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# Risk communication process





## Risk communication

- **RISK COMMUNICATION** is an interactive process of exchange of information and opinion among individuals, groups, and institutions; often involves **multiple messages** about the nature of risk or expressing concerns, opinions, or reactions to risk messages or to legal and institutional arrangements for risk management.

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## Some prejudices on risk communication

- **Communication is more likely to provoke alarm among population than calming people**
  - it doesn't happen if communication is appropriate. Education and information are more effective than alarm and alert
  - people need to express their concerns, ask questions, receive accurate and appropriate answers



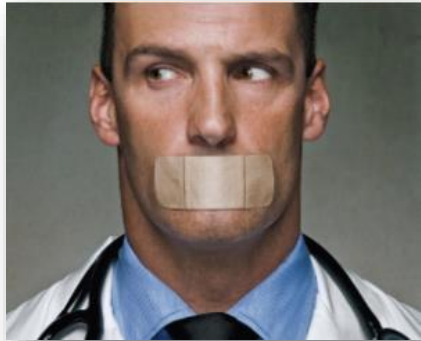
## Some prejudices on risk communication

- **Risks, especially in case of emergency, are too difficult to be understood by the public, so it is better not to tell them**
  - helping people in understanding risks, is part of a health officer's duties, no matter how difficult it is
  - people may take or not decisions, but they influence decision makers
  - there is nothing that a good communicator cannot explain
  - an emergency situation is not the occasion to say "No comment". This sentence suggests that you are either not willing or not allowed to share information with the public, creating mistrust and even fear
  - well-targeted messages help people to understand easily relevant concepts

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## Some prejudices on risk communication

- **Risk communication is not a duty for public health professionals**
  - health professionals are part of the risk communication process
  - people want to hear messages from their health professionals
  - health is a public good. Health professionals are expected to respond effectively to public concerns during an emergency situation
  - communication skills are required to a health officer

## Some prejudices on risk communication

- **Communication is less important than education. People would accept real risks, if they knew them!**
  - the perception of risk is important
  - fear is an important psychological consideration in the response to a crisis
  - effective communication explains uncertainty, which increases emotional reactions and risk perception



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## Risk communication

- The ultimate goal of risk communication is to assist stakeholders, consumers and the general public in understanding the rationale behind a risk-based decision, so that they may arrive at a balanced judgment
- Risk communication should not be seen as an attempt to convince or persuade people to adopt the judgment of the communicator

## Risk communication

- Risk communication is a **two-way process** and cannot be confused with a one-way information campaign
- The early involvement of stakeholders in the decisional process enhance trust and credibility of all actors





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## Risk communication

- Effective risk communication can make a strong contribution to the success of a comprehensive and responsible risk management programme



## Risk message

- A written, verbal or visual **statement** containing information about risk; may or may not include advice about risk reduction behaviors
- A formal risk message is structured written, audio, or visual package, developed with the express purpose of presenting information about risk



## Risk message

- The message has to be developed according to its **objective**, and has to be timely delivered
  - Objective: reduce population concerns .....
    - Messages:
      - *The risk is low*
      - *The disease can be treated*
      - *Infection is difficult*
      - *Symptoms can be easily recognized*
  - Objective: Encourage the adoption of correct behaviors ....
    - Messages:
      - *Adopt the following precautions ...*
      - *If exposed to contamination, please contact a doctor*
      - *If you recognize these symptoms, contact a doctor*
      - ....

## Words «NO» «NOT»

- “Avian influenza is **not** a threat to human health and is **not** a food safety issue”
- “**No** link between Autism and Measles Vaccine, even for at risk kids”
- “Mad cow is **not** a public health emergency”



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## Bad communication examples



## The AA 587 crash - 2001

- On November 12, 2001, the American Airlines Flight 587 [an Airbus A300-600] crashed in Rockaway, a Queens neighborhood of New York, few minutes after taking off from JFK International airport. All 260 people aboard the plane (251 passengers and 9 crew members) were killed, along with 5 people on the ground.
- After initial concerns about a possible terrorist attack the investigations of representatives of the National Transportation Safety Board excluded this possibility.

