

---

## **LESSON 3. COMMUNICATING IN AN EMERGENCY**

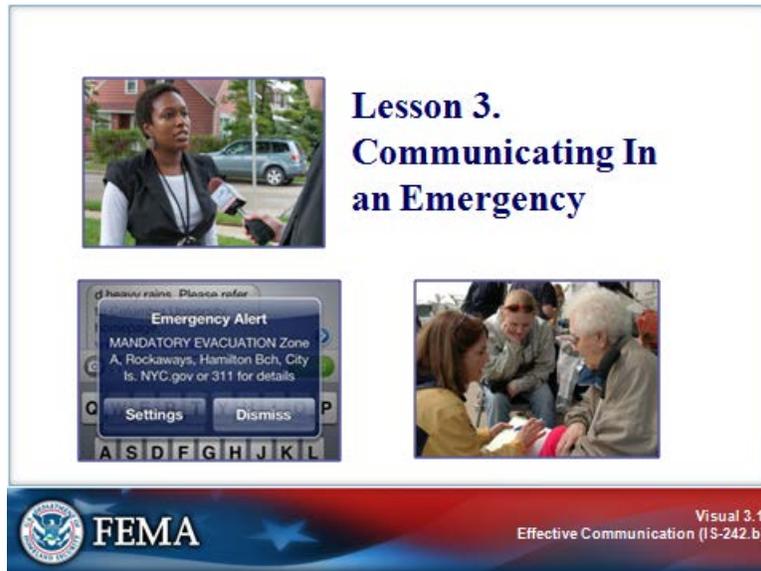
---

**This page intentionally left blank.**

## Lesson 3. Communicating in an Emergency

### INTRODUCTION

#### Visual 3.1



#### Key Points

This lesson presents strategies for communicating effectively in emergency situations.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Visual 3.2



#### Key Points

##### Transcript:

During an incident, communication with the community becomes especially critical. Emergency communications may include alerts and warnings; directives about evacuation, curfews, and other self-protective actions; and information about response status, family members, available assistance, and other matters that impact response and recovery.

Well-conceived and effectively delivered emergency messages can help ensure public safety, protect property, facilitate response efforts, elicit cooperation, instill public confidence, and help families reunite.

The extent to which people respond to a warning message is influenced by many factors, including individual characteristics and perceptions, whether the message comes from a credible source, how the message is delivered, and the message itself.

You have many communication tools to choose from, including in-person events, print and broadcast media, and Internet and social media. Each has advantages and limitations depending on your communication objective and the intended audience.

Whatever communication tools you use, be sure your emergency communications are clear, contain specific and adequate information, are in sync with other information being disseminated, and are accessible to the whole community.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Visual 3.3

### Lesson 3 Objectives

- Indicate how day-to-day communication differs from communication during an incident.
- Identify strategies for communicating effectively in an emergency situation.
- Select the most appropriate form of communication for a given situation.
- Indicate how social media and other communications technology can be used to communicate with members of the community.



**FEMA**

Visual 3.3  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

#### Key Points

At the completion of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Indicate how day-to-day communication differs from communication during an incident.
- Identify strategies for communicating effectively in an emergency situation.
- Select the most appropriate form of communication for a given situation.
- Indicate how social media and other communications technology can be used to communicate with members of the community.

**DELIVERING EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS**

**Visual 3.4**

**Delivering Effective Emergency Communications**

**This lesson presents information about three aspects of communicating in an emergency:**



**Emergency Communication Challenges**      **Emergency Communication Tools**      **Creating Effective Emergency Communications**

 **FEMA**      Visual 3.4  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

Delivering effective emergency communications is an essential part of emergency management. This lesson presents information about three aspects of communicating in an emergency:

- Emergency Communication Challenges
- Emergency Communication Tools
- Creating Effective Emergency Communications

Let's begin with the importance of emergency communication and the challenges it presents.

**EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES**

**Visual 3.5**

**Importance of Emergency Communication**

**In an emergency, information is as critical to people as food and water.**



The visual consists of a white rectangular box with a blue border. At the top, the title "Importance of Emergency Communication" is written in a bold, dark blue font. Below the title, the text "In an emergency, information is as critical to people as food and water." is displayed in a bold, dark blue font. In the center of the box, there are two square images separated by a blue equals sign. The left image shows a close-up of a hand holding a silver mobile phone, with the hand's thumb touching the screen. The right image shows a person in a blue jacket eating a banana. Below the white box is a red and blue banner. On the left side of the banner is the FEMA logo, which includes the text "FEMA" and "U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY". On the right side of the banner, the text "Visual 3.5 Effective Communication (IS-242.b)" is written in a small, white font.

**FEMA**

Visual 3.5  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

Studies show that during an incident, information is as critically important to people as food or water. Not only can accurate information mean the difference between life and death, it can provide reassurance that response and recovery are truly underway.

### EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

#### Visual 3.6

### Key Functions of Emergency Information

- Save lives and reduce injury.
- Protect property and the environment.
- Facilitate the tactical response.
- Educate, inform, and change behavior and attitudes.
- Seek the public's cooperation.
- Instill public confidence.
- Provide information to help families reunite.



