for everyone, as far as possible.

5.2   Communication during a CBRN crisis

This section comprises guide lines for communication during a CBRN attack.

Best Practices in CBRN crisis communication
- Emphasize a dialogic approach regarding the public, such as using the Internet to promote two-way communication.
- Commit yourself to being the best source of information.
- Realize that CBRN crisis response is a narrative, a particular story that unfolds based in the local community, and maintain narrative coherence.
- Improve communication among the emergency organizations themselves.
- Monitor the media constantly – both to learn from what journalists and individuals have found and to immediately correct mistakes or inaccurate information.
- Integrate and display materials and information promptly. Display information in as motivating and engaging way as possible.
- Distribute information to the public early, quickly and frequently. Even if information is incomplete, inform the public that updates will follow.
- Use clear and understandable terms when releasing information.
- Provide the general public with the following information: what the public must do and can do, how one should protect itself, and who are the authoritative bodies one should rely upon.
- Advise the public to take self-efficacy actions in order to reduce the risk: how to help oneself and help others, while demonstrating the effectiveness of self-help to the public. (cf. D8.11 Information Booklet for best practice what to communicate with the public at the scene)

5.2.1   Activate the pre-established crisis organization for CBRN incidents

Guidelines:
- Assemble the Crisis Management Team
- Appoint a spokesperson
- Activate the strategic partnership network
- Adjust the communication policy for the specific CBRN incident
- Make contact information accessible
- Review communication continuously

Assemble the Crisis Management Team

Appoint the pre-established crisis management team (CMT) to be responsible for handling the crisis using existing plans for CBRN crisis management, communication and crisis portfolios as support and guidelines.

Appoint a spokesperson

The CMT immediately appoints a spokesperson, or spokes persons, who will take part in the first team meeting.

Prepare the first crisis message to be delivered to the general public and concerned target groups through the various communication channels.

Depending on the nature and magnitude of the crisis it may be necessary to appoint a Crisis Communication Team (CCT) in order to evaluate incoming information and create an effective communication channel for information directed at the public, media and concerned parties.

Activate the strategic partnership network

Depending on the nature of the crisis at hand, activate the network with authorities, organizations and other credible sources needed for an effective crisis response. A strategic partnership network is established prior to the crisis and trained to support the CMTs handling of different types of crises.

Adjust the communication policy for the specific CBRN incident

Make sure that the CMT has established a communication policy for the CBRN incident, allowing different responsibilities to be defined and allocated to suitable departments and/or managers. Those with communication responsibilities should establish a plan of action, dealing with the most pressing matters first. As explained in the previous section, several of these tasks can be prepared beforehand, allowing for a faster and less reactive response, e.g. using a CBRN specific communication plan.

Make contact information accessible

Make contact information easily accessible and preferably distributed to key authorities and media.

Review communication continuously

During a crisis work in a cycle of: assess, plan, communicate, review, assess, and so forth to ensure that communicative actions are tailored to the situation.

5.2.2   Obtain CBRN related information

Guidelines:

- Use the most recognized credible sources identified prior to the incident
- Prioritize incoming information

Use the most recognized credible sources identified prior to the incident

There are five kinds of information needed during a crisis: information that the CCT needs, information that the public demands, information that the media demands, information that the organization needs to give, and information that is already distributed by various other sources.

Build a picture of the event from many different sources. Collaborate with credible sources to obtain necessary basic information needed by the CCT. It is important to increase the situational awareness as early as possible during a CBRN crisis. Information coming from the public or the media needs to be checked and triangulated for accuracy.

The CCT needs to establish what information already exists, what the public does not know and what it needs to know. Commit to being the best source of information, e.g. beforehand investigated how to reach different target groups, and recognized communication channels in use, pre-established credible network for different kinds of CBRN crisis, well-organized plan for crisis communication (all established in pre-crisis). (cf. D8.12 and D8.16 regarding trust in responders and efficacy of communication during CBRN threats)

Prioritize incoming information

When the CCT has been established: investigate what kind of information the public needs to know, prioritize amongst the flow of information and pinpoint where to look for information. Information is better and more accurate when it is easy to interpret, up-to-date, and sufficient to answer the questions asked.

