
UNIT 14 COMMUNICATION

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14.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the distinction between the Conceptual and Physical Aspects of communication;
- identify the significance and role of communication in Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation; and
- describe the principal techniques, ways and means of communication for effective end results.

4 .1 INTRODUCTION

Among various aspects of Disaster Management, "communication" is one of the most critical requirement. The word "communicate" implies conveying of thoughts, ideas, warnings, instructions, orders, command, knowledge and information. In the context of disaster management, fail-safe communication is vital during a wide range of actions, from the significant phase of "preparedness" to impart knowledge and information (mass education and public awareness), warning of impending threat of disaster, calling various resources and intimation to authorities and conducting disaster management in general.

14.2 COMMUNICATION: MEANING AND CONCEPT

The word "Communication" holds a very significant place in all walks of human life, A person is an element of society, nation and the world and cannot live his or her in isolation. He or she has to interact with his or her fellow human beings.

There are two distinct facets of communication. One is the physical one where we use a variety of means using ever progressing technology. Due to modern technology and use of Satellites we broadcast television programmes all over the world. Satellite phones and internet have added new dimensions to global and almost instantaneous communication. Thus there is no lacking of any type of Hi-Tech means to communicate. Media (print and electronic) serve as credible and influential agents of communication.

The other aspect which is far more important is the conceptual one. It is necessary to ensure that recipient of communication understands the contents of the message being conveyed and that he responds to it in the desired manner. This apparently simple requirement carries behind it Herculean efforts of thorough knowledge, clarity and conciseness. The originator must realise the

capacity and capability of the receiver to appreciate the message and to react correctly. Thus, content and clarity have to be the essential features of the message being communicated. The content has to be specific, to the point, brief and couched in simple, understandable and clear language with no ambiguity. Thus in its modern concept "communication" transcends its traditional meaning of transmission of message but includes the quality of the message itself especially the content, conciseness and comprehensibility.

14.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION

Whenever we talk of "Disaster" we invariably imply the following distinct phases:

- (a) Preventive and preparedness measures for ensuring minimum adverse effects,
- (b) Follow up actions in the event of occurrence of a Disaster, to handle the "Aftermath" and make all efforts to mitigate - i.e., to minimise/to reduce eventual losses/damage to Life and Property.

Unless we have "Communication" at its best in all the required forms we will not be in a position to deal with the above phases to our entire satisfaction. In the aftermath of a disaster, time counts and efficient communication at all levels decides the success of all efforts. It is therefore essential to critically examine the role - and need - of communication. The discussion that follows will critically examine the same in the above mentioned phases.

Communication during the phase of Preventive Measures: An in-depth study of all probable causes of disasters likely to occur in the area is to be made, identifying all likely sources of disaster.

Preparedness: This is the most important phase. The state of Preparedness is to be reached to maximum efficiency to be effective. In this phase, all resources - their types and strength - are worked out, identified and are placed "on call" whenever situation so warrants. This phase requires high degree of dedication and cooperation of all resources. Resources imply police, firemen, medical personnel, transporters, volunteers and above all a sound communication system.

Immediately after A Disaster Occurs: Communication, in all its forms, plays a most vital role in this phase. The prime requirement of this phase is to convey facts without creating any panic. Also, time element is of utmost importance. Even a minor delay caused due to incomplete or incorrect communications will add to the problem. The intimation of the occurrence of a disaster is to be given, in the laid down priority, to government officials, affected population and news media of all types. This becomes effective only when there are "Check Lists" at all levels and personnel are trained to act strictly yet timely according to their respective check lists. In the absence of check lists, chaos will prevail disrupting the smooth responses at required levels.

Aftermath: Once the laid down actions get under way, the situation is brought to normal, i.e., the cause of disaster is "contained" or has passed away. While this is going on, regular progress of events is intimated to people through proper "media". The next action by concerned authorities, after normal life is restored, should be to carry ruthless audit of all events, critically analyse faults, weaknesses, lapses, and shortcomings together with impediments, if any is experienced, and introduce measures to overcome/remove them.

It is implied in the above that only correct and efficient communication can (a) prevent occurrence of a disaster or reduce its impact. (b) reduce vital delays in aftermath and (c) in general decide the success of disaster management efforts.

14.4 TECHNIQUES OF COMMUNICATION

Efficient communication needs hardware and software systems of considerable sophistication. It is obvious, therefore, that their use needs skills and techniques of high order. In the various phases of Disaster Management, where every minute and every effort are precious, it is the efficient and flawless communication which ensures the success of the operation.

Following are the broad areas where skilled communication is required:

- (a) Mass Education And Public Awareness.
- (b) Training of industrial personnel
- (c) Appraisal of Government Authorities
- (d) Information to Media
- (e) Use of Wireless set, and amateur radio (Ham)
- (f) Use of Telephones, Cell phones and satellite phones
- (g) Use of INTERNET including e-mail

A concerted effort is required to train every originator and each recipient in order to make the communication effective, so as to achieve the intended objectives.

14.5 MODES OF COMMUNICATION

With progressive Hi-Tech means a number of sophisticated equipment are being developed. A broad range of the means of communication is given at Annexure A, The point to note in this list is that hardly any existing mode will ever be obsolete despite inclusion of more modern methods.