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## The AA 587 crash - 2001

- Also thank to the witnesses who gave accounts of what they saw to the NTSB, some sort of technical failure was suspected
- After further investigation the cause was identified in the separation of vertical stabilizer

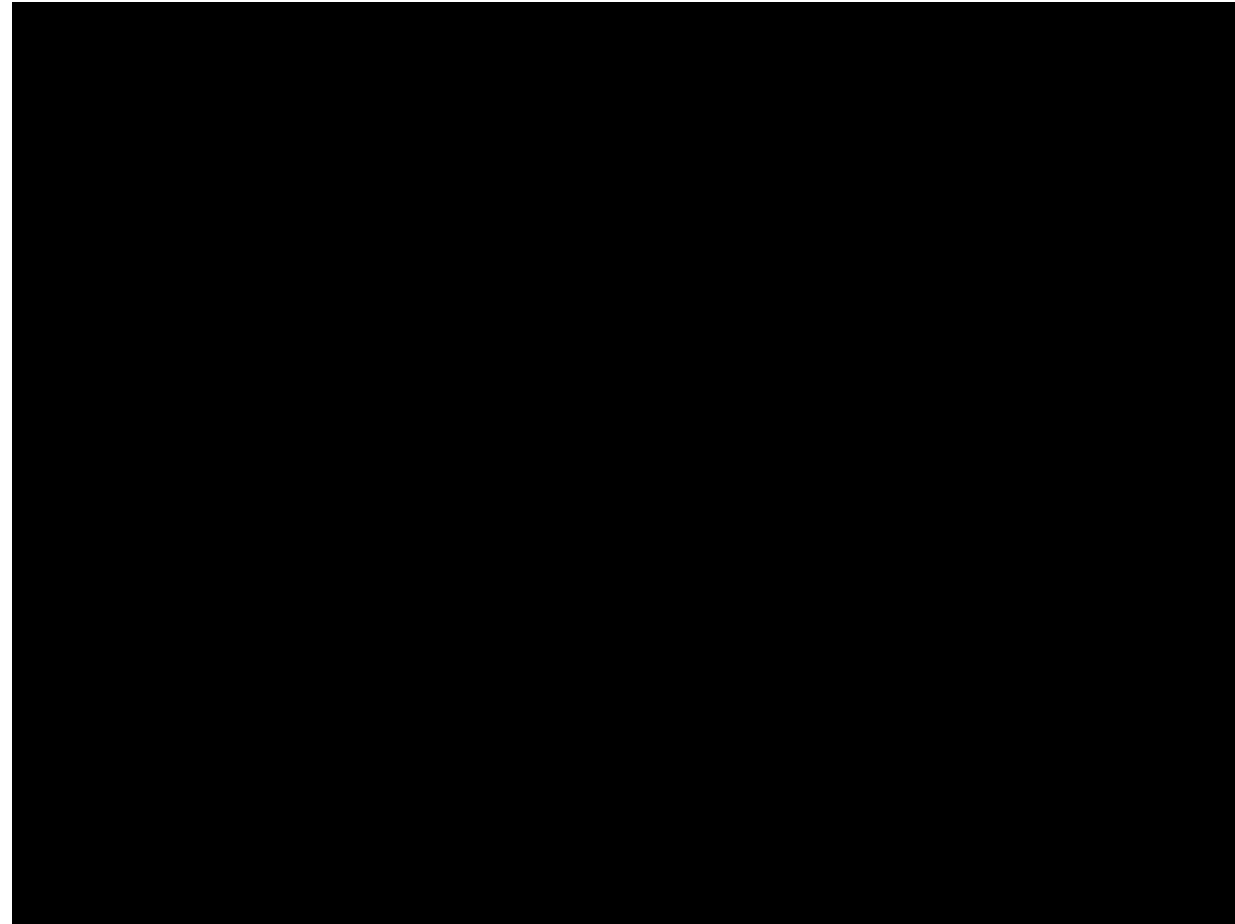
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## The AA 587 crash - 2001





