

Managing Media Relations

Public Health Communications Webinar Series

July 18, 2019

Webinar Objectives

- Introduce basic principles of interacting with and pitching local media
- Understand different types of media communications tactics, (e.g., press releases, backgrounders, media advisories and press briefings)
- Learn best practices for educating media partners on health topics/data to avoid inaccuracy

Agenda

- **Media Relations Principles & Tactics**
 - Richard Sheehe, Senior Strategist, Merritt Group
- **Case Study: Ottawa County Department of Public Health (Michigan)**
 - Kristina Wieghmink, Public Information Officer
- **Q&A**



MerrittGROUP

NACCHO
2019 Public Health Communications
Webinar Series: Managing Media
Relations

Richard Sheehe

Senior Strategist, Merritt Group

Senior Research Fellow, George
Mason University Dept. of
Communications

July 18, 2019

Learning Objectives



Understand conceptual keys to effective media interactions

Navigate the media, messaging and interview techniques

Leverage media relations tools and templates: You don't have to start from scratch!

An Integrated, Strategic Communications Approach



Informed by evidence-based leading practices and a cross-disciplinary perspective derived from Richard's background in journalism, PR, marketing, education & research.

Primer Exercise: Importance of “Storytelling”



An individual has been described by a neighbor as follows:

“Steve is very shy and withdrawn, invariably helpful but with little interest in people or the world of reality. A meek and tidy soul, he has a need for order and structure and a passion for detail.”

Q: Is Steve more likely to be a librarian or a farmer?

The Importance of “Storytelling”

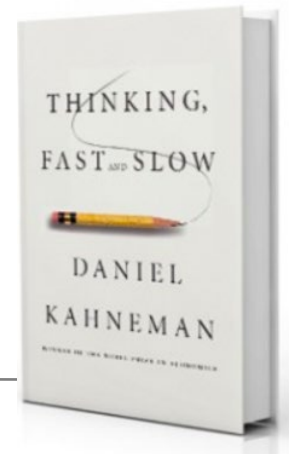


An individual has been described by a neighbor as follows:

“Steve is very shy and withdrawn, invariably helpful but with little interest in people or the world of reality. A meek and tidy soul, he has a need for order and structure and a passion for detail.”

A: Steve is at least 18x more likely to be a farmer.

THE UPSHOT: Our communication style must leverage narrative & storytelling...
...including tech, engineering, science, etc!



WHAT REPORTERS WANT



WHAT YOU WANT

Leverage the media as a resource to reach many stakeholders

Avoid confusing the interests of the media with the interests of your organization and stakeholders

Maintain polite locus of control during the media interaction

Tailor interaction to situational factors (ie: crisis vs. ribbon cutting)

Maintain "Message Discipline" and stay on topic...

....while still maintaining people skills, staying human and approachable

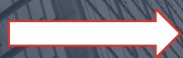
Remember that a media interaction is, above all, a business interaction.

Never confuse a friendly interaction with friendship!

