

Seven Cardinal Rules of Risk Communication (Covello and Allen 1988)

- 1. Accept and involve the public as a partner.**
Your goal is to produce an informed public, not to defuse public concerns or replace actions.
- 2. Plan carefully and evaluate your efforts.**
Different goals, audiences, and media require different actions.
- 3. Listen to the public's specific concerns.**
People often care more about trust, credibility, competence, fairness, and empathy than about statistics and details.
- 4. Be honest, frank, and open.**
Trust and credibility are difficult to obtain; once lost, they are almost impossible to regain.
- 5. Work with other credible sources.**
Conflicts and disagreements among organizations make communication with the public much more difficult.
- 6. Meet the needs of the media.**
The media are usually more interested in politics than risk, simplicity than complexity, danger than safety.
- 7. Speak clearly and with compassion.**
Never let your efforts prevent your acknowledging the tragedy of an illness, injury, or death. People can understand risk information, but they may still not agree with you; some people will not be satisfied.