Risk Communication Model

This communication planning model, adapted from the work of NJDEP (2014), has eight components or spokes on the wheel (Figure 4-1). At the center is review and evaluate. This suggests that communication is two-way, ongoing and continuous, allowing for review of where you are in your outreach efforts and where you may need to go.

The model is interactive, which allows for new information to be incorporated into the plan so that the outreach can be modified accordingly. This approach encourages establishing ongoing dialogue between the lead organization and stakeholders so that the resulting outreach plan reflects stakeholder concerns and your organization's priorities on an issue. This will help you develop a robust risk communication plan.

This risk communication planning process advocates a team approach by recommending that an internal project team be created. A communications coordinator is selected and becomes the lead in developing the plan in concert with the internal team.

Specifically, the steps of the risk communication planning process are presented in the following template. This template can be used for general and specific risk communication activities that encompass current, immediate, and emerging environmental issues and concerns. Subsequent appendices provide additional tools and resources for implementing each step and completing the template.

Template for Risk Communication Plan

[*Site or Issue*]

[*Date originated*]/[*Date updated*]

[*Communication Coordinator*]

Step 1: Identify the Issue/Concern

Issue identification and profiling is the first step in the planning process. It helps you to clearly understand the situation so you can develop a responsive and effective risk communication plan. Issue profiling establishes the case record by compiling all the necessary information on the issue.

Identify the Issue
insert issue(s)
insert issue(s)

Communication Team

Identify and develop the communication team, including a representative of each regulatory agency, responsible party, property owner, and stakeholder group (for example, water purveyors and a community liaisons).

Contact Name	**Contact Info**	**Organization**	**Role**

Step 2: Set SMART Goals and Objectives

A SMART goal is the big picture or ultimate impact that is desired for a project, issue, or situation. As you develop your project goal, keep in mind your organization's procedures, policies, and processes; maintain ongoing dialogue with citizens; and coordinate between the various parties involved in the case. Make sure that you provide needed information in a form that is readily accessible to stakeholders.

Identify SMART Goals & Possible Evaluation Method	
SMART Goal	*Potential Evaluation Method*

Steps 3 and 4: Identify Communities and Constraints and Assess Stakeholders/Communities

The overall objective of stakeholder assessment is to gain a deeper insight into stakeholder concerns and values that facilitate the development of a dialogue. Knowing the stakeholders with whom you are speaking helps you craft targeted messages delivered through the local channels used by your community. Key communities are those stakeholders with whom you need to establish a dialogue and those who wish to talk with your organization. They include those who are aware of or must be made aware of the issue/problem, and those affected by the solution.

Stakeholder name	**Communication approach (e.g., web site, newsletters, emails)**	**Key interests and issues**	**Role (e.g., observer, meeting participant, active in feedback)**

Step 5: Identify Messages

Once you know with whom you will be communicating you need to develop your message or messages. A message is information you want/need to share with stakeholders about the issue or case, a question that you need them to answer, or both. It is linked to your goal and addresses all key points about the issue and concerns of the public that you learned in the audience/stakeholder assessment step.

Message Map Worksheet

Source: (Covello, Minamyer, and Clayton 2007)

Stakeholder:	**Question/Concern/Issue:**	
Key Message/Fact 1:	Key Message/Fact 2:	Key Message/Fact 3:
Keywords: Supporting Facts 1.1	Keywords: Supporting Facts 2.1	Keywords: Supporting Facts 3.1

Stakeholder:	**Question/Concern/Issue:**	
Keywords: Supporting Facts 1.2	Keywords: Supporting Facts 2.2	Keywords: Supporting Facts 3.2
Keywords: Supporting Facts 1.3	Keywords: Supporting Facts 2.3	Keywords: Supporting Facts 3.3

Step 6: Select Communication and Engagement Methods

A communication method is the means by which you communicate with your stakeholders. A number of methods can be used. Your goal and how your stakeholders communicate, as well as the nature of the issue, help dictate the best method of communication. Each method has its strengths and weaknesses. Methods generally fall into one of five categories: you seek to receive information from stakeholders; you want to share information with stakeholders; you want to establish a dialogue; you are summarizing or updating progress on an issue; or you want to build consensus. It helps to think about your goal—what you want to accomplish—when determining which communication method to use.

Identify Communication and Engagement Tools		
SMART Goal (from Step 2)	*Evaluation Method/Tool*	*Roles/Responsibilities*

Step 7: Implement Strategies

Once you have a clear goal, understand stakeholder concerns, know your message and have selected your method, it is time to lay out the strategy you will use to implement the plan. The best way to do this is with a timeline that outlines the tasks, and the roles and responsibilities of each member of the communication team. The timeline includes: your budget and schedule; who your speakers will be; who the contact in your organization will be for the community, and it identifies potential resource constraints you may encounter and how those will be addressed. Finally, it includes how your strategy will be evaluated.

Task/Method	**Date Due**	**Speakers and Organization Contacts**	**Notes (include potential resource constraints**	**Budget**	**Status (Not started, In Process, Complete)**

Step 8: Evaluate, Debrief, and Follow Up

Evaluation is the systematic collection of information about activities, characteristics, and outcomes of projects to make judgments about the project, improve effectiveness, or inform decisions about future programming. This is the opportunity to review the strategy that was put in place and determine if further action or communication is required. Many risk communication efforts require an ongoing presence or outreach in the community. A debrief meeting is an opportunity for you to review the results of the evaluation and will identify what follow-up, if any is needed.

Evaluation Plan		
SMART Goal (from Step 2)	*Roles/Responsibilities*	*Evaluation Method/Outcome*

Follow Up			
SMART Goal (from Step 2)	*Evaluation Method*	*Debrief*	*Follow-up*