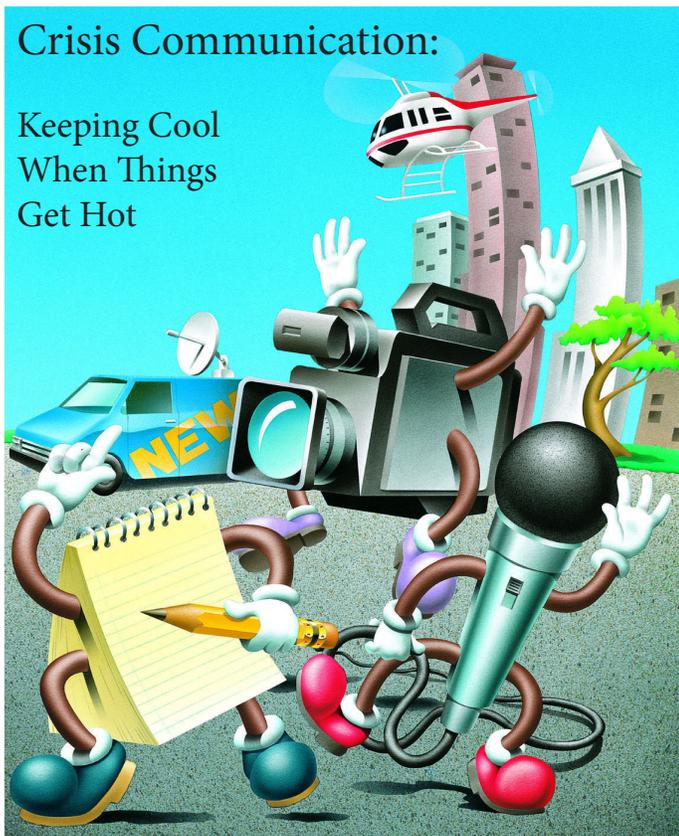


## Crisis Communication:

Keeping Cool  
When Things  
Get Hot



## Serious Accident Investigation Training

March 2008

### Barriers to Communication during a Crisis

- ✓ Everyone is surprised.
- ✓ More questions than answers.
- ✓ People outside the organization become vested in the situation.
- ✓ Intense scrutiny from inside and outside the organization.
- ✓ Emotions may rule over common sense.
- ✓ Shock and disbelief.
- ✓ The fault game begins.
- ✓ Fear.

### When the Going Gets Tough — Six Tips for Communicating During a Crisis



You need to communicate. As much as you'd like to check out and take a trip to another planet, you can't.



Always have a message. A message is something true that you want people to remember.



Keep calm and adjust your attitude if needed. Never lose your cool.



Keep it simple.



Your mom was right. Honesty is still the best policy.



Show genuine concern for people and their plight.

- ✓ Express your concern
- ✓ Take action
- ✓ Provide perspective

### Summary

- Keep in touch! You need to communicate, no matter how difficult the circumstances are.
- Always have a purpose and a message for your communications.
- Stay calm.
- Your job is to find facts, but remember that you'll need to deal with the emotional needs of employees, families and the community at large.

### As a Bonus

My pledge of no-cost, prompt and fairly reliable advice: If you get in a pickle and need a quick opinion or piece of advice, please get in touch with me.

Don Smurthwaite, National Interagency Fire Center  
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208-867-0413 (my cell, but be warned, I only turn it on about three times a year.)  
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*Best wishes and hopes that  
you'll never have to use the  
skills that you've learned  
and refined here this week!*