Three classifications can be used to prioritize information: 1) Immediate – information needed for pressing decisions or actions, 2) Routine – information usually required during a CBRN crisis management effort, 3) Miscellaneous – information with no obvious value but which relates to the crisis in some way.

Validate sources continuously, identifying and maintaining relationships with experts as well as the network of response organizations.

5.2.3 Distribute warning messages

Acknowledge uncertainty

Distribute information to the public early, quickly and frequently. Even if information is partial, inform the public that updates will follow. The decision to issue a warning message can be difficult. However, there is a risk the warning may come too late if the sender waits until the uncertainty has faded. From a communication point of view, it can be warranted to acknowledge uncertainty with statements such as "The situation is fluid," and, "We do not yet have all the facts".

Sometimes crises develop so fast that there is little or no time to distribute warning messages. A valuable window of opportunity is available when approaching threats have been discovered before they develop into a crisis.

Manage publics' expectations

Make the most out of the time given in order to inform the public about the type and magnitude of the crisis and what members of the public can do to protect themselves. The public also needs to be informed of which authoritative bodies are handling the crisis and consequently should be trusted.

A crisis is at the same time often both unexpected and unpredictable. Uncertainty is an integral part of every crisis and something that has to be accepted even though it complicates decision-making.

5.2.4 Collaborate within the response network

Guidelines:
- Establish a joint staff for the CBRN incident
- Collaborate to create consistency and necessary adjustments

Establish a joint staff for the CBRN incident
Make sure that organizational communications within and between the emergency organizations themselves are secure and well-functioning. During a crisis, it is recommended that involved agencies collaborate in a common communication platform and do not respond independently.

Establish a common Event Control Suite, were information can be collected and shared by all involved parties. As more and more information is added through emergency calls and other information sources, the nature of the crisis, its effects and the measures that need to be taken are clarified. Trust within the network can be created and maintained through continuity of participation.

Collaborate to create consistency and necessary adjustments
Always collaborate within the response network to create a unified view of the situation and to create consistency when communicating with stakeholders. This approach within the response network includes communication responsibility, collaboration, and using different communication channels.

This approach is commonly known as "speaking with one voice" and is effective in cases of social homogeny and when opinions about the technical aspects of the crisis are similar among experts.

To "speak with multiple voices" refers to when messages are adjusted for different audiences. This is effective in a multi ethnic society and when the technical aspects of the crisis are uncertain.

5.2.5 Communicate to ensure credibility

Guidelines:
- Be honest
- Get to know the recipient
- Display compassion, concern and empathy to enhance credibility
- Be informed and listen carefully
- Be consistent and clear

Some general rules need to be considered and followed when preparing to communicate during a crisis; within the crisis organization and strategic network itself, with the general public and with the media.

Be honest

Of all the crisis communication best practices, *honesty* may be the most emphasized by researchers. It is therefore very important to remain honest, sincere and open towards the public and media at all times. Being honest is simply a matter of not lying. Being sincere is a question of communicating the entire truth, as it is known at the time, even if it reflects badly on the organization. To be open is to be accessible and to respond promptly to the crisis. While these guidelines are easy to understand, they may be hard to actually achieve in the midst of a crisis. However, it is vital to act with the public's best in mind in order to maintain their trust.

During a CBRN incident this might be even harder, as the incident is seldom experienced and the consequences are often unknown. The incident in itself could have fatal consequences, and must be dealt with accordingly. This puts special pressure on the spokesperson and the CMT to compose relevant, easy to interpret, up-to-date, and sufficient information. Then, be honest and tell what you know and not know.

Get to know the recipient

Get acquainted with different audiences before a crisis (see above "Identify target groups"). Understanding audience is a key issue in all forms of communication and the key to responding correctly in a crisis is to monitor public opinion and information needs. Adapt messages to suit the needs of the public or different target groups. It is vital that public concerns about risks are viewed as legitimate concerns and are taken into account when formulating and communicating messages.