Media (electronic and print) are very helpful in disaster management related communications. They serve as very useful conduit between the people and the disaster management personnel.

14.6 WAYS TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Plan the Total Requirements of Today and Tomorrow. At the outset, determine numbers - after duly identifying them - of total "subscribers" including industries other sources of Disaster Resources, Government Authorities and make out the phase wise programme of the required means from the list at Annexure 'A'. Also provide for the futuristic increased requirements.

Disaster Management Directory. For day to day interactions, telephone is going to be the major means. Therefore, a group wise Telephone Directory is also necessary..

Skilled Personnel. Having obtained costly communication equipment, skilled personnel need to be inducted to handle it. Every instrument has to be kept in daily use by scheduled "checking". The equipment needs to be maintained and always kept in serviceable condition.

Vigorous and Regular Training. It must be an integral activity so as to maintain and improve the skill level. For example use of wireless set has a specific pattern, not familiar to even educated. This has to be attended to. Also, duty personnel must be taught the use of telephone in an economical yet clear manner.

Sub-Control Rooms/Alternate Control Centres. In the event of main Control Room being ineffective for any reason, there must be another one to assume charge without interruption in the operations.

14.7 LET US SUM UP

We have seen that "Communication" is the most vital requirement for effective and efficient Disaster Management. Since time is of great significance, the delays in intimation and responses at all levels can only be minimised by skilled communication through multitier, sophisticated equipment and trained persons.

Basic requirements of communications are:

- (a) Thorough Knowledge of Situations
- (b) Clarity
- (c) Conciseness
- (d) Thorough Assimilation of Message Received and Correct Response.

Taking into confidence people likely to be affected, in general, and news-media, in particular, and giving them the correct and timely knowledge and information is vital, in order to obviate panic, chaos, rumours and confusion.

The skill levels of all "Originators" and "Receivers" of messages need to be kept high by regular training and constant practice.

Check Your Progress 1

- Noie:**
- i) Use the space given below for your answers.
 - ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Distinguish clearly between the Physical and Conceptual aspects of Communication.

- 2) What are the basic requirements for making an effective communication?

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.
ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1) Which are the "electronic" modes of communication?

2) Which are various wings of "Media"?

14.8 KEY WORDS

Comprehensibility	: Quality of being understood clearly by the recipient of the message
Originator and Receiver of Communication	: A person/control centre which originates orders/instructions/information is originator whereas the party at the other end which "responds" is Receiver.
On Call	: In a state of readiness
Preventive Measures	: All actions including training, supervision, exercises taken to prevent or minimize the probability of occurrence of disaster situations.
Transcends	: Goes beyond
Audit of Events	: To analyse what went wrong after normalcy is restored.
Disaster Management Directory	: A useful compendium of full details of all agencies who contribute to the entire scenario of Disaster Management in any way/capacity in the specific area

14.9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

Vardaman, George T. and C. Carroll, *Managerial Control Through Communication*, New York Communications, New York, Wiley, 1968.

Berlo, David K., *The Process of Communication*, New York, Holt, 1960.

14.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Physical aspect implies various modes of communication e.g., telephones, wireless sets, sirens, TV & radio, newspapers.
 - Conceptual aspect, which is more vital, is to ensure that the intended message/knowledge/ information/order/instruction is so conveyed that it is understood clearly by the "Receiver" for the intended/expected action.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Clarity, Conciseness, Credibility
 - Completeness with due consideration to above.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Electronic modes include-Radio, Television, Wireless Set, Amateur Radio (HAM), Cellular phones, Satellite phones, and INTERNET.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - The word media includes agencies like newspapers, television and radio that serve as the carriers of information to the people at large and also give publicity to their views and responses.
 - Media are usually recognized in two types viz., print media (newspapers and periodicals) and electronic media (television and radio).

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION (DEPENDING ON SITUATION AND AVAILABILITY)

1. WIRELESSSETS:
 - (a) STATIC
 - (b) MOBILE (VEHICLE-MOUNTED)
 - (c) AMATEUR RADIO (HAM)
 - (d) HAND-SET (WALKIE-TALKIE)
2. HOT LINES
"NO DELAY" POINT-TO-POINT COMMUNICATION (BOTH WAYS)
3. ONE WAY COMMUNICATION FROM MAIN CONTROL ROOM TO EACH SUB- CONTROL ROOM FOR SIMULTANEOUS WARNING.
4. TELEPHONES INCLUDING CELLULAR PHONES AND SATELLITE PHONES: TELEPHONE CONFERENCING FACILITIES
5. INTERNET INCULDING E-MAIL
6. SIRENS AND BELLS OR GONGS.
7. DESPATCH RIDERS WITH MOTORCYCLES.
8. MESSENGERS WITH BICYCLES.
9. PAGING SYSTEM - FOR KEY PEIESONNEL AND TRAINED DOCTORS.
10. AIR HORNS.
11. LOUDSPEAICERS MOUNTED ON JEEPS/VANS OR MOTOR BOATS.
12. DOORDARSHAN.
13. AKASI-IVANI.
14. SLIDES IN CINEMA THEATRE