



# **Persuasive Communications: Tailored Messages for a Diverse Population**

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Naomi Moye



Dr. Velma J. Deleveaux

Booz | Allen | Hamilton

# The lack of communication preparedness in the wake of Hurricane Katrina demonstrates a failure to communicate effectively to underserved populations

- ▶ Based on survey results reported by the Washington Post of hurricane Katrina evacuees
  - 33% of the respondents who heard the evacuation message reported that the message did not give clear information about how to evacuate
- ▶ According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS), hurricane Katrina disproportionately impacted poor and minority communities.
  - Of the 727 storm related fatalities in Louisiana, 53% were African-Americans, 43% were Caucasian and 17% were Hispanic.
- ▶ Hurricane Katrina also disproportionately impacted the elderly
  - Over 71% of the fatalities from Katrina were over 60 years old

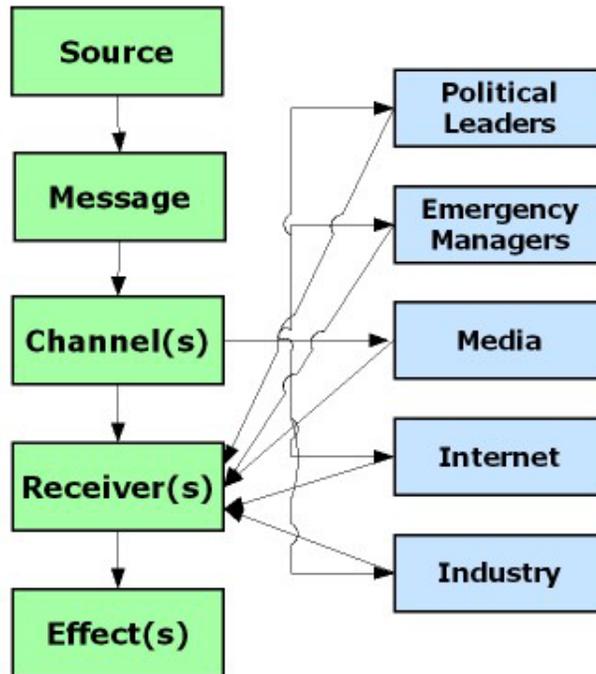
***“ The dangers of the coming hurricane could have been presented in a more effective manner. If people don’t hear a message from someone they trust, they will be skeptical”***

***“Both the message and the messengers were ineffective before and after Katrina. Messages to the public were uncoordinated and often confusing, leaving important questions unanswered. Federal, state and local officials did not have a unified strategy for communicating with the public”***

*A Failure of Initiative: The Final Report of the Select Bi-Partisan committee to investigate the preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina*

# Our current approach to communications is based on the classical communications model

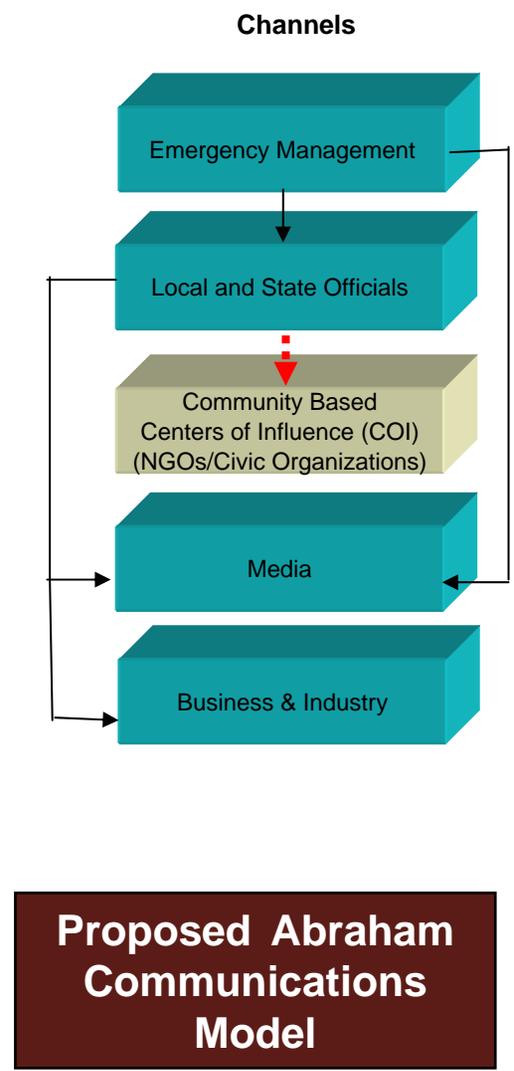
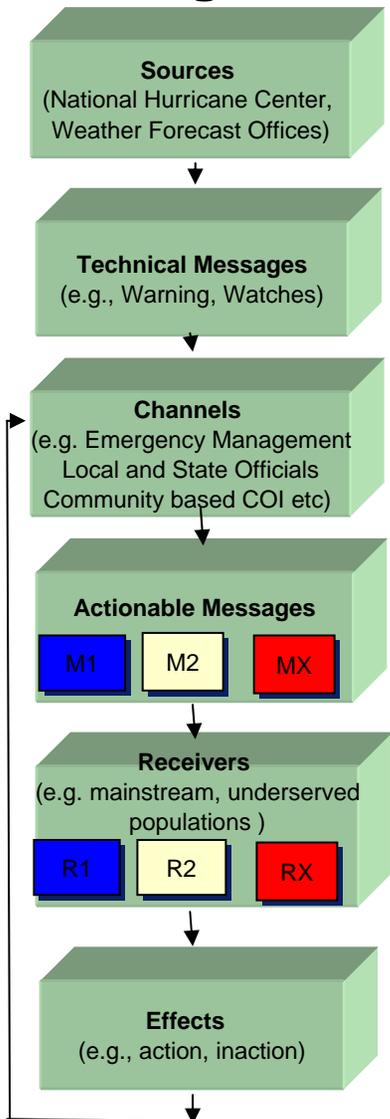
## Classical Communication Model