SUPPORT YOUR
**STORY WITH SOLID
MESSAGE
DEVELOPMENT**



SUPPORT YOUR
**STRATEGY WITH
SOLID GRASP OF
SITUATION & GOALS**



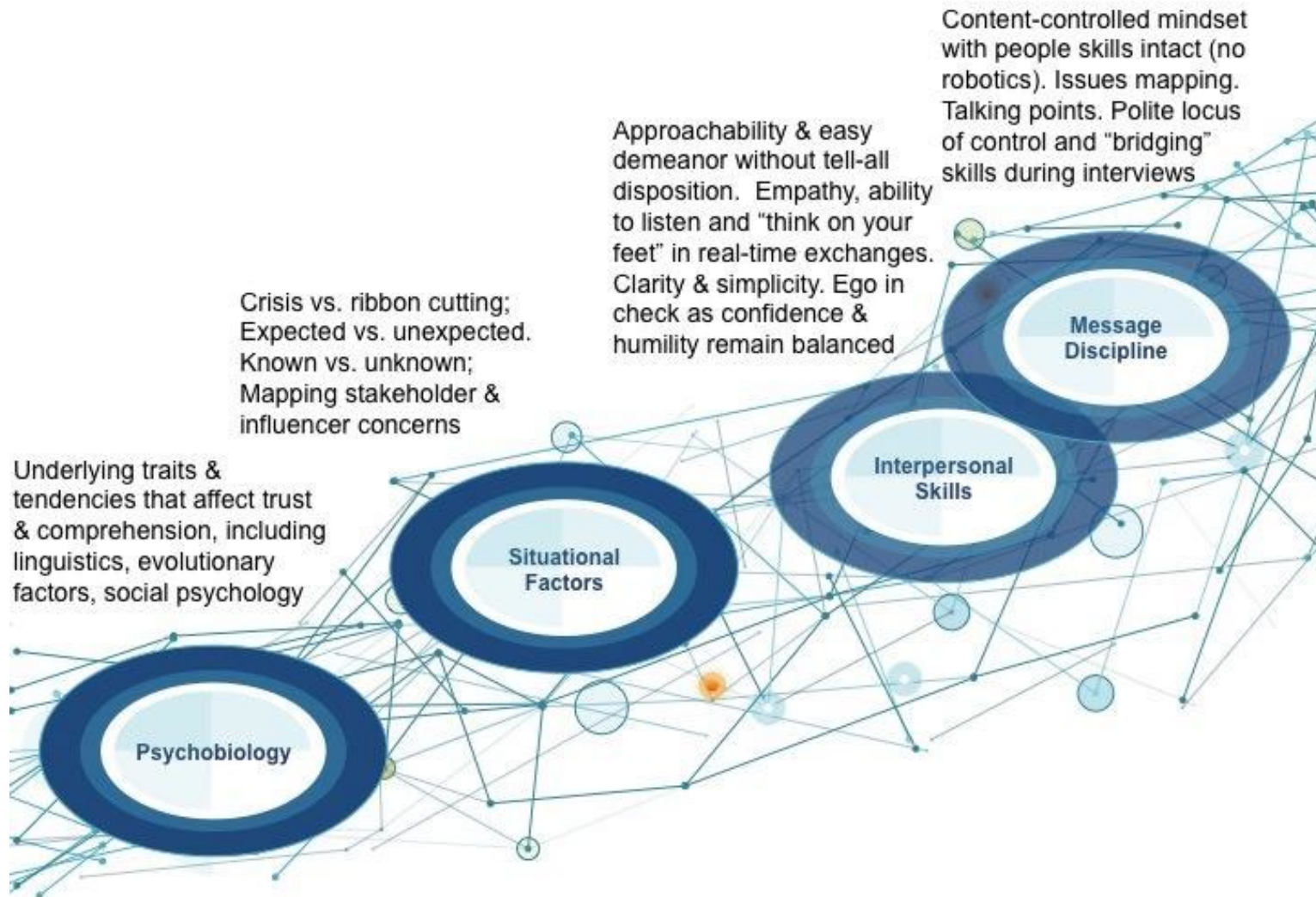
KNOW YOUR STORY:

- Develop key messages and have sound bytes ready to optimize quotability
- Balance facts and figures with anecdotes and illustrations
 - This reaches the broadest variety of stakeholders
- Use 3rd party endorsements

**DEFINE YOUR OBJECTIVE
AND THE MEDIA'S OBJECTIVE:**

- What are you being interviewed for?
- What is the potential loss/gain? Any controversy?
- Will stakeholders, consumers, partners, and customers understand your message?

THE COMMUNICATIONS “ECOSYSTEM”



More on the Communications Ecosystem



'Ecosystem' Approach Urged For Communicators

By Richard Sheeha and Gary L. Kreps

Managing public communications across a range of situations and stakeholder audiences is a lot like building a puzzle from many useful, but fragmented, pieces of insight. Especially during a crisis, it can be challenging to share relevant information with multiple audiences and maintain a consistent and trusted organizational identity amid diverse, and sometimes conflicting, priorities and principles.

Imagine, for instance, you're hearing calls to test a very wide population for a disease that, in all scientific likelihood, won't spread beyond a small group of individuals. From a communications standpoint, how do we balance public fears and political demands for "abundance of caution" against fiscal, scientific and organizational concerns about misallocation of resources? Emotions, medicine, politics, competing stakeholder interests and basic human nature are all at work here – and your communication strategy needs to take every perspective into account.

Connecting the Dots

Communicators hoping to untangle situations like this will benefit from fewer silos and more coordination among the many practice areas involved. Media advisers, community relations staff, subject-matter experts, scientists, emergency managers, finance, legal and regulatory colleagues can all play important roles in guiding strategy. But it's the communicator's job to synthesize these diverse and sometimes competing interests into a public posture that is unified, consistent and trustworthy.

