The Scholars Programme

"Help!!!": How Should We Plan Emergency Communication?

Key Stage 4 Programme

Pupil Name

Tutorial Group

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Course Rationale

Evacuation orders and warnings are a common feature in the modern world, from school fire evacuation drills to motorway warnings of a driving accident ahead. Each warning requires careful communication, and there is a generic 'emergency style' of writing.

But what is lesser known is what the theories and features required for making effective communication in these emergency situations are. The general guidance is that clear and actionable communication is the only bedrock for effect evacuation during emergencies. How we realised this is disputed, not through loud speeches and campaigns, but through an inconsistent application of emergency communication across organisations, with many training staff told to simply 'speak clear and be authoritative'. This is an overly simplistic way of thinking, as it does not account for community trust, social reputation, diversity or multilingualism.

This course will outline the base theories and approaches to design and implement emergency communications in a consistent manner. The course will invite pupils to challenge the warning, messaging and evacuation communications from across society, by considering the impact of the language itself, and how well the messages are delivered. Additionally, this course is designed to provide pupils with the skills needed to replicate effective communications for emergencies, from both theoretical and practical standpoints.

More widely, this course will challenge pupils to consider the greater picture involved with emergency communication. The course will prompt pupils to consider multilingualism and multiculturalism in society, and how to prevent discrimination and bias with communication, both general and in emergencies. Furthermore, this course will encourage pupils to critically analyse and assess established communication practises using standardised international warnings criterion. Ultimately, this course will allow pupils to critically decide whether an emergency communication strategy will be effective before the fire alarm rings.

Front cover image: Getty Images

Sample Tutorial Activity

The Risk Model (Sandman, 2012)

In the words of Sandman, "scaring people who are ignoring something that is legitimately dangerous and risky; calming down people who are freaking out over something that's not risky; and guiding people who are freaking out over something that is legitimately risky"

> Risk = Hazard + Outrage model

What is hazard?
The level of danger that exists in a situation. This danger can be from the literal environment towards the literal person, i.e. a danger to life or danger of injury. It can also be for economic, sociological or psychological. With economic, the hazard can be danger to the business's operations, eg redundancy. Psychological hazards include things that can result in trauma. Sociological hazards include events which endanger whole population groups or cultures.

What is outrage?
The response to an event. This includes whether a person believes that there is a serious event occurring, as well as including a person's reaction to the event. High levels of outrage can result in panic, hysteria or over-reaction If the actions of the crisis responders does not provide support and comfort.

What is risk?
The combination of a danger (hazard) and the reaction to it (outrage). When we map these two factors, we can categorise the level of response required to resolve the situation and communicate with the wider population.
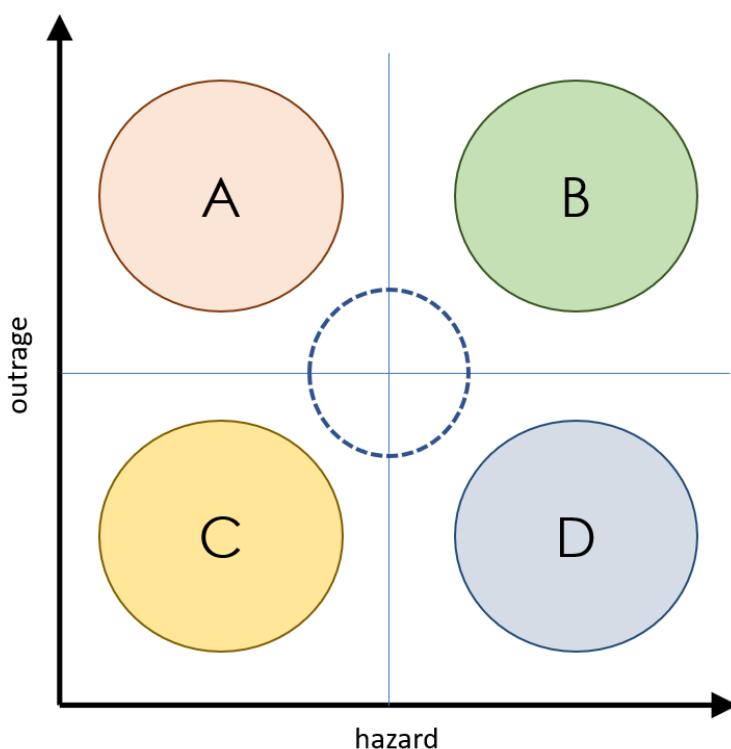
The 5 Zones

A is Outrage Management
Example is 'calm down'

B is Crisis Communications
Example is 'We'll get through this'

C is Outreach building
Example is 'In the future be aware of…'

D is Precautionary Advocacy
Example is 'Watch out'

Target zone is the best practise
Example is 'Take action, but do not panic'

The ideal relationship between hazard and outrage should result in the target zone. To reach this, the gradual approach would look like this, with the two factors risking in severity equally.