Treat the public as an equal partner with the right to be informed about what is happening and to be informed about the risks around them. Contrary to popular beliefs, withholding information from the public in order to avoid assumed panic can be more damaging than full disclosure (cf. D8.16). If a dialogue approach is applied to crisis communication, the public can be treated as a resource rather than a burden.

Display compassion, concern and empathy to enhance the credibility

Different crises demand different approaches in terms of delivery. Display compassion, concern and empathy when communicating with the public, media and employers to enhance the credibility of the message and legitimacy of the sender. If spokespersons show genuine concern about the crisis, the public will be more likely to respond in a positive manner and trust the actions being taken. If there is a lack of concern or empathy, the spokesperson may seem cold and uncaring in the eyes of the public, which in turn might undermine both the message and the sender.

Factors of importance for effective delivery of a message can be improved through training. By recording and reviewing videos of press conferences, spokespersons are made aware of how they deliver messages and in doing so are able to improve their skills and techniques.

Be informed and listen carefully

As a spokesperson you need to be well informed, and able to quickly retrieve information, and answer questions effectively without showing signs of aggression.

Provide accurate responses to journalists' questions; listen carefully to the question, rephrase if necessary, but always answer the question being asked.

During a CBRN incident this is of special importance to be specific since this situation is rare for all

involved. In this situation, the answers to questions from journalists are of crucial importance. If questions are not carefully attended to, there is a risk of misinformation or giving the wrong impression of the threat. Not answering questions or leaving partial answers is often leading to the spreading of rumours, and giving other sources opportunities to fill the void. You risk losing control of being the most credible source of information.

A good spokesperson can use the time with reporters to provide a briefing of the situation while at the same time delivering the core crisis message; thereby building trust for further cooperation.

Be consistent and clear
When communicating with the media, be as consistent and clear as possible. Information may often be scarce in a CBRN incident, and more information will later add to the meaning of the crisis situation and its effects. It is recommended to inform the public with the existing primary information in order to provide a definition of the crisis and take the first steps towards handling the crisis. At the same time it will give the CMT and its spokesperson an opportunity to establish credibility instead of waiting until all the information about the situation is provided. It is always best to acknowledge what is known so far, and stress that the situation may change depending on new information.

Coordinate communication and evaluate developments of the crisis in order to determining the course of action. Contradictory information provided by different authorities during a crisis will create confusion and uncertainty amongst the public.

To ensure consistency when communicating with the public use the glossary of the CBRN terms that has been agreed upon by the organization, authorities, and CMT prior to the crisis (cf. 1.4).

5.2.6   *Communicate CBRN relevant information with the public*

Guidelines:
- First message
- Public need of information
- Instructing the public
- Use all possible communication channels
- Use social media
- Adjust the message as the situation unfolds

During a crisis there is likely to be a high demand for information from the public and the media as well as within the response network.

First message
Ensure that messages are short, simple, comprehensive and consistent while addressing diverse needs and the diversity of the heterogeneous publics and contexts.

First of all, the public requires information that defines the crisis and its magnitude, what kind of release, where, how does it effect, what symptoms can be counted on.

Secondly, the public requires information about what is being done to manage the crisis, what they should do to and reduce its consequences and where to turn in need for help.

Thirdly, inform the public where to find more information during the crisis.

Be as sincere and open about the situation as possible.

Public need of information

It is of utmost importance that individuals or group of individuals are given the opportunity to evaluate the crisis information provided and make rational decisions on how to handle the situation for themselves and their families. Messages that directly affect the public such as closed roads, avoiding certain areas, staying at home or closing windows are important to get out quickly.