- ▶ Recognizes that messages are routed through and interpreted by multiple intermediaries
- ▶ Assumes that all receivers will respond appropriately to the same messages
- ▶ Omits important intermediaries

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# A new communications model is needed that reflects the divergent information needs of various receivers



- ▶ Recognizes that outreach, education and relationship building is necessary in order for the model to work optimally
- ▶ Focuses first on understanding different receiver needs and response mechanisms
- ▶ Incorporates feedback mechanisms to measure model effectiveness by testing responses prior to catastrophic events
- ▶ Receiver needs drive:
  - the message
  - the specific channels of delivery
- ▶ Community organizations are the primary channels of information for various receiver groups
  - (e.g., churches, civic organizations)
- ▶ Channels/Intermediaries send actionable messages – tailored messages that fit a specific population’s needs

# Understanding receivers and leveraging the right channels is required to achieve true message delivery

- ▶ Receiver groups should be segmented and examined to understand their particular needs and concerns
  - Elderly
  - Poor
  - Disabled
- ▶ Some receivers understand and use technology regularly and effectively (e.g., Blackberry, Cell Phones)
- ▶ Others receive information through **community** organizations that they trust and have **existing** relationships
- ▶ It is necessary to identify the **multiple** and **primary** channels through which each receiver group gets information in order to deliver messages to **everyone**
  - New technology will **not** improve message delivery for some receivers
- ▶ Community organizations are primary channels that must be included in preparedness planning
  - Creating partnerships with influential community and business leaders in advance of a disaster is necessary to build relationships and trust with the receiver
  - Partners will be instrumental in the dissemination of information that will get heard – through a common language, an understanding of culture and shared experiences

# The new communications model requires the following

## ▶ Conduct Outreach

- Understand the needs and concerns of all receiver/customer groups, especially vulnerable populations
- Determine the appropriate role of technology (e.g., TV, radio, NOAA weather radio, sirens, Weather Channel, cell phones, internet) for each receiver group
- Determine who are the influential and trusted community leaders
- Develop messages that are simple, come from a credible source and are forthright
- Educate receivers, regarding preparedness planning, roles and warning messages
- Forge partnerships with influential and trusted community leaders, churches, civic organizations and businesses
- Work in partnership to ensure that community leaders, the media, local and state officials and others speak with **one unified voice**

# The new communications model requires the following Cont'd

## ▶ **Develop an Actionable Communications plan**

- Action plans must be created that compliments the Actionable Message;
- Include diverse populations as key customers to provide input into an action plan
- Working through new partnerships and in concert with federal, state and local governmental officials, conduct simulations

## ▶ **Measure Outcomes**

- Gauge effectiveness of messages and make adjustments

# Effective Communications is also a critical component of Response and Recovery

## Response

- ▶ Action plans must be implemented that compliment the Actionable Message
- ▶ Action plans must be tied to community disaster readiness plans, developed by decision makers (e.g., local leaders)
- ▶ Action Plans must be coordinated by Emergency Management and disseminated to Community Centers of influence for execution.

## Recovery

- ▶ Emergency Management must implement stand down communications techniques, that informs and instructs community centers of influence
- ▶ Community centers of influence must be empowered to properly convey the needs of their user population.