In the struggle to connect the dots, we believe the most successful strategies involve filtering wisdom from multiple disciplines through a common lens focused squarely on the communications mission. In this article, we're not advocating any one particular program or methodology, but rather a strategic mindset: Try to imagine your information landscape as a multi-disciplinary ecosystem of interrelated and sometimes interdependent dynamics that govern communications success.

Three Strategic Priorities

The accompanying graphic is one way to illustrate this kind of "Communications Ecosystem" mindset, as we've come to call it. Whatever your specific strategy might look like, we suggest it involve several key characteristics:



- Your strategy should be multi-disciplinary** – Depending on the specific situation, the communicator may be dealing with science, politics, HR, law, medicine, critical infrastructure and just about any other field you could think of. No single discipline should necessarily overshadow the others as you craft and share messages. Legal strategy dressed up as a communications plan, for instance, can come across as inhuman or robotic; a plan based solely on community expectations can lead to overpromising; a media-driven playbook may sacrifice message discipline for quotability. Understanding and respecting the insights and applicability of multiple professional disciplines – and helping your many colleagues do the same – can bring checks, balances and consistency over time and across different circumstances.
- Your strategy should be evidence-based** – Your approach should invite common ground between the academic and practitioner's worlds. Real-world lessons learned and "war stories" should be backed up by accurate metrics, analysis and research findings on how specific audiences interpret, share and respond to messages. As our ecosystem graphic on page 6 suggests, data-driven evidence on cognitive, biological and social dynamics affecting how we communicate is essential to your strategy. "Evidence-based practice" has helped revitalize medicine, criminal justice, education and other disciplines, but its direct application to strategic communication remains rare. We all should work to change this!

continued on page 6



Ecosystem Approach, continued from page 5

3. Your strategy should be accessible to the communicator as "end user" – Multi-disciplinary and evidence-backed insights aren't much good if they're out of reach for the front line communicators who work with the public, media and other stakeholders daily. Your approach should include useful toolkits, templates and dashboards that can be put to use on short notice and in real time to keep your communication programs timely, relevant and influential.

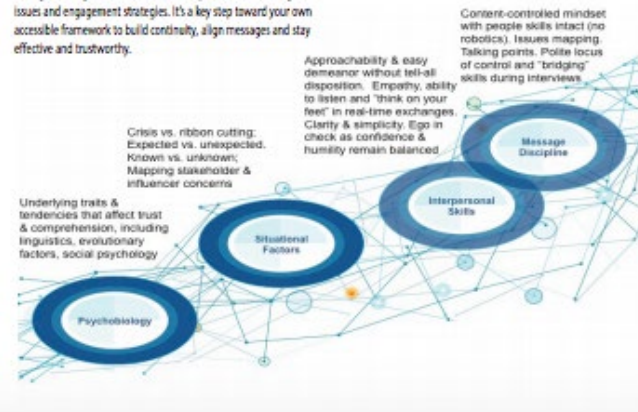
If adopting this expansive and practical "ecosystem" view of communications sounds like a tall order, the good news is that you don't have to start from scratch. We all owe a great debt to the CDC's own CER, curriculum, which builds all three of the above characteristics into guidance for crisis and emergency risk situations. A great example is the CER's "Crisis Communications Lifecycle" graphic, an accessible dashboard that is backed by tons of applicable research and best practices across multiple disciplines.

Your own organization inevitably will have unique communication dynamics and challenges that require a certain amount of customized strategy in crisis and non-crisis situations alike. Regardless of your particular solution, however, it helps to think through the larger communications "ecosystem" when vetting issues and engagement strategies. It's a key step toward your own accessible framework to build continuity, align messages and stay effective and trustworthy.



(Richard Sheeha, MA, is a senior research fellow at George Mason University's Center for Health and Risk Communication and a NPHIC Thought Leader who has been affiliated with CDC CER since 2001. A former national correspondent for NBC News and contributing writer for The New York Times and Associated Press, he has worked in public affairs since 1998 and is founder of PRO160, a media training and strategic communication consulting practice. His "Communications Ecosystem" blog can be found at www.pro160.com.)

(Gary L. Kreps, Ph.D., FMH, is director of George Mason University's Center for Health and Risk Communication and is a university distinguished professor in GMU's Department of Communication. A researcher and educator who has authored more than 400 articles, books and essays, Dr. Kreps also served as founding chief of the Health Communication and Informatics Research Branch at the National Cancer Institute.)