When the first batch of information comes in, it is common that people do not understand what they are seeing or hearing and the situation might be much more hazardous than people believe. Whether the public is at risk or not, their concern must always be validated and respected by crisis managers. Advices on avoiding an area, closing windows, staying at home and of closed roads that directly affect the public are messages that are important to get out quickly. For many people, family is the first priority if an event occurs, and to use the phone to call them or to try to collect children from school is the normal reaction (cf. D8.4, page 20; Pearce *et al.*, 2012).

The first questions that stakeholders usually have when they are made aware of a crisis are: What has happened and why? How will it affect me, and those close to me? How long will I be affected? What measures are being taken by authorities and those responsible? When and where can I get more information?

Whether the public is at risk or not, the concern for members of the public must always be validated and respected by crisis managers.

Instruct the public

Instruct public groups on how they can prevent further damage, e.g. not moving into affected area; be aware of information given from official sites and spokespersons. Public safety and saving lives is the first priority. But as the incident goes on, people need to get up-to-dated information on "the likelihood and severity of the threat, the effects of a particular toxic agent and the appropriate preventive measures" (D8.4, page 21). Clarify the situation and guide the public to cope with the situation. Too much information may be confusing so concentrate on two or three pieces of information: "we have this type of incident and this is what we want you need to do". In this way, the one message will be reinforced rather be lost in a jungle of different responses (D8.4, page 68 and 72).

To be effective aim the messages at people affected by the crisis, encourage specific actions to be taken, and provide both real and apparent benefit for reducing the harm. It may be as simple as encouraging people to pay attention to the developments as presented in the media. Eventually, such messages can help the public become more resilient and in the end reduce the harm inflicted during a crisis. For communication and information with affected people at the scene (see D8.11 information booklet, for detailed information).

Use all possible communication channels

Get the facts out and direct the public to the organizations' own channels in order to prevent rumours and speculation spreading in social media. The different types of channels suits different messages better than others, e.g. twitter (150 characters) vs. a newspaper article (approx. 500 words).

The level of urgency influences the publics' choice of communication channel for seeking information. If the situation is urgent, many older people will turn on the radio, which is the traditional crisis communication channel. If it is not urgent, people will read the newspaper or other channels.

At the incident site, face-to-face communication, and megaphones are common communication channels used by first responders. Messages to smartphones can be used, but oral information is most important to ensure that all present get the right interpretation of the warning messages. In these cases it is preferable that emergency staff communicate with the public. The person who communicates with the public should be in charge at the actual site or alternatively responsible for communication. For specific target groups, e.g. relatives who are not on the site, information about the event needs to be distributed through a number of other channels such as the local- and national news stations and the Internet (cf. D8.11 Information booklet, information to the public on the incident site).

Use all available channels. One of the most important channels is face-to-face communication through the television or the Internet. A trustworthy person perceived to be in authority has a calming effect when delivering the message.

Use social media

Analyse which part of the population is affected by the crisis and evaluate the possible use of social media. Promote a two-way communication through the Internet using a dialogue approach with the public. To what extent the broad range of social media can be used to reach the public or different target groups will have been evaluated prior to the crisis and noted in the crisis communication plan (see above, "Understand people's use of social media").

Also, cooperate with national, regional and local authorities and use their websites to reach the public with relevant crisis information.

Adjust the message as the situation unfolds

Communicate that responsible agencies are preventing the situation from becoming catastrophic, provided that they are doing that. This will increase public trust in their competence and skills to handle the situation as well as the crisis communication messages providing advice on how to act for protection and safety.

The primary messages can be in a standard format: "There is an CBRN incident; a chemical may have been affecting people." The next message is used to guide people on what to do: "Close all doors and windows and stay away from the immediate area." Further messages: "This is an attack; it is a [C/B/R/N]." More information is provided once the situation is under control and brought back to normal status.

Both the content and the need for information changes as the crisis unfold over time. The information that the public has already received will have provided them with an understanding of the situation and the need for further information will decrease over time. However, there will be a shift from wanting to know what has happened or is happening, towards wanting information about the underlying cause of the event. Having knowledge that can explain why the event occurred helps create a sense of security.