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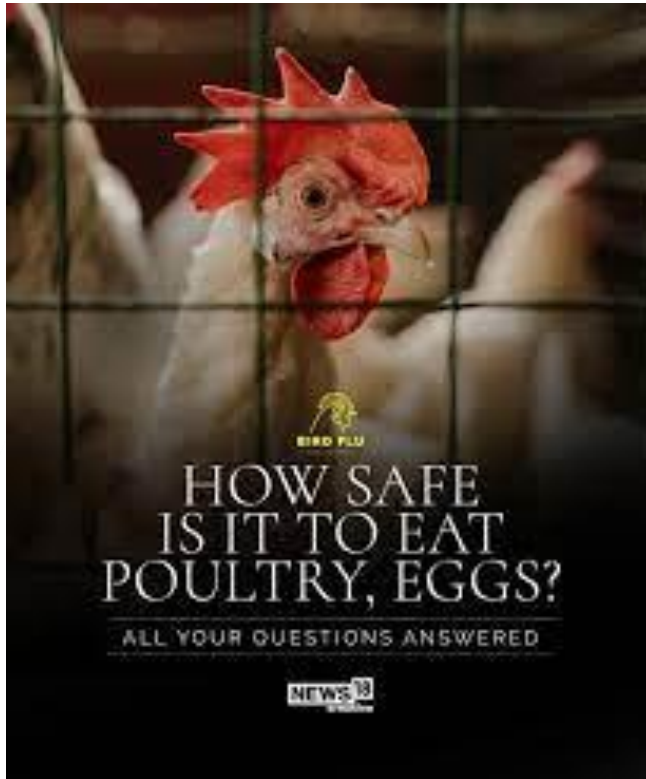
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## The AA 587 crash - 2001

- During a crowded briefing representatives of NTSB and other Institution released reassuring messages on the fact that “The plane crash was **not** due to a terrorist attack”, and the cause was *only* “a technical problem leading to the separation of the vertical stabilizer”

## The AA 587 crash - 2001

- BUT... IS IT NORMAL FOR A PLANE TO LOOSE THE VERTICAL STABILIZER ??????
- As immediate consequence of this affirmation ALL Airbus A300-600 (1/3 of the entire commercial fleet in the US) were forced to remain on ground till all technical verifications were not performed



## Deliberate false messages “Fake news”

What a coincidence that the hens stopped laying eggs, (for which another virus is blamed) just as Gates invests in Beyond Eggs, the new Chicken less eggs. Last year, we had an infant formula shortage, after BioMilq raised 3 million from Gates.



### Why Bill Gates Is Investing In Chicken-Less Eggs

June 13, 2013 - 3:59 PM ET

Heard on All Things Considered



At left: Beyond Eggs' egg-substitute product, a powder made of pulverized plant-based compounds. Right: Mother Nature's version. Only Photos by Beyond Eggs