 **FEMA**

Visual 3.6  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

#### Key Points

Public information during an incident serves many important functions. It can:

- **Save lives and reduce injury.** Knowing the proper protective actions to take enables people to reduce their risk.
- **Protect property and the environment.** Understanding how to mitigate risk to property and the environment may lessen the damage inflicted by disasters.
- **Facilitate the tactical response** by calming fears and managing expectations. People who know what to expect are more likely to follow instructions and allow responders to do their jobs.
- **Educate, inform, and change behavior and attitudes.** An educated public is more likely to prepare for emergencies and be ready when they occur.
- **Seek the public's cooperation.** Whether the need is for volunteers to help with sandbagging, citizens to cooperate with investigators, or residents to evacuate their homes, public information is an instrument that can help make it happen.
- **Instill public confidence.** Providing timely, accurate, and understandable information builds confidence in emergency management's competence.
- **Provide information to help families reunite.** Public information about shelter message boards, hotlines, survivor registries, and other linkages can help reunite families and enable them to move forward with their recovery.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

Visual 3.7

**Characteristics of Emergency Communications**

Emergency communications differ from routine communications in several ways:

- Barriers
- Timeliness
- Required response



FEMA

Visual 3.7  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

Key Points

Emergency communications differ from routine communications in several ways:

- **Barriers:** It is more difficult for people to hear messages during an emergency. Stress, change of routine, and lack of sleep all can be hurdles to overcome when communicating during emergencies.
- **Timeliness:** If official answers are not available, rumor and speculation quickly fill the information vacuum. Then, not only must you disseminate correct information, but you also need to counter any misinformation that circulated. To use media in a timely fashion, learn local media news cycles and deadlines.

For example, if a news event occurs at 4:00 p.m., you can most likely get it on the radio immediately, on television in time for the evening report, and into the next morning's edition of the local paper. Online news outlets can be updated at any time.

- **Required Response:** Emergency warnings differ from other kinds of messages because their purpose is to elicit a specific response from the public, rather than merely raise awareness or provide knowledge.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

Visual 3.8

**Factors That Affect Response**

- Individual characteristics
- Perceptions
- Message source
- The message itself



FEMA

Visual 3.8  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

Key Points

Successful warnings are those that are taken seriously and responded to in a timely and effective manner. Multiple factors may have an impact on whether people respond to a warning, including:

- **Individual characteristics**—Age, education, language, access and functional needs, family composition, and length of residency, among others.
- **Perceptions**—Previous experience with a hazard and perceptions of proximity and risk.
- **Message source**—Who issues the warning, credibility of the warning source, and the level of trust in that source.
- **The message itself**—Accuracy, clarity, timeliness, consistency, and specificity of the message; and its focus on immediate needs.

The job aid on the next page provides additional information about factors that influence message response.

## Lesson 3. Communicating in an Emergency

### Job Aid: Factors That Affect Response

Research has identified a number of community, experiential, and individual factors that influence the extent to which alerts and warnings are received, comprehended, and heeded.

#### Community Factors

- **Type of community:** Residents of rural communities may have more difficulty receiving warnings than those living in urban areas.
- **Level of community interaction:** People who have more contacts in the community will receive more warnings and are more likely to act; also, they are more likely to trust officials.
- **Family composition:** Families, more than individuals, tend to heed evacuation warnings. Research indicates that people tend to confer with family, extended family, and friends prior to making a decision. They do this to ensure that their loved ones are safe and also to determine whether they may need to provide protection for their loved ones. Their decisions are based on the following factors related to family composition:
  - **Family network:** People are more likely to act if they have relatives nearby who may warn them and offer them short-term shelter.
  - **Presence of children:** Concern for children's safety will elicit quicker response from parents.
  - **Presence of pets:** People often view their pets as they would their children and will take action to protect them. However, whereas families with children usually act more quickly to take precautions, in emergencies requiring evacuation, people with pets may endanger their own lives by refusing to evacuate, because many public shelters do not allow pets.

#### Experiential Factors

- **Interpretation of message:** When different people listen to the same message, there may be a variation in what they hear, leading to different interpretation and response.
- **Previous experiences:** Often people will rely on their previous experiences with the hazard to determine what actions they initially take (or don't take).
- **Observations:** Individual responses to warnings vary, but most people will seek some form of confirmation. For example, some people will look for more information through environmental cues, while others will seek to contact other trusted sources. Optimism bias (thinking that "disasters happen to other people") is overcome with confirmation.
- **Perception of risk/proximity:** People tend to make a rapid assessment of the relative safety of their location, producing an emergent perception of risk. If their perception of personal risk is high, people will act quickly. When the perception is low, they will delay acting.

### Job Aid: Factors That Affect Response (Continued)

#### Individual Factors

- **Age:** Children and older adults may not be able to receive and/or respond appropriately to alerts and warnings. Many in this group may also need assistance.
- **Language:** Non-English-speaking persons may not understand warnings that are provided in English. Communities with high percentages of non-English-speaking people should issue warnings in the primary language(s) of the population as well as in English.
- **Length of residency:** Transients, tourists, and newcomers to the area lack knowledge of local hazards and the history of local disasters, so they may react differently.
- **Access and functional needs:** Individuals with access and functional needs may need alerts in accessible formats and additional time and assistance for evacuating. Accessibility of alert and warning messages refers to whether individuals hear and understand them. Alternative alert and warning methods are needed for individuals with access and functional needs such as those who are blind or deaf or have low vision or hearing. Both audio and equivalent text messages should be available.
- **Level of individual preparedness:** People who have taken the time to prepare for hazards (i.e., they have a plan and disaster supply kit, and have exercised the plan) are more likely to heed warnings and act appropriately. Getting the preparedness buy-in is often the challenge.

**EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES**

**Visual 3.9**

**The Medium and the Message**

How you will get the message to the audience is influenced by:

- The audience itself.
- Urgency of the message.
- Reliability of the medium.
- Appropriateness of the medium.
- Resources.



 **FEMA** 

Visual 3.9  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

A key decision in planning emergency communications is how you will get the message to the audience. This decision is influenced by several factors, including:

- The audience—Whom are you trying to reach?
- Urgency of the message—How quickly do they need the information?
- Reliability of the medium—How reliable are the available media?
- Appropriateness of the medium—Which media best communicate the message in these circumstances?
- Resources—What resources may be required?