At some point, casualties are reported, but emphasis would be on the fact that more people survived. The message that "people are saved" is more positive than "there is an attack".

5.2.7 Collaborate and communicate with the media

Guidelines:
- Cooperate with the media
- Be prepared
- Use simple messages
- Be open and honest
- Keep the media informed

The organization to first break the news of an ongoing crisis is likely to gain credibility from its audience. However, it is important not to rush to take initial contact with the media.

Cooperate with the media
Cooperate with the media. Create a trustworthy relationship with media representatives and journalists in particular to provide the public with information in a crisis situation.

A wide range of what is still defined as "traditional media" can be accessed through smartphones, e-book readers and computers, which means that an informed journalist may be responsible for the news in tomorrow's newspaper as well as today's news on the Internet.

Be prepared
Be prepared by having a message in place beforehand. When responding to the media, the spokesperson should be able to answer questions concerning when, where and how the incident occurred, as well as who is involved and responsible.

Use simple messages
Use simple messages that are relevant and can be distributed quickly.

Producing short video clips for YouTube where the officer in charge explains what is happening gives the organization control of the information while at the same time providing the media with information.

Be open and honest
Always strive for honesty and openness; during highly uncertain scenarios it can be beneficial to admit not having full knowledge in order to gain credibility.

Allocate enough resources for the media as there could be a large number of journalists all having special information needs and individual questions. In some cases, influential bloggers are more important and have more readers than the newspapers, and may therefore be given information about the event.

Building a trusting relationship with journalists facilitates crisis communication.

Keep the media informed

Do not withhold information from the media as this would create a void that would result in the media coming to the event to find out for themselves or people making up and spreading their own stories.

In the beginning of the crisis process the focus is on the event itself. In later stages more critical questions develop. Providing information is critical in order to prevent self-appointed experts taking over an arena to communicate.

5.3 Post-Crisis Responsibilities

This section comprises guide lines what to communicate after a CBRN attack.

Guidelines:

- Focus on compassion for the victims
- Establish a mourning process
- Inform and update the stakeholders
- Take responsibility
- Notice mistakes and be specific

Focus on compassion for the victims

Focus on messages of compassion for the victims rather than messages of attribution concerning who is to blame. Communicate with compassion, concern, and empathy.

Establish a mourning process

Help ease any mourning process and honour the memory of people and events by conducting memorials. Even years after a severe incident it can be important for people to remember and mourn their losses.

Inform and update the stakeholders

Inform the stakeholders about the recovery process. Any questions they have must be addressed. Inform about any progress being made as well as the efforts taken to restore damage, help victims, and to learn from the experience. Update stakeholders on what is being done in order to prevent similar crises in the future.

Communication with the public should come across as sincere and concerned.

Dispatch follow-up information about medical care, symptoms, and more to affected public.

Take responsibility

Acknowledge and take responsibility for the role of the organization during the crisis that may enable more effective future crisis communication.

Notice mistakes and be specific

Noticeable mistakes made by the CMT/CCT could, for example, concern information that was not processed, questions from stakeholders that were ignored or inappropriate messages sent to stakeholders.

5.4 Evaluate and Learn from the CBRN event

This section focuses on the evaluation and learning after the crisis.

5.4.1 Crisis evaluations

Guidelines:

- Evaluate the crisis communication
- Estimate and evaluate the damage
- Collect all kinds of data sources
- Analyse the data collected

Evaluate the crisis communication

Evaluate the crisis communication efforts. How efficient was the crisis management plan? Did messages from the CMT reach the intended target groups? How did the target group receive the information? How was it interpreted? Any de-briefs with the response teams involved should be documented.

Estimate and evaluate the damage

Estimate and evaluate the impact and damages of the crisis. If the crisis management efforts were effective, the actual crisis damage should be less than the estimated damage. When completed, the analysis should indicate if the right actions were taken by the CMT, if the crisis management plan was useful for anticipating and responding to the crisis, if there was anything that prevented the crisis management efforts, and the amount of damage suffered due to the crisis.

