

“EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION”

Being able to communicate effectively is a necessary and vital part of emergency communications. Communications go in two directions and there is nothing that can be more frustrating than poor communications skill during emergencies and disasters!

Listening is one of the greatest communicating skills that you can achieve. When you listen empathically, you do not just hear words, **you hear thoughts, beliefs and feelings.** Empathic listening is highly active and requires hard work. So, like other skills, listening skills improve with practice. During our time on regular nets, pre-nets and even on some of the traffic nets you can sense ROADBLOCKS, meaning people are not communicating. Some roadblocks during emergency communications could be NOISE, TEMPERATURE TOO HOT OR COLD, or even the setting you are working in such as a devastated area. These are called external roadblocks that can cause poor communicating.

Let's look now at some internal roadblocks that are not uncommon to any of us---**PERSONAL ISSUES**-----**INDIFFERENCES**-----**EMOTIONAL**---**DEFENSIVENESS**-----**NOT SEEKING CLARIFICATION**---**HEARING WHAT IS EXPECTED INSTEAD OF WHAT IS SAID**---**AUTOMATIC DISMISSAL**-----and the Big one I know we have all faced at one time or the other and that is **RESISTANCE TO CHANGE.**

During the time we have been called out by our served agencies and we are handling their traffic is not the time for any of these roadblocks to cause interference. We need to put roadblocks behind us and get on with doing our committed services professionally, and that requires that right attitude, information level and communicating skills. In an emergency and or disaster, people are depending on us and they need, expect and deserve to have effective communications that is timely, accurate and clearly stated. **To be an emergency communicator, it takes time and training, it doesn't come overnight and it isn't like riding a bicycle, it takes continuous training.**

During an emergency or disaster situation, it is especially challenging and

important to communicate traffic clearly and accurately. Even though we are trained emergency communications professionals, the stress you will encounter, the attitudes you will occasionally have to deal with, the hours you will spend with a microphone in your hand and the overall general stress of just being in the situation of hearing and handling traffic about a disaster, its damage and information about victims will all take their toll on you.

The following is a partial list of stress factors that can affect good communicating skills during emergencies and disasters. You should be vigilant while on duty and watch for any of the following signs of stress in yourself or your team members!!!!

IRRITABILITY----- SELF BLAME OR BLAMING OTHERS-----
ISOLATION-----FEAR OF RECURRENCE-----FEELING
OVERWHELMED-----MOOD SWINGS-----CONCENTRATION OR
MEMORY PROBLEMS-----LOSS OF APPETITE-----FATIGUE and LOW
ENERGY.

While you cannot eliminate disaster stress, you can certainly take steps to reduce or control it. The following are a few recommended tips that can help you manage the situation to avoid creating and dealing with excessive stress and stressful situations:---

PRIORITIZE YOUR ACTIONS-----DO NOT
TAKE COMMENTS PERSONALLY-----TAKE A FEW DEEP
BREATHS AND RELAX-----DO NOT WORK MORE THAN YOUR
ASSIGNED SHIFT-----TAKE A MOMENT TO THINK BEFORE
RESPONDING TO A STRESS CAUSING CHALLENGE-----IF YOU FEEL
YOU ARE LOSING CONTROL OF A SITUATION BRING SOMEONE
ELSE IN TO ASSIST YOU, DO NOT EVER BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR
HELP-----GET PLENTY REST-----EAT A BALANCED DIET, and finally,
IF ALL ELSE FAILS JUST GET AWAY FROM IT ALL FOR A WHILE,
GET SOME REST, TALK WITH A FRIEND OR GO FIND AND READ A
BOOK.

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01-19-06