

## Behavioral Health Guidelines for Risk Communication

BE FIRST. BE RIGHT. BE CREDIBLE.  
BE EMPATHETIC.

Building trust and conveying messages of hope and recovery is critical to the emotional well-being of persons affected by the disaster and the general public.  
The public's emotional well-being is affected by the messages you deliver.

### Your messages should:

- Begin with a statement of empathy.
- Provide reassurance through fact-based information.
- Counter rumors.
- Encourage safe, adaptive and cooperative behavior.
- Promote self-care strategies for stress management.
- Emphasize resilience.

### *During a period of uncertainty and unconfirmed threat, communication should:*

- Reassure
- Foster Confidence & Coping
- Promote Preparedness

### *During an event communication should:*

- Reassure
- Foster Confidence & Coping
- Empower
- Encourage People to Reconnect

### *During recovery communication should:*

- Foster Resilience
- Empower
- Encourage Community Cohesion
- Commemorate

#### **TWEET:**

140 characters with spaces

*Formula for calculating character count for re-tweets:*

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140 - # characters in the User name + 4 (rt @)

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### Reference:

Missouri Department of Mental Health Office of Disaster Readiness. (2006) *Disaster Communications Guidebook - Communicating in a crisis: Promoting trust, cooperation, & emotional well-being through risk communication*. U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services. (2005). *Terrorism and other public health emergencies: A reference guide for media*. Office of the assistant secretary for public affairs: Washington, D.C. Retrieved April 23, 2007 from <http://www.hhs.gov/emergency>

DeWolfe, D. J., & Nordboe, D. (2000). *SAMHSA field manual for mental health and human services workers in major disasters*. Retrieved March 7, 2007, from <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/ADM90-537/fmrisk.asp>