An evaluation is only useful if it is used for learning and understanding the importance of capturing lessons and experiences from crisis management for future reference.

Knowledge gained from the crisis must be stored in a system that can easily be retrieved and made accessible within the organization.

Collect all kinds of data sources

Use crisis records, stakeholder feedback, organizational performance measures, Internet comments, and media coverage to obtain evaluation data. If any information log sheets, contact worksheets, or incident reports where maintained during the crisis, use these as the primary source of crisis documentation.

Ask stakeholder groups representative of the public that were involved in the crisis for feedback through surveys, interviews and focus group interviews. Look for information about how stakeholders were notified about the crisis and threats, how information was collected and processed and how questions from stakeholders were answered.

Consider crises-related messages from the organization and decisions made by the CMT. Be specific about what was done well or not so well so the evaluation does not become too general.

Analyse data collected

Divide data into more specific categories to enable strengths and weaknesses to be targeted more precisely. If evaluations are too general it is hard to take accurate measures or to address weaknesses and improve crisis management performances. Assessment should be based on both individual and team performance.

Data can be separated by crisis type and phase, as well as other factors such as technical, human, and cultural factors.

5.4.2 Post-crisis learning

Guidelines:
- Invite stakeholders and start a continuous learning process
- Address weaknesses
- Organize workshops
- Revise the crisis communication plan
- Communicate lessons learned

Since CBRN incidents are so rare, it is all the more important to communicate and share lessons learned from all incidents that occur. If you are involved in such an incident, prepare to be invited to present and share your experiences widely.

Invite stakeholders and start a continuous learning process
The end of a crisis also marks the beginning of a continuous learning process where preparations, planning and practice take place to be used in the event of new crises. In a sense, the work during a crisis is circular phenomena where lessons learned are used to improve preparedness for future crises.

When the emergency phase has passed and operations are back to normal, the CMT has a number of important tasks to complete. One is to re-establish a new normality. This phase should transcend into crisis preparation. By continuing to monitor the crisis after it has passed the efforts will eventually loop back to detecting warnings signs and the CMT will be back in the crisis preparation phase.

Address weaknesses
Address any weaknesses or implications that are discovered. Whereas some learning situations require very little effort, others may require fundamental changes of principles and practices within the organization. Proper learning takes place when an evaluation results in action being taken to make improvements based on past experiences.

Organize workshops
The evaluation, reflections and self-critique shall lead to the organizations communicating lessons learned both within their own organization and to the public and will in this way be the start of planning for future crisis situations.

In this way the members of the organizations that are crucial for handling every crisis situation create new organizational routines and plans to meet the crises of tomorrow.

Workshops and seminars could be used to explore a subject and improve routines or activities of the crisis organization. Workshops are most effective when they address specific issues, for example as part of an evaluation of (a) how the crisis was handled during the first day by the Crisis Management Team (CMT), Crisis Communication Team (CCT) or spokesperson; (b) how a certain routine could be improved to be more effective or (c) how different organizations could work even more effective in the initial rescue work.

A specific form of workshop focuses on forming scenarios of the future. The recent crisis made your organization see a new spectra of risks and crisis that earlier was not planned for. This demands a thorough discussion, analyses and the making of new plans and routines to be able to meet a similar crisis more effective in the future.

To start the workshops use an invited guest speaker with relevant knowledge and experience. Hand out background material from the crisis like fact sheets, maps, and a list of frequently asked questions or watch part of a TV program. Also invite an experienced moderator that could lead the workshop discussions to a concrete results and improvements.

Revise the CBRN crisis communication plan
Revise the crisis management plan accordingly, by building on strengths and correcting weaknesses.

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Annex I   CHECKLIST Communication User Manual/Toolkit

In the attachment below there is a short version of the tool in the form of a checklist built on the CBRN communication manual. If you need more information you have to use the present expanded version of the manual where you will find explanations of all guidelines.