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## The power of the words



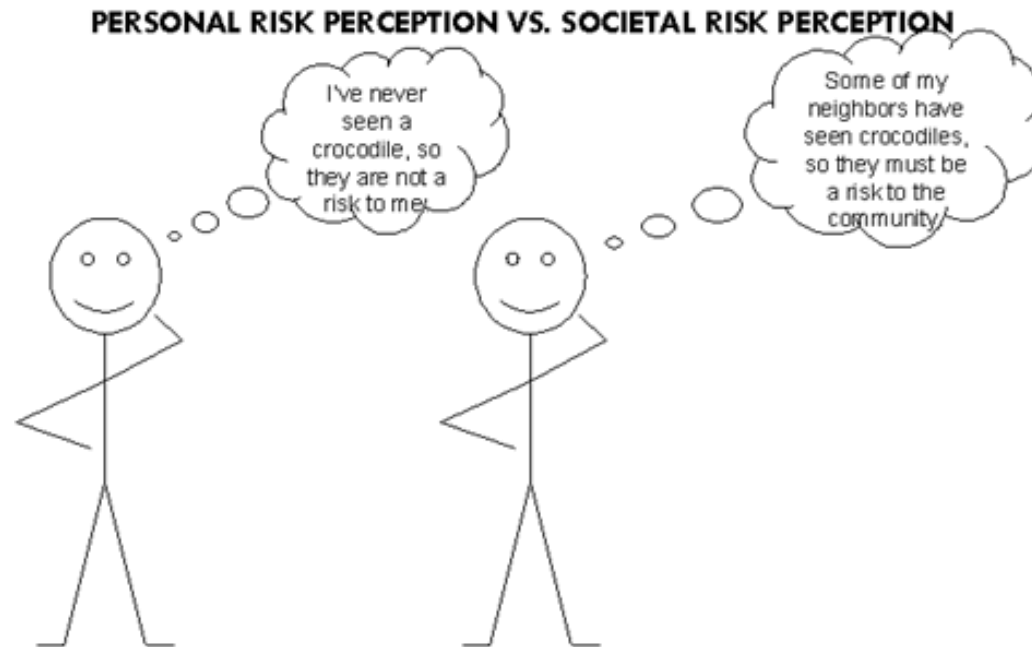
## Risk message and Risk perception

- Do not forget that people perceives in different ways the risk
- This must be encountered by risk managers



## Risk perception

- While administrators may have interest in risks that can affect large part of population (quantitative – objective approach), citizens are concerned about personal risks (to themselves, close family, etc.)



## Risk perception

- The risk perception by general public may give priorities and ranks to risks substantially different from the outputs of scientific risk assessments
- Public risk perceptions cannot be ignored by risk managers