The job aid on the next page provides additional details on these factors.

### Job Aid: Factors Affecting Communication Strategies

**The Audience:** Select media that have the greatest likelihood of reaching the intended audience:

- Are you sending your message to the general public?
- How many people does the information need to reach?
- Does your message apply only to people living in a specific geographic area?
- Is your message intended for emergency management personnel only?
- What is the primary language of the intended audience? Are there other languages that must also be accommodated?
- Where does this audience usually obtain news—TV? Radio? Newspapers? Community venues? Online? Social media?

**Urgency:** Match the speed and frequency of the media to how quickly and for how long your audience needs to know:

- Is this information related to immediate safety?
- Is this referral information for future recovery?
- Should urgency take priority over style and format?
- When do various media air, publish, or broadcast information?
- How long will this information be useful to the audience?
- How many times do you think your audience needs to see or hear your information before they act on it?

**Reliability:** Ensure that your choice of media is reliable during the emergency:

- During *this emergency situation*, which media are functional?
- Are the radio, television, and newspaper companies functioning normally?
- Are residents currently located at their normal mailing addresses?
- Is mail delivery interrupted?
- Are there widespread power outages that affect some or all media outlets?
- Can you identify public places where your audience can assemble?

**Appropriateness:** Choose appropriate media to enhance comprehension:

- Is your message too sensitive to send via fax?
- Is your audience geographically concentrated enough to make a public meeting possible?
- Can you make your point on a billboard?

**Resources:** Consider your resources in your media choice:

- Which staff will you need to implement this media approach?
- Can your budget afford a televised public service announcement?
- Can you deliver an effective public speech?

**ACTIVITY: EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES**

**Visual 3.10**

**Activity: Communication Challenges**

**Instructions:** Entire group:

- Your instructor will read each statement in the Student Manual and ask if it is true or false.
- Be prepared to explain your answers.

FEMA

Visual 3.10  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to identify emergency communication challenges.

**Time:** 5 minutes

**Instructions:** Entire group:

- Your instructor will read each statement in the Student Manual and ask if it is true or false.
- Be prepared to explain your answers.

**Statements:**

- Public information during an incident can facilitate the tactical response by calming people's fears and managing their expectations.
- Most people respond to emergency messages in the same way regardless of experience or individual characteristics.
- Stress, change of routine, and lack of sleep can affect the way people process information during an incident.
- It is important to match the speed and frequency of the communication medium to how quickly and for how long the audience needs the information.

**EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION TOOLS**

**Visual 3.11**

**Emergency Communication Tools**

The most effective communication tool is the one that:

- Reaches the target audience.
- Gets information to the audience when they need it, for as long as they need it.
- Can be expected to deliver the message reliably.
- Enhances comprehension of the message content.
- Can be accessed within resource limitations.

FEMA

Visual 3.11  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

During an incident, a wide variety of communication tools are available to provide vital information to the community.

This section of the lesson will focus on the various tools available and factors to consider in choosing among them.

Choosing the right communication tool is a matter of getting the right information to the right people at the right time so they can make the right decisions. Remember, the most effective communication tool is one that:

- Reaches the target audience.
- Gets information to the audience when they need it, for as long as they need it.
- Can be expected to deliver the message reliably.
- Enhances comprehension of the message content.
- Can be accessed within resource limitations.

Most often, you will use a combination of methods to deliver a consistent message to the whole community.

**EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION TOOLS**

**Visual 3.12**



**Key Points**

Tools and methods for emergency communications include:

- In-person events—briefings and public meetings.
- Print media—newspapers and magazines.
- Broadcast media—television and radio.
- Internet and social media.

The following pages present information about advantages, limitations, and requirements of each.

### EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION TOOLS

#### Visual 3.13

### In-Person Events

**Advantages:**

- Interactive.
- Can target specific populations.

**Limitations:**

- Must have ability to stay on message.
- May expose you to difficult questions.



 **FEMA** 

Visual 3.13  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

#### Key Points

In-person events such as media briefings and public meetings can be used to get information to the media and the public. When properly planned and executed, these events can be a powerful tool to aid you in communicating the messages you want disseminated to the public while guiding the news media to important information for the public.

#### Advantages:

- Interactive, allowing participants to voice their questions and concerns and giving you the opportunity to respond.
- Can be targeted to specific populations.

#### Limitations:

- Require the ability to stay on message when the audience becomes vocal.
- May expose you to difficult questions.

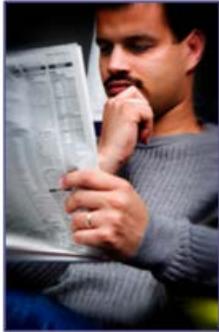
#### Requirements:

- An appropriate, accessible venue.
- Public address equipment.

**EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION TOOLS**

**Visual 3.14**

**Print Media**



**Advantages:**

- Allow for detail.
- Can use a variety of approaches.

**Limitations:**

- Take longer to get the message out.
- May be filtered through another spokesperson.

 **FEMA** 

Visual 3.14  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

Print media such as newspapers and magazines can be used to disseminate information that is not time-critical. These media are especially effective for presenting indepth analysis of developing situations and for educating the public about preparedness. Most newspapers and magazines have Web sites where they will also post your story.

**Advantages:**

- Allow for more detail and indepth treatment of the subject.
- Permit a variety of approaches—e.g., news story, interview, background piece.

**Limitations:**

- Take longer to get the message out.
- May be filtered through another spokesperson.

**Requirements:**

- Details and background information.
- Access to subject-matter experts.
- Access to photo opportunities.

**EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION TOOLS**

**Visual 3.15**

**Broadcast Media**

**Advantages:**

- Immediate broadcast.
- Varied programming.
- Reaches a wide audience.

**Disadvantages:**

- May be less detailed.
- Messages may be filtered or edited.
- Listeners/viewers must turn on the device.



 **FEMA**

Visual 3.15  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

Television and radio can be used to disseminate information quickly, through the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Public Service Announcements (PSAs), and news programs. More indepth features can also be presented. Stations that broadcast in other languages can be used as an avenue to reach specific populations within the community.

**Advantages:**

- Immediate broadcasting of urgent messages.
- Varied programming.
- Can reach a wide audience and be tailored to specific populations.

**Limitations:**

- Reporting may be less detailed, especially on television.
- Messages may be filtered through a reporter or other spokesperson, and may be edited or cut to fit available time.
- Listener/viewer must choose to turn on the TV or radio in order to receive the message.

**Requirements:**

- Television—visuals, sound bites, staging area.
- Radio—audio sound clips, recorded interviews, recorded PSAs.

**EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION TOOLS**

**Visual 3.16**

**Internet and Social Media**



**Advantages:**

- Can be updated quickly.
- Can incorporate varied media.
- Flexible.

**Limitations:**

- Updates may only be at certain times.
- Limited message control after sending.

 **FEMA** 

Visual 3.16  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

The Internet and social media can provide immediate message dissemination and a wide variety of formats. A Web site can incorporate many different types of media and accessibility features, but the recipient must choose to access the site or have signed up for automated message feeds. Social media provides almost instantaneous messaging to those who have access.

**Advantages:**

- Internet—Updated quickly, can incorporate varied media (e.g., print, photos, graphics, audio, video, live streaming).
- Social media—Very flexible; messages can be short and quick.
- Individuals can opt into notification systems that push messages to the recipient.

**Limitations:**

- Internet—Updates may only be at certain times.
- Social media—Limited control once the message goes out.

**Requirements:** Vary according to the medium and type of message.

**EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION TOOLS**

**Visual 3.17**

**Coming to Terms With New Media**

“New media” include:

- Blogs
- Photo sharing
- Podcasts
- RSS feeds
- Social networking
- Webcasts
- Wikis



 **FEMA**

Visual 3.17  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

The key to using emerging technology is staying on top of what is out there, because “new” media is a relative term and technology doesn’t slow down for anyone.

Ultimately, new communication technology is all about speed. People have an expectation of being engaged and involved and they don’t want to wait for it. They expect that their government agencies will not only be transparent and responsive, but that the response will be customized to the incident and as rapid as the flow of electrons.

The job aids on the following pages summarize various types of social media and provide a comparison of different media tools.

**Job Aid: Social Media Descriptions**

<b>Social Media</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Blog</b>	<p>A blog (a contraction of the term Weblog) is a Web site, usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. “Blog” can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.</p> <p>Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, Web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs.</p>
<b>Citizen Journalism</b>	<p>Citizen journalism is based upon public citizens playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information. The availability of technology such as smartphones with cameras and video capability makes it possible for individuals to report breaking news often more quickly than traditional media reporters.</p>
<b>Micro-blog</b>	<p>A micro-blog is a form of multimedia blogging that allows users to send brief text updates (say, 140 characters or fewer) or micromedia (such as photos or audio clips) and publish them, either to be viewed by anyone or by a restricted group that can be chosen by the user. These messages can be submitted by a variety of means, including text messaging, instant messaging, email, digital audio, or the Web.</p>
<b>Photo Sharing</b>	<p>Photo sharing is the publishing or transfer of a user’s digital photos online through both Web sites and applications that facilitate the upload and display of images. The term can also be loosely applied to the use of online photo galleries that are set up and managed by individual users, including photoblogs.</p>
<b>Podcast</b>	<p>A podcast is a series of visual or sound files that are distributed over the computer by syndicated download, through Web feeds, to portable media players and personal computers. Though the same content may also be made available by direct download or streaming, a podcast is distinguished from most other digital media formats by its ability to be syndicated, subscribed to, and downloaded automatically when new content is added. Like the term broadcast, podcast can refer either to the series of content itself or to the method by which it is syndicated; the latter is also called podcasting. The host or author of a podcast is often called a podcaster.</p>

**Job Aid: Social Media Descriptions (Continued)**

<b>Social Media</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Really Simple Syndication (RSS) Feed</b>	<p>RSS (abbreviation for Really Simple Syndication) is a family of Web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works—such as blog entries, news headlines, audio, and video—in a standardized format. An RSS document (which is called a “feed,” “Web feed,” or “channel”) includes full or summarized text, plus metadata such as publishing dates and authorship. Web feeds benefit publishers by letting them syndicate content automatically. They benefit readers who want to subscribe to timely updates from favored Web sites or to aggregate feeds from many sites into one place. The user subscribes to a feed by clicking an RSS icon in a browser that initiates the subscription process. The RSS reader checks the user’s subscribed feeds regularly for new work, downloads any updates that it finds, and provides a user interface to monitor and read the feeds.</p>
<b>Smartphone</b>	<p>(See Citizen Journalism.)</p>
<b>Social Networking</b>	<p>Social networking sites are online communities that connect people who share interests and/or activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others.</p> <p>The most popular social networking sites have groups, which offer chat boards for members. There are also professional social networking sites with sections for jobs. All social networking sites allow users to find people they know among the members, or look for other members with similar interests or affiliations. These sites make it easy to establish networks of contacts.</p>
<b>Video Blog</b>	<p>A video blog, sometimes shortened to a vlog or vidblog, is a form of blog for which the medium is video. Entries are made regularly and often combine embedded video or a video link with supporting text, images, and other metadata. Vlogs also often take advantage of Web syndication to allow for the distribution of video over the Internet using either the RSS or Atom syndication formats, for automatic aggregation and playback on mobile devices and personal computers.</p>
<b>Video Sharing</b>	<p>Videos can be used to communicate information on Web sites or on video hosting sites. Video is a good choice for sharing information because of its audio and visual components.</p>
<b>Web 2.0, Webcast</b>	<p>A Web 2.0 site allows users to interact and collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community.</p> <p>A webcast is a media presentation distributed over the Internet using streaming media technology.</p>