Exemplar
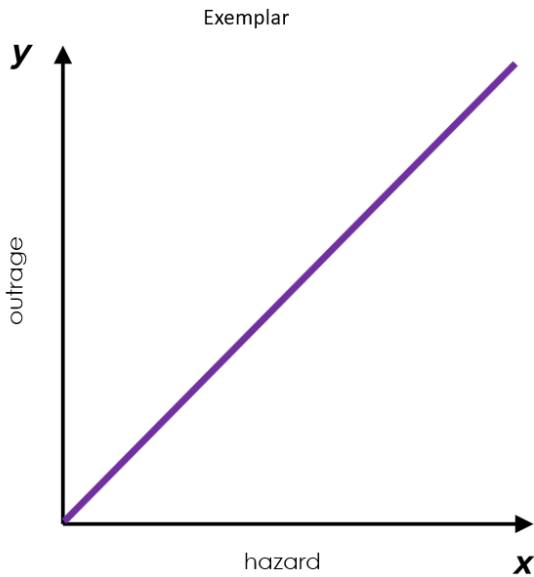
Some could call this a perfect response to emergency. This argument is based on the idea that the population is in sync with the disaster response forces.

Examples for this result are:
Flood prevention strategies where the population reinforced their homes in advance and then relocated for the flash flooding. Thus, no injuries and minimal property damage.
The difficulty making this relationship is that we often do not know the full level of a hazard in advance. Consider tornados or earthquakes, which can occur with little notice. And therefore, the hazard starts higher than the outrage, as the public are unaware.

In reality, what we often see is an imbalance between the outrage and the hazard. Below are two situations which were not equal in outrage and hazard but resulted in the end with high risk.

## Situation A
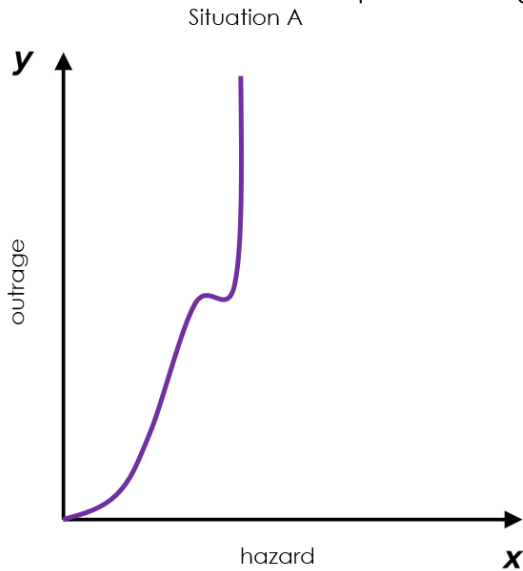
Panic buying
When outrage is far higher than the hazard. In this example, the hazard of supply difficulties could reduce the availability of a product temporarily. However, the outrage escalates within the population.
By the time the supply times have been fixed, the outrage can still be high, which can create a secondary situation – hysteria.

Examples include:
April 2020. Supermarkets faced panic buying for basic essentials. There was an assumption that the resources would run out.
May 2021 Petrol stations faced mass-emptying of fuel stations due to people filling up their cars more often than regular.

Situation B
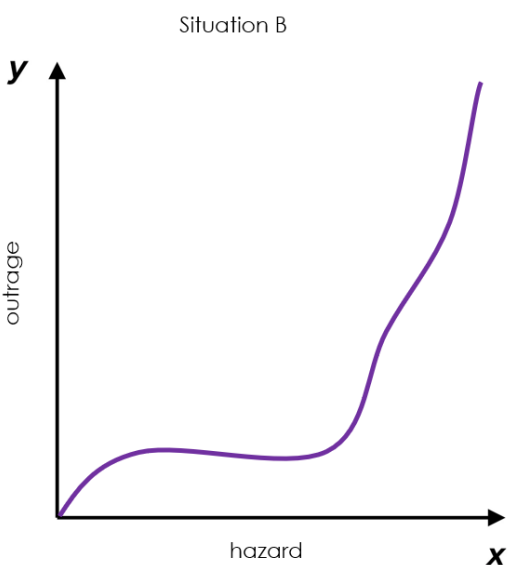
Denial of severity of weather events
The Met office issues an orange warning of an incoming weather event. This alert warns the population of the hazard and encourages precautionary action to be taken. The population ignore the alert.