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## Dangerous ?





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## Risk perception

Fear of flying afflicts 40% of the U.S. population, although only about 5% have aviophobia so severe that they cannot fly.



## Risk perception

- 37 million of flights occurred during 2023 globally, carrying about 4.3 billion of travellers. The same year 30 mortal accidents occurred (0.8 for 1 million of departures).
- In 2023, globally 1.19 million of people died for road accidents (3200 persons/day or 2 persons/minute):
  - 30% car drivers,
  - 23% pedestrians,
  - 21% motorcycle riders
  - 6% bike riders
  - 3% scooter and others

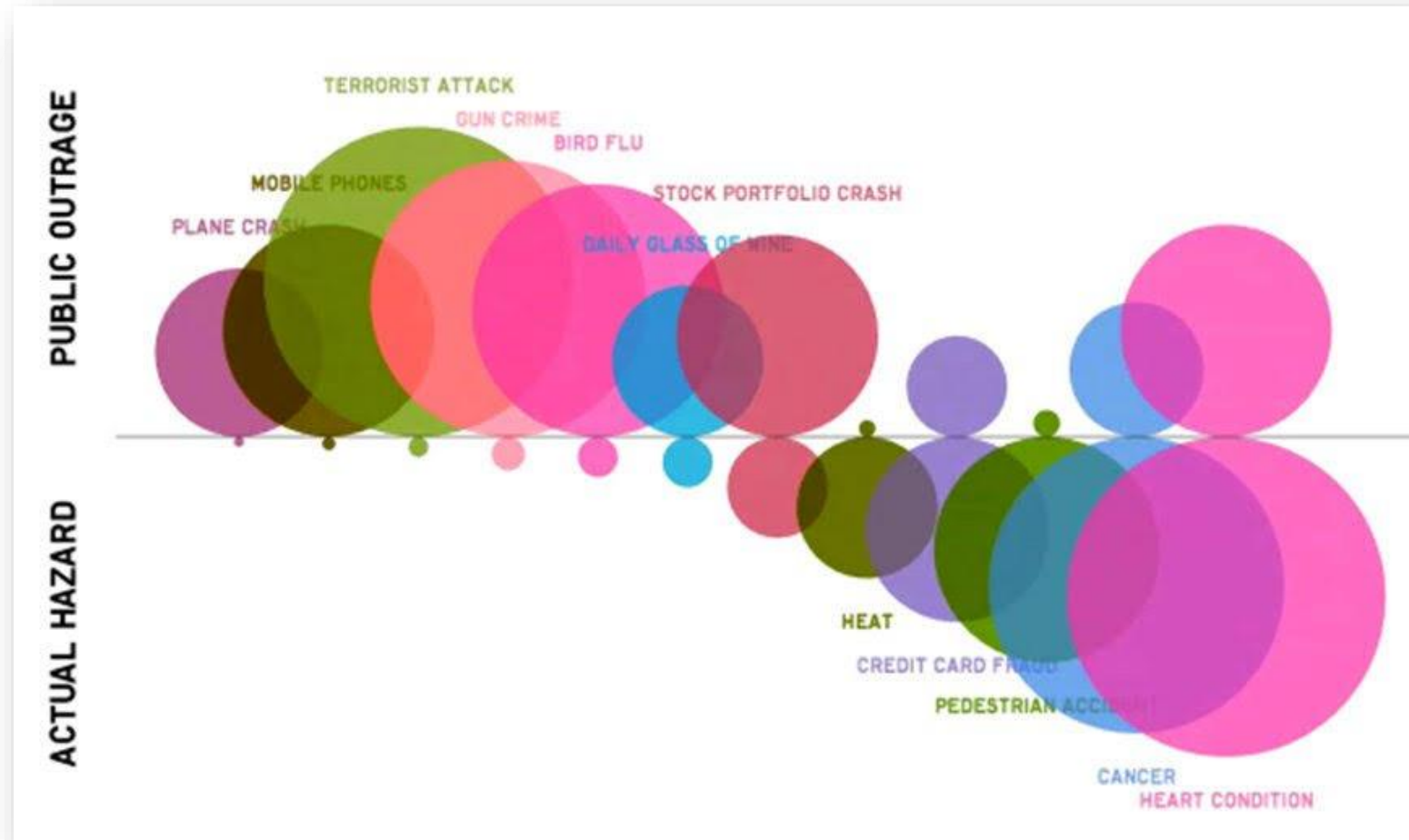
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## Risk perception