**Job Aid: Social Media Descriptions (Continued)**

<b>Social Media</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Wiki</b>	<p>A wiki is a page or collection of Web pages designed to enable anyone who accesses it to contribute or modify content, using a simplified markup language. Wikis are often used to create collaborative Web sites and to power community Web sites.</p> <p>A defining characteristic of wiki technology is the ease with which pages can be created and updated. Generally, there is no review before modifications are accepted. Many wikis are open to alteration by the general public without requiring them to register user accounts. Sometimes logging in for a session is recommended, to create a “wiki-signature” cookie for signing edits automatically. Many edits, however, can be made in real-time and appear almost instantly online. This feature can facilitate abuse of the system. Private wiki servers require user authentication to edit pages, and sometimes even to read them.</p>

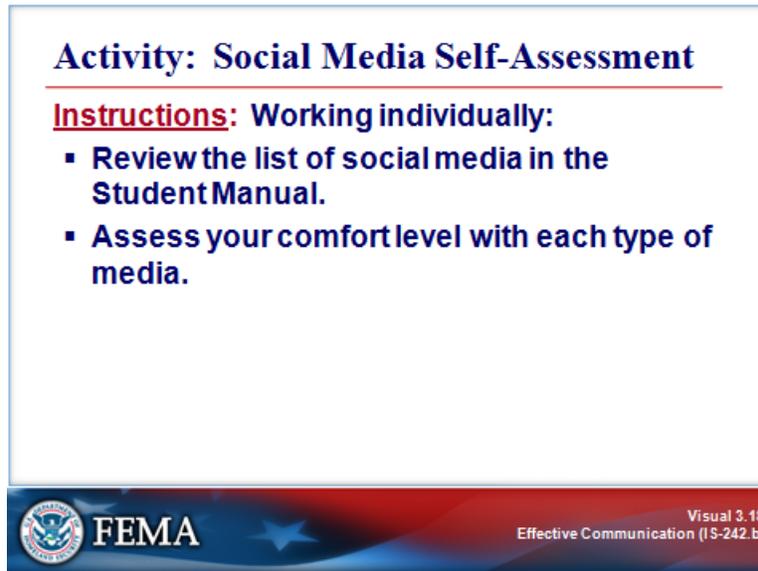
## Lesson 3. Communicating in an Emergency

### Job Aid: Communication Tool Comparison

Types of Media	Advantages	Limitations	What They Require
<b>Briefings, public meetings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interactive.</li> <li>▪ Allow response to specific concerns.</li> <li>▪ Can be targeted at specific populations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Require ability to stay on message.</li> <li>▪ Exposure to difficult questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Appropriate venue accessible to whole community.</li> <li>▪ Public address equipment.</li> </ul>
<b>Newspapers, magazines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More detail.</li> <li>▪ Available on Web site.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Longer to get information out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Details.</li> <li>▪ Background information.</li> <li>▪ Access to subject-matter experts.</li> <li>▪ Access to photo opportunities.</li> </ul>
<b>Television</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Immediate.</li> <li>▪ Varied programming.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Less detailed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Visuals!</li> <li>▪ Sound bites.</li> <li>▪ Staging area.</li> </ul>
<b>Radio</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Immediate.</li> <li>▪ Can reach special populations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Few field reporters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Audio (sound clips or telephone interviews).</li> <li>▪ Sound bites.</li> <li>▪ Recorded public service announcements (PSAs).</li> </ul>
<b>Internet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Updated quickly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Updates may only be at certain times.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Needs can vary and may be a combination of print, television, and radio needs because Web sites are capable of having videos, pictures, and text.</li> </ul>
<b>Social media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Very flexible.</li> <li>▪ Messages can be short and quick.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limited control once the message goes out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can accommodate short, informal, quick messages ("Tweets," blogs, postings, texting, etc.).</li> </ul>

**ACTIVITY: SOCIAL MEDIA SELF-ASSESSMENT**

**Visual 3.18**



**Activity: Social Media Self-Assessment**

**Instructions:** Working individually:

- Review the list of social media in the Student Manual.
- Assess your comfort level with each type of media.

FEMA

Visual 3.18  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to identify how comfortable you are with different types of social media.

**Time:** 5 minutes

**Instructions:** Review the list of social media in the Student Manual. Assess how comfortable you are with each type of media.

## Lesson 3. Communicating in an Emergency

### ACTIVITY: SOCIAL MEDIA SELF-ASSESSMENT

#### Visual 3.18 (Continued)

#### Social Media Self-Assessment

	I am familiar with it.	I know how to use it.	I should learn more about it.
Blog	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Citizen journalism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Micro-blog	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photo sharing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Podcast	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Really Simple Syndication (RSS)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smartphone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social networking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video blog	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video sharing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Web 2.0, Webcast	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wiki	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**ACTIVITY: COMMUNICATION TOOLS**

**Visual 3.19**

**Activity: Communication Tools**

**Instructions:**

- Review the list of communication tools/methods in the Student Manual.
- Match each communication tool/method by entering the number beside the description.

FEMA logo and text: Visual 3.19 Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to match the communication tool/method with the description.

