

Instructor Guide to Unit Eight:
Disaster Communication

1. The goal of this unit is to explore how the form and function of communication is impacted by the circumstances of a disaster. It will emphasize how communication should be based on the needs of the relationship between the survivors, responders and community experiencing the disaster

2. This is the content for Unit Eight:

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|---|------------|
| A. The forms and functions of communication during a disaster | 20 minutes |
| B. Four major systems of personal communication | 25 minutes |
| C. Communication Exercise | 15 minutes |

3. Unit eight is scheduled for one hour:

Time spent on each unit can be maneuvered by dropping content and referring to its placement in the take-home materials. This permits flexibility on the part of the instructor and encourages participants to question or discuss course matters. It also holds the instructor to the time limit for the unit without expecting participants to stay overtime or to have instructors who follow to give up their time.

3. Supplies needed for Unit Eight:

- LCD projector
- Computer linked to LCD projector
- Computer disk containing Unit Eight power point presentation
- Instructor Guide for Unit Eight
- Participant's Manual for CERT

4. Instructional staffing requirements:

One instructor is required for this unit. Although team teaching is encouraged.

6. Creative Contributions:

In the column to the right of each of the slides in this unit, there is space to take notes on teaching techniques that are fun, funky, and innovative. Use the classroom time in this train-the-trainer course to share ideas on how to reach people with different learning styles. Seal good ideas, generate some yourself, and utilize other's ideas as a foundation to develop new training techniques that benefit all course participants!



Community Emergency Response Training Unit Eight: Disaster Communication



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Objectives

Describe how a disaster can interrupt the **taken-for-granted nature** of personal communication networks.

List the **four major types of communication** that can be utilized during a crisis for the benefit of survivors, responders and the community.

Display an ability to be flexible in your communication form in order to get across simple messages in class activities that simulate disaster situations.



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1. Along with such concrete elements, intangible elements like personal communication networks are in disarray. Communications technologies such as phones, faxes and computer lines may be easy to identify and repair; personal communication networks are not so easy to reestablish. People may or may not have access to their loved ones, and they usually don't have access to individuals who are not in their immediate family. Those people or groups are also an important way people gather and share information, on an informal everyday basis.



The scope of disasters

- In a time of disaster everything can be in a disastrous state:
 - Land
 - Community
 - Loved ones
 - Resources
 - Employment
 - Social services



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2. Individuals and groups with whom people engage in everyday talk are now displaced and the taken-for-granted nature of communication is exposed. In modern western culture, people expect communication with family and friends as well as business and government to be immediate. A disaster destroys not only the technology that provides those services, but displaces people's interpersonal relationships.

This can place great stress on individuals as they attempt to understand the disaster and reconstruct the relationships of their daily lives.

Communication Networks and Disasters

- **Communication Technology Networks**
 - Phones
 - Computer lines
 - Cell towers
- **Social Communication Networks**
 - Friends and family
 - Community groups
 - Service organizations
- Length time to repair
- Taken-for-granted nature of communication systems in everyday life.



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3. Just like society takes for granted the instant nature of communication technology, most people take for granted that their primary form of personal communication will always be available and functional. Even more so, people often assume that others will adapt to them when communicating. Disasters can put everything in disarray, even a person's system of personal communication. Human bodies can get harmed, and with that physical systems of communication can falter and fail.



Impact

- A disaster destroys not only the technology that provides communication services, but displaces people's interpersonal relationships.
- This can place great stress on individuals as they attempt to understand the disaster and reconstruct the relationships of their daily lives.



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4. Consider:

What is your primary form of communication?

How would you feel if it was no longer available to you?

How might you adapt and communicate without it?

Personal Communication Skills

How you would adapt if your primary form of communication was damaged?

Consider:

- Losing your voice (if you are a speaking person)
- Breaking your hands
(if you use American Sign Language)
- Being separated from your interpreter
(if you speak English as a second language)



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5. Personal skills used by individuals may be interrupted by the disaster.

Although training and preparation can help avoid personal injury during a disaster, physical harm can happen to anyone from a random person on the street to the most highly trained emergency management personnel. Imagine how you would have to adapt if your primary form of communication was no longer available to you (to either send or receive information).



Four major systems of personal communication

- **Oral Communication** is influenced by:
 - Culture
 - Social needs
 - Physiology
 - Disasters

Tips

- Think before you speak
- Be clear and concise
- Regulate your tone and pitch
- Avoid using contractions and acronyms
- be willing and able to adapt to the needs of the receiver



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6. Oral communication (talk) uses sound to form words (then the words form sentences to express thoughts and ideas in spoken format). Many things can affect the use of oral communication such as culture, physical capacity, language and many other elements. In Western cultures talk is viewed as desirable and people use it for social purposes and for performing tasks. In some other cultures talk is perceived differently, silence is more valued.

Four major systems of personal communication

- **Written Communication**
 - Formal
 - Reports
 - Memos
 - Informal
 - Words
 - Symbols

Tips

- Always have workable writing implements
- Keep things short
- Use fact not opinion
- Limit acronyms
- Be willing and able to adapt to the needs of the receiver



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7. Some written communication is formal such as report writing, other is informal, such as the use of notes or symbols. Formal written communication is often one-way communication. CERT members who work on a team will often have to report on their daily and weekly activities in written format.



Four major systems of personal communication

- **Non-verbal communication**
 - Sight or description dependent
 - Color, gestures, etc.
- **Visual communication**
 - Perception dependent
 - Time
 - Vocal intonation
 - Touch

Tip: Using symbols

Wong-Baker FACES Pain rating scale



- Be willing and able to adapt to the needs of the communication relationship

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8. Messages expressed by means other than spoken words are considered non-verbal or visual communication. Visual communication can include

- How a person is dressed
- How space is used while communicating
- Use of color
- Body gestures

Non-verbal communication does not need sight to be perceived, it can include:

- The use of time
- Voice
- Speed (rate of speech)
- The use of touch

Four major systems of personal communication

Listening involves:

- Attending
- Understanding
- Responding
- Remembering

Tips:

- Talk Less
- Get rid of distractions
- Do not judge prematurely
- Listening takes time and effort
- Adapt to the relationship needs

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9. Listening is the most critical system of personal communication in a disaster. Taking the time to both hear and understand what your team members, your leaders, disaster survivors, community members, and those there to assist are really communicating is the best skill you can utilize.



Communication Style Flexibility Exercise

- One person role play
 - Hurt person and responder
- **Communicate this to the partner without using your primary form of communication**
 - Make it more complex
 - Flexibility and concentration are key
- **Read the Participants Manual on page 11 for details.**



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10. Work with a partner or small group for this activity (3-4 people) Take turns changing roles between being the community member and CERT responder.

- Have one person assume the role of an individual who is hurt because of the disaster. This person must communicate their pain to the respondent; practice doing this in several ways. First do not use your primary form of communication (e.g. if you speak, do not do that. If you use sign language, do not use that)
- The goal of the listener respondent is to accurately access the condition of the person pretending to be hurt.
- You can make this activity more complex by changing what the person is trying to communicate. Rather than identifying pain, the person could attempt to tell the responder someone is caught in rubble, separated from their family or in need of medication.

After the activity is complete, spend time with your partner or group deconstructing the process of communicating under these circumstances. What was the process like? How long did it take you to understand one another? When the pain or circumstances were more complex, how did that impact your ability to communicate?





If your CERT class continues the same day, take your break and return to this classroom.

Or

If your CERT class continues another day (next week or next month). Your Homework Assignment is to read Unit Nine: Disaster Psychology