NPHIC News Article: (archived at <https://bit.ly/32t9eKG>)

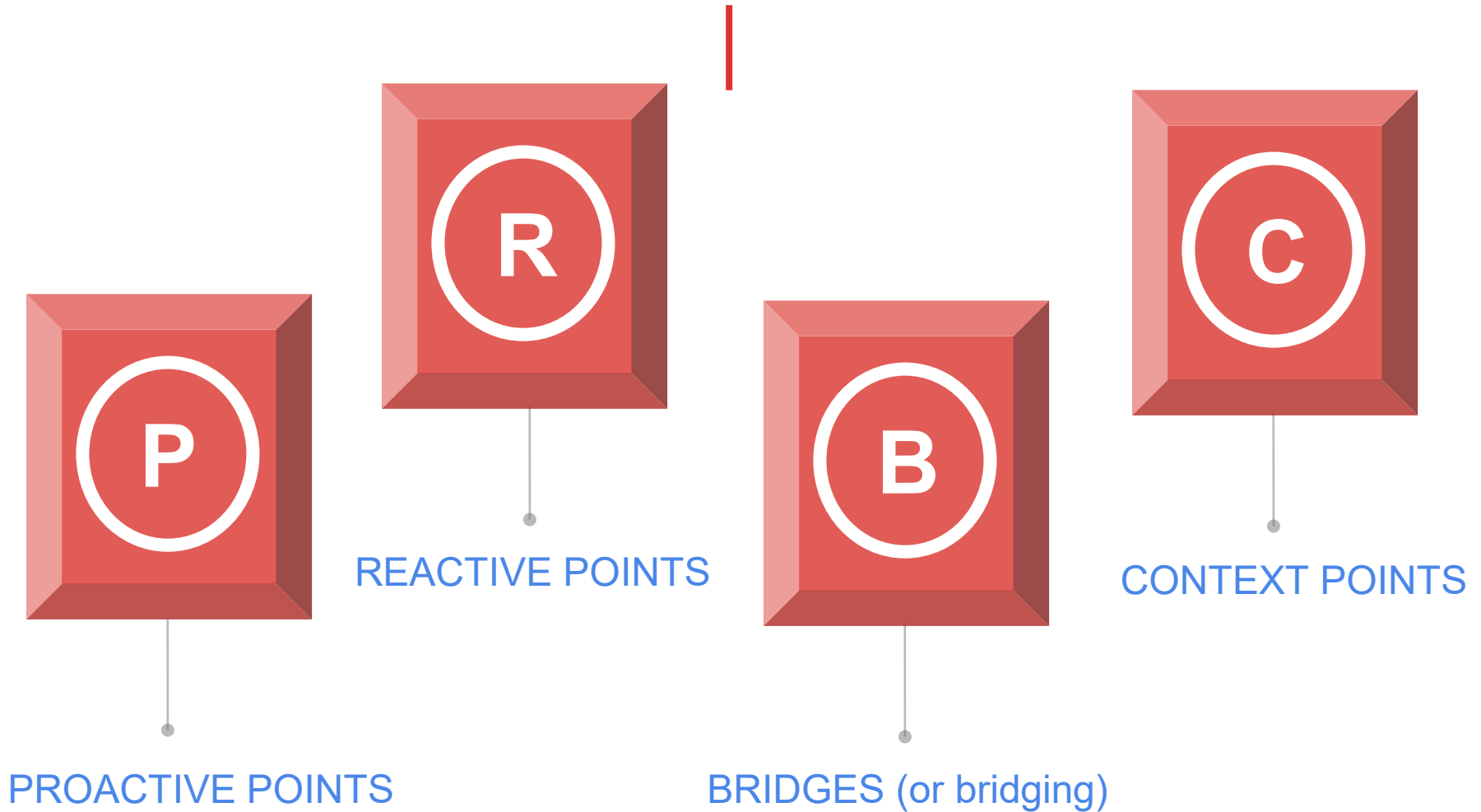
FRAME OF MIND



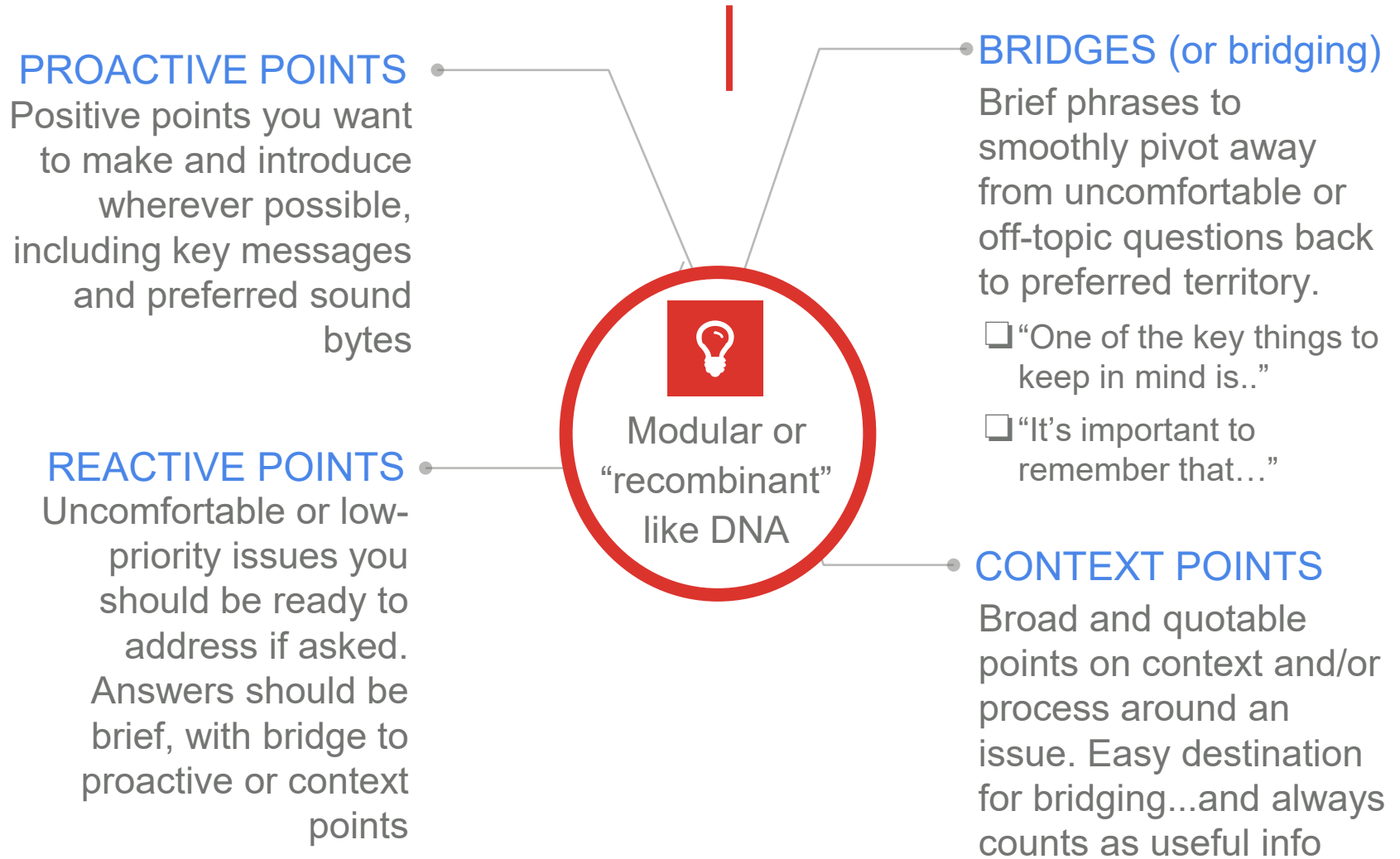
Make sure to convey:

- Openness and “Empathy”
- Common interests
 - “Zoom out” to find shared goals
 - “Zoom back in” to establish POV from a starting point of consensus
- Emotional balance
 - Keep any of your own strong emotions in check
 - Avoid urge to match any negative rhetoric/tone of the questioner
- Sense of teamwork (“We” instead of “I”)

INTERVIEWS & REAL-TIME MEDIA RELATIONS:
CONSTRUCT **ALL** YOUR ANSWERS FROM
4 KEY “BUILDING BLOCKS”



CONSTRUCT ALL YOUR ANSWERS FROM 4 KEY "BUILDING BLOCKS"



KEY TAKEAWAYS



- The media is not your end stakeholder, only a conduit to them.
- Your media interactions require advance strategy and preparation wherever possible.
- Your strategy and tactics should be informed by evidence-based best practices and a grasp of the broader “Communications Ecosystem”
- Your real-time media interactions should rely on communications building blocks and message discipline.
- Tools, templates and processes can enhance consistency, efficiency and impact of your media relations efforts...YOU DON'T HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH!