**Time:** 5 minutes

**Instructions:** Entire group:

- Review the list of communication tools/methods below.
- Match each communication tool/method by entering the number beside the description.

**1 – In-Person Events**

**2 – Print Media**

**3 – Broadcast Media**

**4 – Internet and Social Media**

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide a vehicle for quick, short messages but can be difficult to control once the message goes out.

\_\_\_\_\_ Are better for indepth coverage and analysis than for issuing time-critical information such as alerts and warnings.

\_\_\_\_\_ Can be used to distribute information quickly to a broad general audience; may be limited by programming schedules.

\_\_\_\_\_ Allow you to interactively learn about and address the questions and concerns of a specific audience.

**CREATING EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS**

**Visual 3.20**

**Creating Effective Emergency Communications**

**Successful emergency communications should:**

- **Present the information in sequence.**
- **Be worded precisely.**
- **Avoid jargon, code, and acronyms.**
- **Use common terminology.**
- **Omit unnecessary details.**
- **Speak in sync with other related authorities.**
- **Keep messages consistent across various media.**



The slide features the FEMA logo on the left, which includes the text 'FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY' and 'FEMA'. On the right, the text reads 'Visual 3.20 Effective Communication (IS-242.b)'. The background of the slide is a red and blue gradient with a white star.

**Key Points**

All emergency communications—regardless of the medium—should conform to general principles of effective communication.

In a crisis, clarity, specificity, and consistency are vitally important. Be sure to:

- Present the information in sequence. Present the reason for the message, the supporting information, and the conclusion.
- Word the message precisely, making every word count.
- Avoid jargon, codes, and acronyms.
- Use common terminology for all personnel and facilities.
- Omit unnecessary details.
- Speak in sync with other related authorities.
- Keep messages consistent across various media.

CREATING EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

Visual 3.21

**Creating Alerts and Warnings**

- Alerts and warnings are products or messages intended to get the attention of the public and to prompt some type of action.
- In practical usage, there is little distinction between the two.

FEMA Visual 3.21 Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

Key Points

Alerts and warnings are products or messages intended to get the attention of the public and to prompt some type of action—whether protective actions or a continued state of alertness.

Terminology related to warnings can be confusing. Below are some basic distinctions.

- **Watch vs. Warning:** The National Weather Service distinguishes between these two types of messages based on degree of certainty:
  - **Watch**—A watch is used when the risk of a hazardous event has increased significantly, but its occurrence, location, and/or timing is still uncertain. It is intended to provide enough lead time so that those who need to set their plans in motion can do so. From the listener’s perspective, a watch lets you know that weather conditions are favorable for a hazard to occur. It literally means “be on guard!” During a weather watch, gather awareness of the specific threat and prepare for action.
  - **Warning**—A warning is issued when a hazardous event that poses a threat to life or property is occurring, is imminent, or has a very high probability of occurring. During a weather warning, it is important to take action: grab the emergency kit and head to safety immediately. Both watches and warnings are important, but warnings are more urgent.
- **Emergency Message vs. Warning Message:** The message encoding protocol used to trigger alerts over the Emergency Alert System (EAS) designates these message types based on the significance and directness of the threat. We’ll return to this distinction later in this lesson.

In practical usage, there is little distinction between the two. In this course, “alert” and “warning” are used interchangeably when referring to messages issued to the public.

### CREATING EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

#### Visual 3.22



**Alert and Warning Message Content**

**Successful messages should include:**

- **Specific hazard**
- **Location**
- **Timeframes**
- **Warning source**
- **Magnitude**
- **Likelihood**
- **Protective behavior**



FEMA

Visual 3.22  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

#### Key Points

Effective alerts and warnings are those that result in members of the public taking recommended actions to protect themselves. To help ensure that messages are effective, they must be issued in a timely manner and should include the following components:

- **Specific hazard:** What hazard is threatening? What are the potential risks for the community?
- **Location:** Where will the impacts occur? Describe the location so those without local knowledge can understand their risk.
- **Timeframes:** When will it arrive at various locations? How long will the impacts last?
- **Warning source:** Who is issuing the warning? Identify an official source with public credibility.
- **Magnitude:** What impact is expected and how bad is it likely to get?
- **Likelihood:** How probable is occurrence of the impact?
- **Protective behavior:** What protective actions should people take and when? If evacuation is called for, where should people go and what should they take with them?

An example warning:

A dangerous wildfire is moving toward North Haverbrook and is expected to reach the north edge of town by 2 p.m. All persons remaining within the hazard area must evacuate now to a safe location to the west or east. A shelter is now open at Waverly Hills High School gym. Pets are permitted.

**CREATING EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS**

**Visual 3.23**

**Accessible Alert and Warning Systems**

- **Ensure messages are accessible to all audiences by using clear and simple language.**
- **Provide information in multiple languages.**
- **Be aware of text-to-speech technology requirements.**
- **Ensure audio is consistent with text.**
- **Explain images and maps.**
- **Use multiple delivery channels.**



The slide footer features the FEMA logo on the left, which includes the text 'FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY' and 'FEMA'. To the right of the logo is the text 'Visual 3.23 Effective Communication (IS-242.b)'. The background of the footer is a red and blue gradient with a white star.

**Key Points**

Ensure that alert and warning messages are accessible to all audiences by:

- Using clear and simple language.
- Providing information in multiple languages.
- Taking care with text-to-speech conversion. Avoid nonstandard language formats and terminology when using conversion and translation technologies.
- Ensuring that the audio is consistent with the text.
- Providing ample text and audio to explain images and maps.
- Delivering the message through multiple channels to reach all recipients.

The job aid on the following pages provides additional information about accessible alert and warning messages.