Prepare for effective CBRN crisis communication

Select and train a CBRN crisis management team (CMT)
Train the crisis management team together with credible inter-organizational sources within each area of responsibility.
Focus on collaboration and coordination exercises in order to build common crisis preparedness.
Test the crisis communication plan in the absence of crisis, in order to identify and, if necessary, correct weaknesses.
Inform and educate the CMT in public response to CBRN and characteristics of CBRN treats.

Create and implement a CBRN crisis communication plan
Create a specific CBRN annex for communication with the public, and CMT
Construct a crisis portfolio to address particular CBRN risks and potential CBRN situations

Select and train spokespersons and CCT for CBRN communication
Select spokespersons, with sufficient CBRN training and ability to interact with the media and the general public and designate members to a Crisis Communication Team (CCT)
Carry out media training focused on CBRN relevant issues

Prepare for effective CBRN communication
Select and establish strategic partners for different CBRN crisis scenarios
Prepare the organization and its strategic network on the characteristics of CBRN communication, incl. a common glossary with terms for CBRN incidents, agreed upon by partners
Carry out training/simulations to strengthen the general ability to handle CBRN communication

Prepare for communicating with the public
Identify target groups with special requirements and their use of media
Monitor peoples' perception of risk and understanding of the crisis
Recognize peoples' use of social media and prepare for an on-going dialogue through several channels

Prepare for communication with the media
Engaged different media in reporting about the crisis: local, national and sometimes global media
Establish cooperation and long-term working relationship with journalists

Communication *during* a CBRN incident

Activate the pre-established crisis organization for CBRN incidents
Assemble the Crisis Management Team and appoint a spokesperson
Activate the strategic partnership network
Adjust the communication policy for this specific CBRN incident
Make contact information accessible
Review communication continuously

Obtain CBRN related information
Use the most recognized communication channels in to obtain relevant information
Prioritize and analyse incoming information
      1) Immediate – information needed for pressing decisions or actions
      2) Routine – information usually required during a CBRN incident
      3) Miscellaneous – information with no obvious value but related to the incident
Validate sources continuously, identify and maintain relationships with experts

Distribute warning messages
Acknowledge uncertainty, and inform even if the information is partial, inform that updates will follow
Inform the public of which authoritative bodies are handling the crisis and should be trusted

Collaborate within the response network
Establish a joint staff for collaboration in the CBRN response network
Collaborate to create consistency and necessary adjustments when communicate a message

Communicate to ensure credibility
Be honest
Get to know the recipient of your message, who are they, where, in what state
Display compassion, and show genuine concern and empathy when communicating with the public, media and employers to enhance the credibility of the message and legitimacy of the sender
Be informed and listen carefully to your sources
Be consistent and clear in your message

Communicate CBRN relevant information with the public
First message: Ensure that messages are short, simple, comprehensive and consistent while addressing diverse needs and the diversity of the heterogeneous publics and contexts.
      1) Define the crisis and its magnitude, what kind of release and where, how does it effect, what symptoms can be counted on
      2) What is being done to manage the crisis, instructions what to do
      3) Where to find more information during the crisis
Adjust the message as the situation unfold
Be as sincere and open about the situation as possible.
Use all possible communication channels

Collaborate and communicate with the media
Cooperate with the media and keep media informed
Be prepared and use media to communicate and inform the public
Use simple messages

Post-Crisis responsibilities

Focus on compassion for the victims
Establish a mourning process
Inform and update the stakeholders on what is being done
Take responsibility for things that have happened
Notice mistakes and be specific

Evaluate and Learn from the CBRN incident

Crisis evaluations

Evaluate the crisis communication
Estimate and evaluate the damage
Collect all kinds of data sources
Analyse data collected

Post-crisis learning

Invite stakeholders and start a learning process from the incident
Address weaknesses found in the evaluation
Organize workshops, communicate and share lessons learned
Revise the CBRN crisis communication plan

PREPARE FOR EFFECTIVE CBRN CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Select and train a CBRN crisis management team (CMT)

