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Evolution

of U.S. Government Crisis Comms
Lessons Learned since 9/11

Today's talk

- What drove evolution in US Gov crisis communications?
- Creation of a national crisis comms strategy
- How a large disaster further shaped the system
- How technology continues to force an evolution

What drove the change?

- 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US
- Hurricane Katrina
- Internet and social media

9/11

- Pointed out the lack of a national crisis comms strategy
- Led to creation of Dept of Homeland Security
- DHS tasked with creation of the national strategy
- Originally focused only on terrorist attacks, now all-hazards

Creation of the DCS

- **Domestic Communication Strategy**
- US Government's crisis communications playbook
- First 72-hours of an incident
- Menu of options supported by a robust system
- Used often, exercised regularly, maintained constantly

DCS support system

- **Plans don't work without a system**
- **ENS – emergency notification system**
 - GETS system with telecoms
- **Conference call protocols**
 - NICCL, SICCL, PICCL, classified calls
- **National Joint Information Center**

Hurricane Katrina

- **Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act**
- Unified US Gov communications under ESF-15
- Revamped comms into External Affairs vs media focus
- Organized from Washington DC to the field
- Coordination / integration / synchronization

PKEMRA

- Urged improved external communication
- Engaged key stakeholders including the private sector
- One message / many voices
- Created Ready Campaign, [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://www.disasterassistance.gov)
- Preparedness messaging key to improved crisis comms

New Technology

- Internet allowed direct communication with public
- Social media again changed how we communicate
- Democratized information and allowed 2-way comms
- Drones and AI will reshape situational awareness

Challenges

- Rapid evolution of the information environment has outpaced public sector ability to adapt
- Changes in sources and info habits of the public
- Greater expectations by public that government acts like private sector – faster/individual response
- Challenges of rumors, activism, fake news and sensational media coverage

Further Evolution

- Moved from gov-centric to survivor-centric
- Whole Community Approach – shared responsibility
- Surge capacity force for communications
- Use of reach-back and VOST support

Rethinking Comms

- Communications is Operations
- Presence is Communication
- Improved multi-lingual / multi-cultural engagement
- Establishing comms relationships with stakeholders early
- Greater Public-Private Partnerships in communications

Tomorrow

- Risks and Threats: Cyber attacks, foreign meddling
- Need to make the complex understandable
- Reestablishing credibility of government “voice”
- Fighting “echo-chamber” and “balkanization”
- Being ready for Maximum of Maximum events (AF8)

For information on:
Risk and Crisis Management and Communication

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