### Job Aid: Accessible Alert and Warning Messages

#### Style Elements

How you write an alert/warning message is nearly as important as what you write. Poorly written warnings can undermine both understanding and credibility.

“Style” refers to how you write. Here are some style elements to consider when writing accessible and usable alert and warning messages. Be:

- **Specific:** If the message is not specific enough about the “Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?” the public will spend more time seeking specific information to confirm the risk. If necessary, be specific about what is or is not known about the hazard.
- **Consistent:** An alert/warning should be internally consistent—that is, one part of the message should not contradict another part. It should be consistent with messages that are distributed via other channels. To the extent possible, alerts/warnings should be consistent from event to event, to the degree that the hazard is similar.
- **Certain:** Avoid conveying a sense of uncertainty, either in content or in tone. Confine the message to what is known, or if necessary, describe what is unknown in certain terms. Do not guess or speculate.
- **Clear:** Use common words that can easily be understood. Do not use technical terminology or jargon. If protective instructions are precautionary, state so clearly. If the probability of occurrence of the hazard event is less than 100%, try to convey in simple terms what the likelihood of occurrence is.
- **Accurate:** Do not overstate or understate the facts. Do not omit important information. Convey respect for the intelligence and judgment of your public.

#### Accessible Alert and Warning Messages for Persons With Access and Functional Needs

As the message originator, you should keep in mind the needs of persons with access and functional needs by using:

- **Clear and simple language:** A general guideline to follow is to use clear and simple language whenever possible, with minimal use of abbreviations. The most important information should be presented first.
- **Care with text-to-speech conversion:** Care must be taken in composing text that is converted to audio by text-to-speech equipment. When considering these and other translation technologies, craft messages that avoid nonstandard language formats and terminology. Consult your NWS Weather Forecast Office for local guidance regarding NOAA Weather Radio requirements.
- **Consistent audio:** The audio should be as consistent as possible with the text and should ensure that any abbreviations are spoken as full words.
- **Ample text and audio to explain images/maps:** Ample text and audio should be provided to explain images or maps, so that message recipients can understand the meaning of what is being conveyed graphically.

**Job Aid: Accessible Alert and Warning Messages (Continued)**

**Accessible Alert and Warning Messages for People for Whom English Is a Second Language**

Non-English-speaking people may not understand warnings that are provided in English. Communities with high percentages of non-English-speaking people should issue warnings in the primary language(s) of the population as well as in English.

Your alert authoring or other software programs may provide automated translation, but you should validate any automatically translated text with a speaker of the language to avoid errors.

The use of pre-translated templates may serve to minimize the amount of information requiring translation for actual alerts.

Features of modern communication devices owned by end users can also provide translation of alerts to the targeted language supported by the device.

**CREATING EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS**

**Visual 3.24**

**Using Warning Message Templates**

Using templates tailored to threats and hazards likely in your warning area, that incorporate pre-approved language, can:

- Help prevent errors or omissions.
- Reduce delays in issuing alerts and warnings.
- Allow for language translation in advance.



 **FEMA**

Visual 3.24  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

One way to help prevent errors or omissions that can occur in moments of urgency is to use templates that are tailored to threats and hazards likely in your warning area.

Using a template that incorporates pre-approved language can reduce delays in issuing alerts and warnings. Another advantage is that, if you need to use a language in addition to English, your templates can be translated in advance.

An example template for a warning message is provided on the next page.

**Sample Immediate Evacuation Order (EVI) Template**

**Replace all bracketed text below:**

(Headline field)

Immediate Evacuation Ordered for [geographic description of area to be evacuated]

(Description field)

Effective immediately, and extending until [further notice or expiration time], the Mayor of Disasterville has issued an evacuation order for all persons living, working, or traveling in the vicinity of [geographic description of area to be evacuated]. This area is at immediate risk from [brief description of the hazardous conditions].

(Instruction field)

To protect yourself and your family from this dangerous situation, the following actions are strongly urged:

\*Leave your home or workplace immediately for a safe destination outside the hazard area via [specify recommended route(s) of travel].

\*Take only pets and essential items such as medications with you.

[\*Instruction related to school children if applicable, e.g., Do not pick up your children from school. They are being evacuated by school officials.]

A shelter operated by [organization, e.g., the Red Cross] is available at [address of public shelter]. If you need evacuation assistance, call 555-9999. Do not call 9-1-1 unless you have a serious personal emergency. For further information, tune to radio station WXYZ.

**ACTIVITY: DEVELOPING A WARNING MESSAGE**

**Visual 3.25**

**Activity: Developing a Warning Message**

**Instructions:** Working in your table group:

- Review the scenario in the Student Manual.
- Imagine this scenario occurring in your jurisdiction. You may add additional facts and details not contained in the scenario.
- Develop a warning message to address the scenario.
- Be prepared to follow up with a group discussion.

FEMA

Visual 3.25  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

**Key Points**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to practice creating a warning message.

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Instructions:** Working in your table group:

- Review the scenario in the Student Manual.
- Imagine this scenario occurring in your jurisdiction. You may add additional facts and details not contained in the scenario.
- Develop a warning message to address the scenario.
- Be prepared to follow up with a group discussion.

**Scenario:**

A hazardous materials accident has just occurred, shutting a major roadway. Evacuations are being ordered for the homes within a 1-mile radius of Highway 1. A shelter at the high school is opening that allows pets.