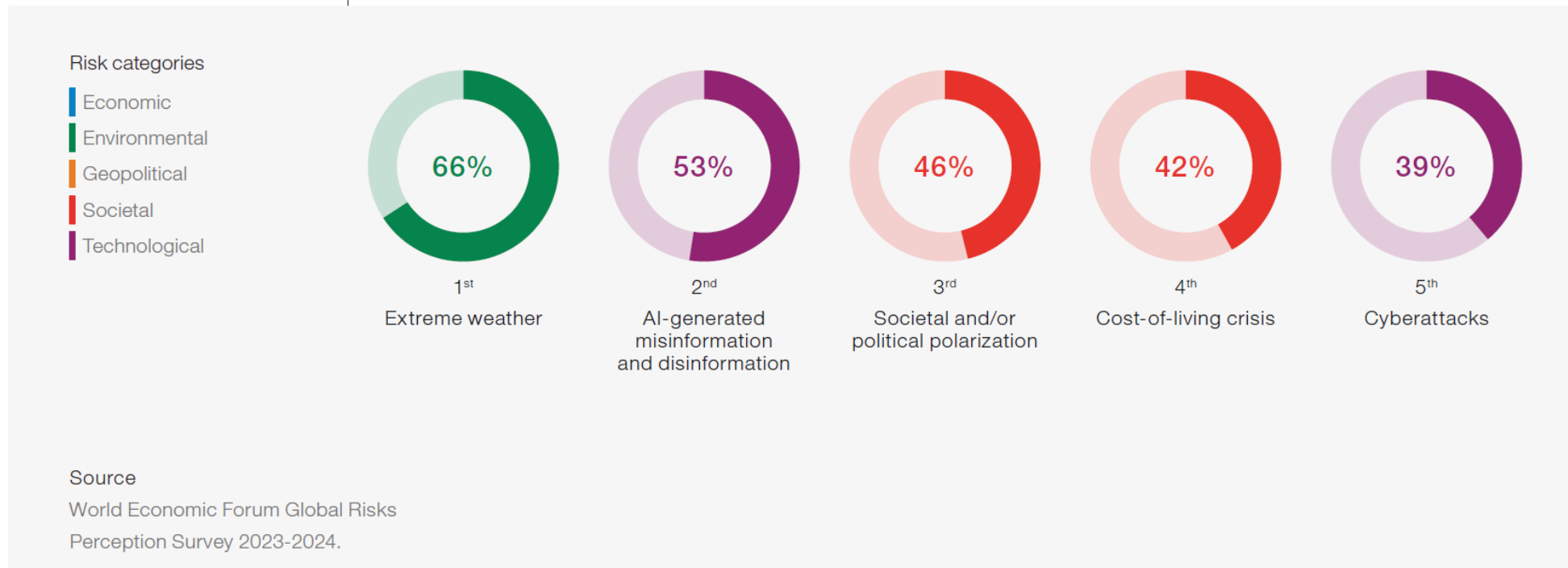


## Risk perception

FIGURE B

### Current risk landscape

"Please select up to five risks that you believe are most likely to present a material crisis on a global scale in 2024."



## Risk perception

- Risks are generally more worrying (and less acceptable) if perceived:
  - To be **involuntary** (*pollution*) rather than voluntary (*smoking*)
  - As **inequitably distributes** (*some benefit while others suffer*)
  - As **unavoidable** by taking personal precaution
  - To arise from unfamiliar or **novel source**
  - To result from **man-made** rather than natural sources
  - To cause hidden or **irreversible** damages
  - To pose particular danger to «sensitive» **groups** (*small children, pregnant women, etc.*)
  - To threaten **a form of death** particularly dreaded (*rabies*)
  - To damage well **identifiable** rather than anonymous **victims**
  - To be **poorly understood** by science
  - As subject to **contradictory statements**



**PEOPLE PERCEIVED AS GREATER RISK WHAT IS INDUCING THEM FEAR**

## Seven rules of risk communication – US Environmental Protection Agency

- Accept and involve **stakeholders** as legitimate partners
- **Listen** to people
- Be **truthful, honest, frank**, and **open**
- Coordinate, collaborate, and partner with **other credible sources**
- Meet the **needs of the media**
- Speak **clearly** and with **compassion**
- Plan thoroughly and **carefully**



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## The risk message



## Risk communication Plan

- The **risk communication plan** is the tool used by an organization to inform and communicate with citizens and all other stakeholders: it includes subjects, strategies, objectives, activities, resources and means engaged in risk communication
- It is intended to be a mean to develop an appropriate communication culture, optimizing the necessary resources to build a communication strategy





## Risk communication Plan

- Describe and designate **staff roles and responsibilities** for different emergency scenarios
- Designate who is accountable for **leading the response**
- Designate who is responsible for **implementing** various **actions**
- Designate who needs **to be consulted** during the process
- Designate who needs **to be informed** about what is taking place
- Designate who will be the lead **spokesperson** and backup for different scenarios



## Risk communication Plan

- Include procedures for information **verification**, **clearance**, and **approval**
- Include procedures for coordinating with **stakeholders** and **partners**
- Include procedures to secure the required human, financial, logistical, and physical **support** and **resources**



