1. **Public Relations (also health education) – high-hazard, low-outrage**

   **Audience:** Apathetic and inattentive; but undefended, uninterested in talking back. Huge – most people, most of the time, on most issues.

   **Task:** To produce brief messages that reinforce whatever appeals are most likely to predispose the audience toward your goals. For serious hazards, this usually means provoking more outrage.

   **Medium:** Monologue via the mass media.

   **Barriers:** Audience inattention; audience size; media resistance; need to package everything into short sound bites; policy implications of trying to provoke outrage.

   **"Silver lining":** There is little need to listen, or to address audience concerns, reservations, or objections; this audience has few if any.

2. **Stakeholder Relations – medium-hazard, medium-outrage**

   **Audience:** Interested and attentive, but not too upset to listen: The ideal audience ... but a fairly unusual one.

   **Task:** To discuss the issues openly and rationally, explaining your views and responding to audience questions and concerns.

   **Medium:** Dialogue in person, supplemented by specialized media (web site, newsletter, etc.).

   **Barriers:** None, except perhaps the inefficiency of one-on-one dialogue. And you have to be prepared to explain the technical details; this is the only audience that really wants to hear them.

   **"Silver lining":** This is the easiest communication environment. Duplicating it is the goal of the other three kinds of risk communication.

3. **Outrage Management – low-hazard, high-outrage**

   **Audience:** Outraged, largely at you. A small group of "fanatics" is usually accompanied by a larger, less outraged constituency watching to see how the controversy evolves.

   **Task:** To reduce audience outrage by listening, acknowledging, apologizing, sharing control and credit, etc. The controversy ends when the "fanatics" declare victory or their constituency thinks they have won enough.
3. **Outrage Management – low-hazard, high-outrage** (continued)

   **Medium:** In-person dialogue ... in which the "audience" does most of the talking. But journalists may also be watching.

   **Barriers:** The audience's outrage at you; your own outrage at the audience; coming to grips with the need to focus on outrage when you'd really rather talk about substance.

   "Silver lining": At least you have their attention, though it is hostile (or at least highly skeptical) attention.

4. **Crisis Communication – high-hazard, high-outrage**

   **Audience:** Huge and very upset. In a crisis, the outrage is mostly fear and misery rather than anger; if either is unbearable, it may flip into denial or escalate into terror or depression.

   **Task:** To help the audience bear its fear and misery. Key strategies include avoiding over-reassurance, sharing dilemmas, being human and empathic, providing things to do, and acknowledging uncertainty.

   **Medium:** Monologue via the mass media, and dialogue in person to the extent possible. There is no "public" in a crisis; everyone's a stakeholder.

   **Barriers:** The stress of the crisis itself; missing the difference between crisis communication and routine public relations.

   "Silver lining": Though outrage is very high, it is not directed at you. Any anger at you is put aside until the crisis is past.

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For more about my take on this issue, see: