

Crisis Communication Tips

Know Thy Audience

- Open with acknowledging people's fears and concerns.
- Check your tone: Are you authoritative or warm? Is this a firm call to action or reassuring the status quo?
- Someone who represents your audience should proofread your materials.

Content

- Get to the main point quickly without too much preamble.
- Share at most 3 key messages + repeat the most important key message.
- Triple fact-check information and add quotes or testimonials to humanize materials.

Plain Language, Plain Language, Plain Language

- Do a readability check – content should be at Grade 6 level or lower.
- Use the same words, even if it seems repetitive.
- Cut out fillers like: "in order to; needless to say; it is possible that."

Visual Look

- Have a graphic designer create your materials.
- Use visuals like graphics and photos to back up your messages.
- Use a visual hierarchy to emphasize the important and allow secondary messages to be secondary.

Other

- Appoint the same person to deliver your messages.
- Include contact information for follow-up questions and include links to relevant resources.
- Frame action steps in positives (DO this) instead of negatives (DON'T DO this).

References

Crisis Communications: https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/ppt/CERC_Messages_and_Audiences.pdf

Plain Language: <https://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/tcdnstyl-chap?lang=eng&lettr=chapsect13&info0=13>
