



Public Information Roles in an HCID Event

Michael Schommer, Communications Director
Minnesota Department of Health

April 10, 2019

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Public Information Challenges in an HCID Event

- High-stress, high-concern situations change the rules of communication
- People under stress can lose much of their ability to receive/process/retain information
- People under stress are less likely to trust
- People may not know who to trust or where to go for accurate, helpful information

4/11/2019

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

2



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

What Public Information Does in an HCID Event

- Share vital life/safety information
- Help ensure clear, accurate narrative during response and recovery
- Build trust and credibility for response effort



4/11/2019

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

3



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

What Public Information Doesn't Do in an HCID Event

- Make up for operations problems
- Function as a tool for operational communication ("Communications" vs. "Public Information" in ICS)
- Operate independently

4/11/2019

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

4 m

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Public Information Contributions in an HCID Event

- We help stakeholders (and political leaders)
 - Understand what is happening and why
 - Understand what you are doing and why
 - Feed the media beast
 - Give people options for more information
 - Coordinate across groups to ensure consistent messaging
 - Detect/correct inaccurate messages



4/11/2019

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

5 m

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Public Information Tools in an HCID Event

- Earned media
 - News releases and statements
 - News conferences and briefings
 - One-on-one interviews
 - Media tours
 - Pool arrangements



4/11/2019

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

6 m

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Public Information Tools in an HCID Event

- Social media
 - Twitter
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - YouTube



4/11/2019

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

7 m

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Public Information Tools in an HCID Event

- Website
 - Static pages
 - Blogs
 - Infographics
 - Links to email, phone lines, other resources



4/11/2019

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

8 m

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Public Information Tools in an HCID Event

- Face-to-face interactions
 - Community meetings
 - Information fairs
 - Classroom visits
 - Special events



4/11/2019

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

9 m

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Partnering with Public Information in an HCID Event

- Recognize the three must-dos for risk communication
 - Keep it brief
 - Use plain language
 - Put people first

4/11/2019

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

10 

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Partnering with Public Information in an HCID Event

- Build trust and credibility by expressing
 - Empathy and caring
 - Competence and expertise
 - Honesty and openness
 - Commitment and dedication

4/11/2019

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

11 

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Partnering with Public Information in an HCID Event

- As a Spokesperson
 - Know your organization's policies
 - Stay in your lane
 - Tell the truth and be as transparent as possible
 - Avoid defensiveness or blaming
 - Know your key messages and get them out over and over



4/11/2019

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

12 

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Partnering with Public Information in an HCID Event

- Top Tips
 - Anticipate the tough questions
 - Prepare and practice good answers
 - Don't over-reassure
 - Admit what you don't know and explain what you are doing to find answers

4/11/2019

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

13 

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Partnering with Public Information in an HCID Event

- Top Tips
 - Acknowledge people's fears
 - Give people things to do
 - Use the bite/snack/meal approach to sharing information

4/11/2019

PROTECTING, MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL MINNESOTANS

14 



Thank you.

4/11/2019

WWW.HEALTH.MN.GOV

15