

## Science Communication in a Crisis

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In the wake of a natural disaster or environmental crisis, the media, responders, elected officials, and public look to scientists for their input. These events are excellent opportunities to showcase the value and need for continued excellence in science—but they come with career and personal risks. The higher stakes, immediacy, uncertainty, and unplanned nature of these events deviate from the norms of science. While the interests, needs, value systems, and backgrounds of different stakeholders may be reasonable and rational, they can be new to scientists. A homeowner wants to know if they should sell their waterfront property after an oil spill. A fisher wants to know when they can start feeding their family. Journalists are crafting stories for their impatient and information-hungry audience.

Here, I will identify the principal challenges that scientists face when communicating with different stakeholder groups, offer advice on how to navigate the maze of competing interests, and deliver actionable science when the clock is ticking. My aim is not to teach you how to ace an interview or craft a soundbite; instead, I rely on my mistakes and lessons learned from high-profile case studies, including the 1996 *North Cape* oil spill, the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* disaster, and the 2021 Sri Lanka shipping accident. I will present a clear pathway to effective and collaborative communication and finish with practical advice on how to gain experience and develop connections with the world outside the research lab, with a particular focus on patience, starting at the local community level and focusing on low-risk, high-reward outcomes.