

Reference & Sources

- Various published research papers by Slovic, Tversky & Kahneman, Renn, Lofstedt, Fischhoff, Boudier & Others...
- 'Behaviour Bear Bull or Lemming?' Lloyd's Emerging Risks Reports
- 'Understanding & Managing Risk Attitude' Hillson & Murray-Webster
- 'Improving health & safety – An analysis of HSE's risk communication in the 21st Century' – RR785 March 10
- 'Communicating & consulting about risk' – HB 327:2010

The Plan

- Risk Perception
 - Before the break
- Communicating on Risk Issues
 - After the break

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Risk Perception

- - Perception
 - How individuals interpret the information received by their senses
- - Risk Perception
 - Interpretation of information on risk and how this influences
 - Attitude to risk and subsequent behaviours
 - Assessment of risk
 - Subsequent decision making



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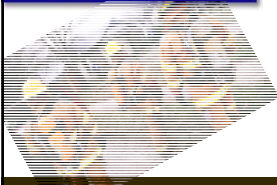
We All See Things Differently



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Factors Influencing Perception & Attitude?



- Hazardous sports
- Child abductions
- Driving a car / Flying in an airplane
- Working as a fire fighter
- Hazards from new technologies
e.g Nanotechnology, GM Foods, EMFs



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1) Nature of the risk

- Familiarity/ Knowledge / Experience
- Complexity / level of uncertainty
- Voluntary / Involuntary exposure
- Man-made / natural (Artificiality)

Source: Slovic and Lofstedt

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2) Consequence of Risk

- Fear of consequences (dread)
- Level of fatalities from single event
- Immediate / Delayed effects
- Identifiable victim(s) or Location
- Clarity of benefits

Source: Slovic and Lofstedt

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3) Management of the Risk

- Level of personal control
- Trust and distrust in institutional control
- Media attention

Source: Slovic and Lofstedt

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Influence of Heuristics / Rules of Thumb

Shortcuts used to make decisions, e.g.

- Availability bias (example rule)
- Representativeness
- Anchoring

Source: Tversky, Kahneman, Slovic and others

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The Framing Effect...

- Information framed in terms of 'gains' receive a more risk averse response
- Information framed in terms of 'losses' receive a more risk seeking response to minimise the loss

People dislike losses more than they like gains

Classic Framing Experiment

Group 1

Treatment A – 72%

200 certain to be saved

Treatment B – 28%

1/3 chance 600 people saved

2/3 chance no one saved

Group 2

Treatment C – 22%

400 certain to die

Treatment D – 78%

1/3 chance no one dies

2/3 chance 600 will die

Willing to take more risk / uncertainty to avoid a loss than achieve an equivalent gain

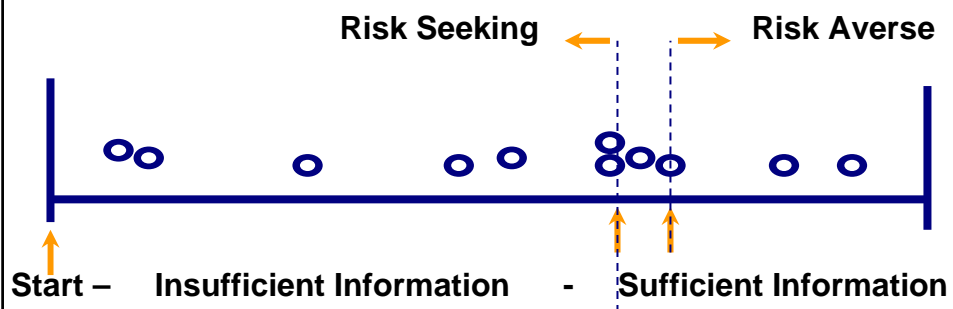
Measuring Risk Perception & Attitude

- Risk Ranking
 - Gap analysis
- Individual perception / attitude
 - Profiling tools
 - Driver Risk Profiling
 - Firearms officer profiling
 - Fire Incident commander training

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Risk Attitude of Trainee Incident Commanders



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Actions to Mitigate Biases

- Be Aware of Influences & Biases – Develop Emotional Literacy - Avoid snap decisions – Reflect – Challenge
- Make sure risk is framed objectively – consider how would you feel if risk was reframed
- Seek peer review
- Consult with stakeholders – seek diversity
- Gut feeling can be right BUT seek evidence before acting

Communicating on Risk

- Translating Cognitive Science to Communication Practice
- Most research focused on health and environmental risks
- It ain't easy!

The Importance of Trust

- Trust is central to the way people respond to messages
- We live in a Post-Trust Environment
 - Government
 - Regulators
 - Science and scientists
 - What about your organisation – Is it trusted?
- Trust is ten times easier to destroy than regain (Slovic 1993)
- How do we build trust?

Elm Energy Incinerator Case History

- What factors may have influenced local people to accept the risk?
- What key factors do you think helped to make their communication strategy a success?

3 Phases in Evolution of Risk Communication

TELLING

1st Convey probabilistic thinking - Get numbers right and tell them the numbers

EXPLAINING

2nd Persuade, convince and manage PR to show that some behaviour inappropriate

SHARING

3rd Two-Way communication, Scientists, Risk Managers & Lay people engaged in social learning

Adapted from Leiss 1996

Checklist 'Health Warning'

- Be aware that all this may improve ability but no guideline or checklist will be enough to capture the complexity of context-specific risk communication demands.

Key Risk Communication Principles (1)

- Be clear about your intentions – make them the central message
- Simplify as far as you can without being inaccurate
- Place simple message at the beginning of text and gradually add complexity
- Anticipate interests of audience and design message to match their needs

Source: Adapted from Renn2008

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Key Risk Communication Principles (2)

- Devise different communication programs for different target audiences
- Distribute on different channels
- Encourage feedback
- Be honest, complete & responsive in composing the message
- Use personal approach and frame to experience of receiver

Source: Renn2008

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Key Risk Communication Principles (3)

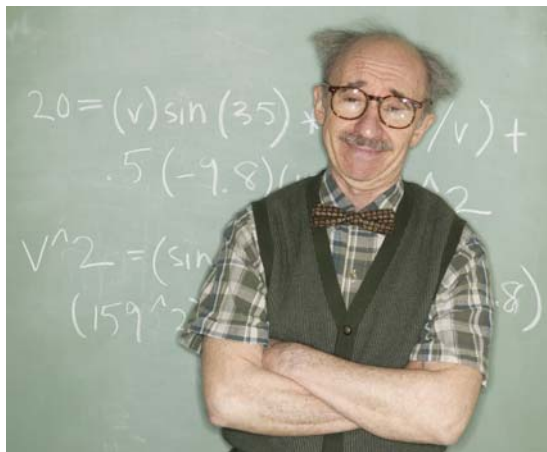
- Explain rationale & logic without claiming superiority
- Place risk in social context and report numerical probabilities only with verbal equivalents
- Institutional performance is key to trust . The more you demonstrate good performance the more you can expect trust in the message

Source: Renn2008

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So Don't Eat Them !



Thank You

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