The weather escalates, and the Met office release a red warning. This means that immediate action must be taken to respond to the weather. This causes sudden action in the population, as direct action is legally required by government services.

Examples include:
Thunderstorms and heavy rainfall, heavy snowstorms, extreme wind, and (newly) extreme heat.

Case Studies

Task 1: Outrage and hazard are abstract variables; this means that they vary by a situation and a person's perspectives. We can plot both as categorical values to keep consistency between situations. Using the boxes below, add examples to describe both variables.
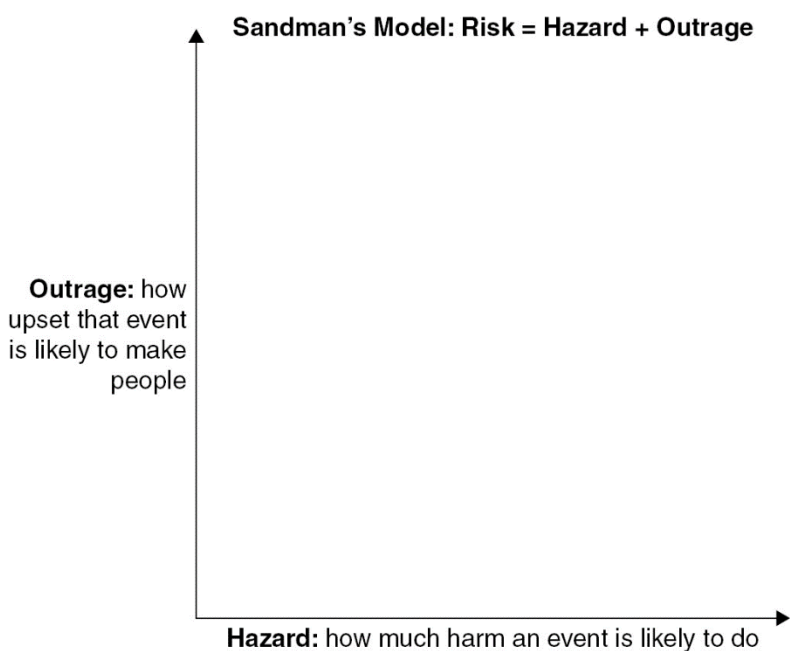
Remember that Outrage is based on the response of the humans (individuals and groups), so emotions and group reactions are the primary examples you should put. Hazard is based on the environment factor causing threat, so example situations where there could be danger would be appropriate.

Outrage	
75-100	
50-74	
25-49	
0-24	Unbothered

Hazard	Broken water pipe			
	0-24	25-49	50-74	75-100

Task 2: Use the graph to plot the expected risk level from the set of example situations

#	Example
1	Flood warning has been issued. There is a village in the risk-zone. The authorities have ordered the evacuation of the population.
2	In a shopping centre, when fixing a display sign, a worker accidently drops their metal toolkit onto the floor. This creates a loud bang sound.
3	A water pipe bursts onto a busy high street during a sunny day.
4	The beginning of the Covid lockdown.
5	A local coffee shop has run out of soya milk.
6	A sudden and heavy hailstorm beginnings at the end of the school day

Sandman's Model: Risk = Hazard + Outrage

Outrage: how upset that event is likely to make people

Hazard: how much harm an event is likely to do

Task 3: In a group or pair, discuss where you have plotted each situation, and compare your answers. If you plotted in the similar area, what were your joint justifications? If you plotted in different areas, why? If you agreed with all of the situations, try to create an alternative plot for the situations with different reasoning to your own.

Task 4: Using the space below, write your justifications for the plotting of each situation.

1 _____

_____

_____

2 _____

_____

_____

3 _____

_____

_____

4 _____

_____

_____

5 _____

_____

_____

6 _____

_____

_____

Plenary/Consolidation Task
To what extent do you agree and disagree with the following statements. Bullet-point your thoughts.

Statement	Agree	Disagree
All emergencies are high risk		
Physical harm is the only harm to think about when an emergency strikes		
Urgency is a minor factor for emergency responses		
Drills improve the outrage for a risk		