» Train the crisis management team together with credible inter-organizational sources within each area of responsibility
» Focus on collaboration and coordination exercises in order to build common crisis preparedness
» Test the crisis communication plan in the absence of crisis, in order to identify and, if necessary, correct weaknesses
» Inform and educate the CMT in public response to CBRN and characteristics of CBRN treats

Create and implement a CBRN crisis communication plan

» Create a specific CBRN annex for communication with the public, and CMT
» Construct a crisis portfolio to address particular CBRN risks and potential CBRN situations

Select and train spokespersons and CCT for CBRN communication

» Select spokespersons, with sufficient CBRN training and ability to interact with the media and the general public and designate members to a Crisis Communication Team (CCT)
» Carry out media training focused on CBRN relevant issues

Prepare for effective CBRN communication

» Select and establish strategic partners for different CBRN crisis scenarios
» Prepare the organization and its strategic network on the characteristics of CBRN communication, incl. a common glossary with terms for CBRN incidents, agreed upon by partners
» Carry out training/simulations to strengthen the general ability to handle CBRN communication

Prepare for communicating with the public

» Identify target groups with special requirements and their use of media
» Monitor peoples' perception of risk and understanding of the crisis
» Recognize peoples' use of social media and prepare for an on-going dialogue through several channels

Prepare for communication with the media

» Engaged different media in reporting about the crisis: local, national and sometimes global media
» Establish cooperation and long-term working relationship with journalists

COMMUNICATION DURING A CBRN INCIDENT

Activate the pre-established crisis organization for CBRN incidents

» Assemble the Crisis Management Team and appoint a spokesperson
» Activate the strategic partnership network
» Adjust the communication policy for this specific CBRN incident
» Make contact information accessible
» Review communication continuously

Obtain CBRN related information

» Use the most recognized communication channels in to obtain relevant information
» Prioritize and analyse incoming information
  1. Immediate – information needed for pressing decisions or actions
  2. Routine – information usually required during a CBRN incident
  3. Miscellaneous – information with no obvious value but related to the incident
» Validate sources continuously, identify and maintain relationships with experts

Distribute warning messages

» Acknowledge uncertainty, and inform even if the information is partial, inform that updates will follow
» Inform the public of which authoritative bodies are handling the crisis and should be trusted

Collaborate within the response network

» Establish a joint staff for collaboration in the CBRN response network
» Collaborate to create consistency and necessary adjustments when communicate a message

Communicate to ensure credibility

» Be honest
» Get to know the recipient of your message, who are they, where, in what state
» Display compassion, and show genuine concern and empathy when communicating with the public, media and employers to enhance the credibility of the message and legitimacy of the sender
» Be informed and listen carefully to your sources
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Communicate CBRN relevant information with the public

» First message: Ensure that messages are short, simple, comprehensive and consistent while addressing diverse needs and the diversity of the heterogeneous publics and contexts.
  1. Define the crisis and its magnitude, what kind of release and where, how does it effect, what symptoms can be counted on
  2. What is being done to manage the crisis, instructions what to do
  3. Where to find more information during the crisis
» Adjust the message as the situation unfold
» Be as sincere and open about the situation as possible
» Use all possible communication channels

Collaborate and communicate with the media

» Cooperate with the media and keep media informed
» Be prepared and use media to communicate and inform the public
» Use simple messages

POST-CRISIS RESPONSIBILITIES

» Focus on compassion for the victims
» Establish a mourning process
» Inform and update the stakeholders on what is being done
» Take responsibility for things that have happened
» Notice mistakes and be specific

EVALUATE AND LEARN FROM THE CBRN INCIDENT

Crisis evaluations

» Evaluate the crisis communication
» Estimate and evaluate the damage
» Collect all kinds of data sources
» Analyse data collected

Post-crisis learning

» Invite stakeholders and start a learning process from the incident
» Address weaknesses found in the evaluation
» Organize workshops, communicate and share lessons learned
» Revise the CBRN crisis communication plan