## **Lesson 3. Communicating in an Emergency**

### **ACTIVITY: DEVELOPING A WARNING MESSAGE**

---

#### **Visual 3.25 (Continued)**

---

Write your message below:

### CREATING EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

#### Visual 3.26

**Preparing for Briefings and Public Meetings**

- **Identify objectives.**
- **Prepare officials and experts in advance.**
- **Prepare a statement and handout materials.**
- **Anticipate difficult or sensitive questions.**
- **Make provisions to comply with all legal requirements.**



 **FEMA** 

Visual 3.26  
Effective Communication (IS-242.b)

#### Key Points

Briefings and public meetings enable you to bring a carefully developed message to the media and the public and to build important community relationships in the process. When planning these public events, remember:

- Use news briefings for important events or significant new information—not just to say there is nothing new to report.
- Don't delay the release of important information for a scheduled briefing—especially if it impacts life and safety. Release it as soon as possible.

When preparing for and conducting a media briefing or public meeting:

- **Identify objectives.** Know what you want to accomplish.
- **Prepare officials and experts in advance.** Ensure that they have all the information and are prepared to address the media.
- **Prepare a statement and handout materials.** Materials should be focused, concise, informative, and cover the basics: who, what, when, where, how, and possibly why.
- **Anticipate difficult or sensitive questions.** Address rumors and incorrect news statements. Prepare brief, honest responses.
- **Make provisions to comply with all legal requirements.** Ensure physical and communication access by all.

The job aid on the next page provides descriptions of materials that may be used to support media events.

## Lesson 3. Communicating in an Emergency

### Job Aid: Information Materials for Media Events

This table presents examples of materials you can use to get information to the media.

<b>Material</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>News release</b>	Used when there is a factual report of an activity or incident of news value.
<b>Statement</b>	Used in lieu of a news release. Issued in print; less detailed than a press release. Good to use when you've received multiple media calls on the same topic.
<b>Fact sheet</b>	Used when you need to provide more detail than is possible in a news release.
<b>Media advisory</b>	Used to invite the media to an event or news conference. Provides basic information (what, where, when, and why); provides directions.
<b>Talking points</b>	Used to prepare yourself or someone else for a telephone or broadcast interview. Written as sound bites: concise, simple to understand. For internal use only—not for distribution to the news media.
<b>Web product</b>	An increasingly important avenue; includes Web pages, blogs, and tweets.
<b>Newsletter article</b>	Used to communicate within the organization or may be a feature in a newsletter that reaches another audience.
<b>Public service announcement (PSA)</b>	Used when you want to enlist the cooperation of the electronic media in promoting an important message.
<b>Brochure, flier, or other handout</b>	Used to provide background information to supplement a news release, provide photos or graphics, etc. Remember not to overwhelm the reporter with too much or extraneous information. Sometimes "less is more."

**ACTIVITY: CREATING EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS**

**Visual 3.27**

**Activity: Creating Effective Emergency Communications**

---

**Instructions: Entire group:**

- Your instructor will read each statement in the Student Manual and ask if that action is recommended or not recommended.
- Be prepared to explain your answers.



The slide footer features the FEMA logo on the left, a blue and red decorative banner with a white star in the center, and the text 'Visual 3.27 Effective Communication (IS-242.b)' on the right.

**Key Points**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to identify whether each emergency communication action is recommended or not recommended.

**Time:** 5 minutes

**Instructions:** Entire group:

- Your instructor will read each statement in the Student Manual and ask if the action is recommended or not recommended.
- Be prepared to follow up the answers with a group discussion.

**Statements:**

- Coordinate emergency messages with those of other authorities and across the various media.
- Include in warning messages the protective behavior expected of the public.
- To keep media informed, hold a media briefing to announce that there is no new information to report.
- Create message templates based on your local threats and hazards that you can use when an emergency arises.
- When preparing for a media briefing, prepare a written statement and handout materials for the audience.

**ACTIVITY: CREATING EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION**

---

**Visual 3.27 (Continued)**

---

**Statements (Continued):**

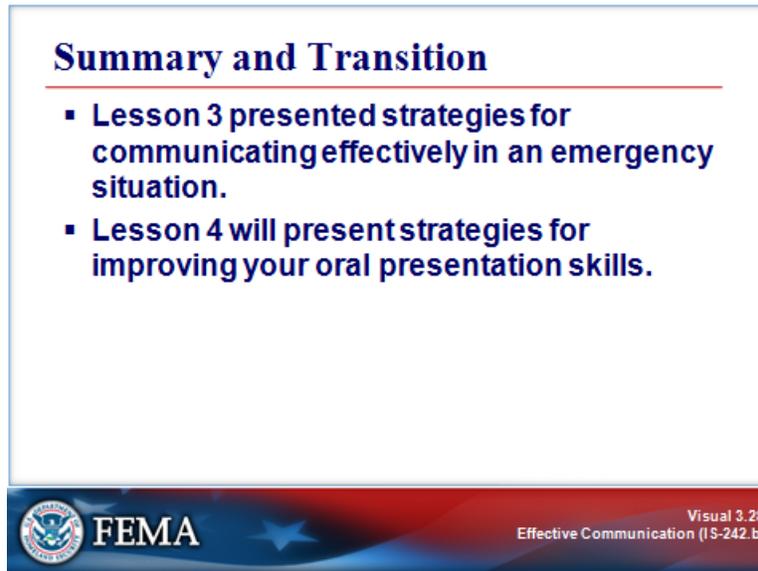
- When issuing an urgent warning message, include as much detailed background information as possible.
- When preparing for a public meeting, prepare brief, honest responses to anticipated questions.

### SUMMARY AND TRANSITION

---

#### Visual 3.28

---



#### Key Points

---

This lesson presented strategies for communicating effectively in an emergency situation. You should now be able to:

- Indicate how day-to-day communication differs from communication during an incident.
- Identify strategies for communicating effectively in an emergency situation.
- Select the most appropriate form of communication for a given situation.
- Indicate how social media and other communications technology can be used to communicate with members of the community.

Lesson 4 will present strategies for improving your oral presentation skills.