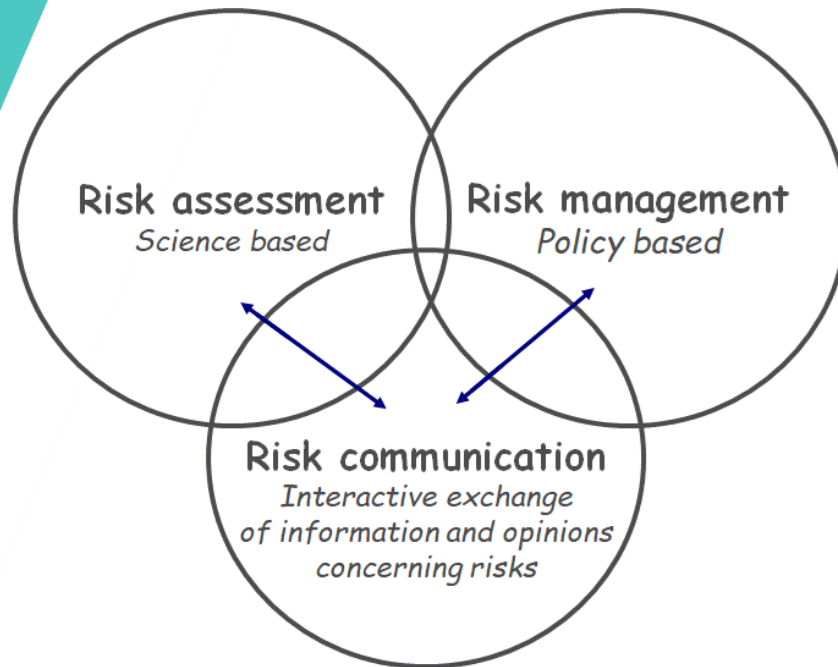
## Risk communication Plan

- Include agreements on releasing information and on **who releases what, when, and how**
- Include policies and procedures regarding **employee contacts** from the media
- Outline well thought out **communication contingency plans** for various scenarios
- Include regularly checked and updated **media contact lists**

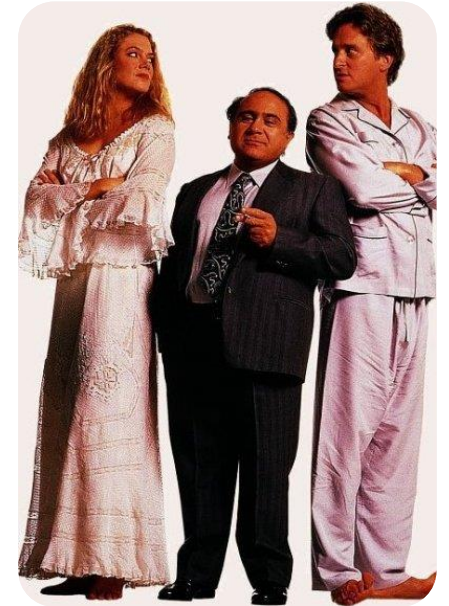


## Communication Between Risk Assessors & Risk Managers

Special aspect:

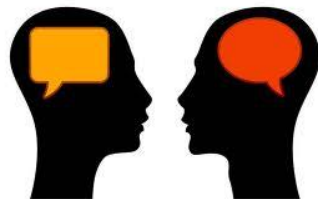


- Individual(s) preparing the risk assessment should not normally be the same individual(s) responsible for the management of the risk.
- **Functional separation** is essential to maintain the scientific integrity of risk assessment process



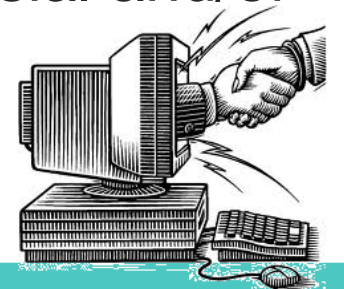
## Communication Between Risk Assessors & Risk Managers

- Risk Analysis: Interactive, iterative & dynamic
- **Common understanding** of the risk issue and risk management goals is essential to producing useful risk assessments and outcomes
- On-going interaction leads to a better understanding of the risk assessment parameters, benefits and limitations, and to a more informed decision-making
- Policy-related decisions are beyond the mandate of assessors



## Communication Between Risk Assessors & Risk Managers

- Critical first step
- Often, managers have not clear ideas about purpose AND/OR have not articulated goals
- **Understanding** on both sides increases if clarify “Why, where, when, what, and how?”
- Distinguish the risk management problem/goals from what questions the RA should answer
- Objective evaluation of RM options that are controversial and/or costly



## Defining Purpose & Scope of RA

- Determine if a **risk assessment is the best strategy** to answer the questions, or is it more appropriate to choose another means to acquire the information needed?
- Determine the **approach** that is needed (degree of precision; direct, or production-to-consumption) ... should be appropriate for the specific risk issue
- Is the work **feasible** within constraints of time, resources, data availability, expertise, etc.?

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## ..and before to conduct a RA let define

- **Context definition**
  - Commodity / animal species / category / type of farming
  - Steps of the chain (From.... To ... )
  - Geographical delimitation (EU, country, specific chain)



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## ..and before to conduct a RA let define

- **Outputs**
  - PH effects (no. of human cases / infections)
  - Prioritization (Attributable fraction)
  - Exposure (freq. / conc.)
  - Costs (no. of samples, tests)
- **Scenarios**
  - Definition of all different scenarios in details

**Thank you very much**