Lots of media relations tools and templates exist, including those freely-available by and for government communicators (e.g., CDC – CERC).

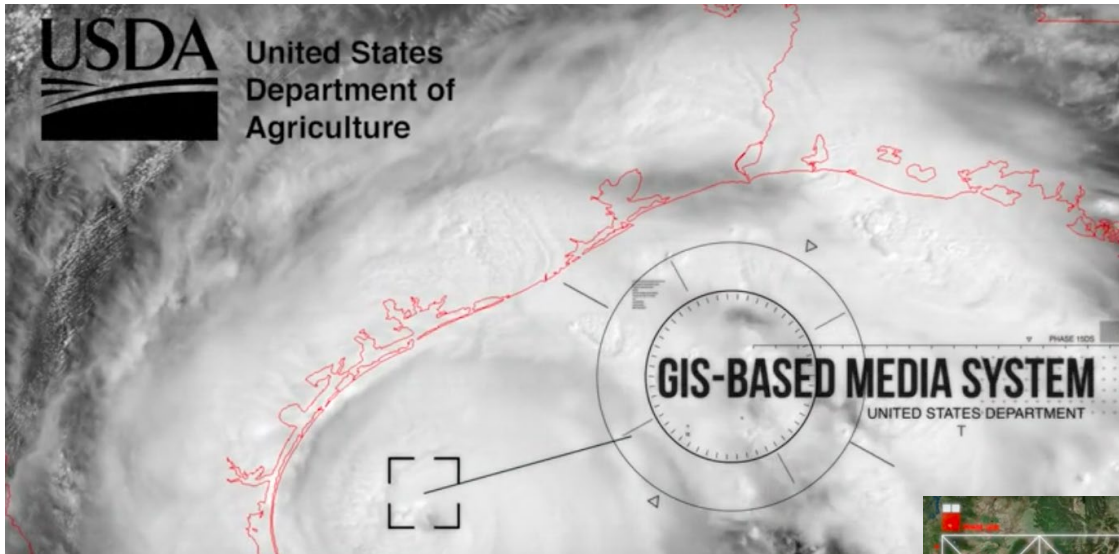
The screenshot shows the CDC Emergency Preparedness and Response website. At the top left is the CDC logo and the text "Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC 24/7: Saving Lives. Protecting People™". At the top right is a search bar and a link to "A-Z Index". The main header is "Emergency Preparedness and Response". Below the header is a breadcrumb trail: "Resources for Emergency Health Professionals > Crisis & Emergency Risk Communication > Manual and Tools". There are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, Email, and RSS. A left sidebar menu includes "Crisis & Emergency Risk Communication", "Training", "Manual and Tools" (selected), "CERC Manual", "CERC Templates and Tools" (highlighted), "CERC Corner", and "Presentations". The main content area is titled "CERC Templates and Tools" and lists various resources:

- [CERC Pandemic Influenza Manual \(PDF\)](#) [PDF - 665K]
- [Staffing Planning Worksheet](#) [PDF - 665K]
- [By Leaders for Leaders \(PDF\)](#) [PDF - 578K]
- [Special Populations Assessment](#) [PDF - 578K]
- [Event Assessment Wizard](#) [PDF - 233K]
- [Anticipated Questions Tool](#) [PDF - 233K]
- [CERC Rubric](#) [PDF - 300K]
- [CERC Plan Checklist](#) [PDF - 175K]
- [CERC Message Template](#) [PDF - 168K]
- [News Release Template](#) [PDF - 166K]
- [First 48 Hours Checklist](#) [PDF - 193K]
- [Message Development for Communication Worksheet](#) [PDF - 57K]
- [CERC Assessment Tool](#) [PDF - 376K]

More info at <https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/>

YOU DON'T HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH!

Another example: USDA's NEW GIS-BASED MEDIA SYSTEM



More info:

YouTube Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPqYgq2g0II>

Dirk Fillpot
USDA Office of
Communications



MerrittGROUP




Managing Media Relations

Contaminated Drinking Water at a Rural School

Kristina Wieghmink, Public Information Officer

kwieghmink@miOttawa.org | miOttawa.org/miHealth

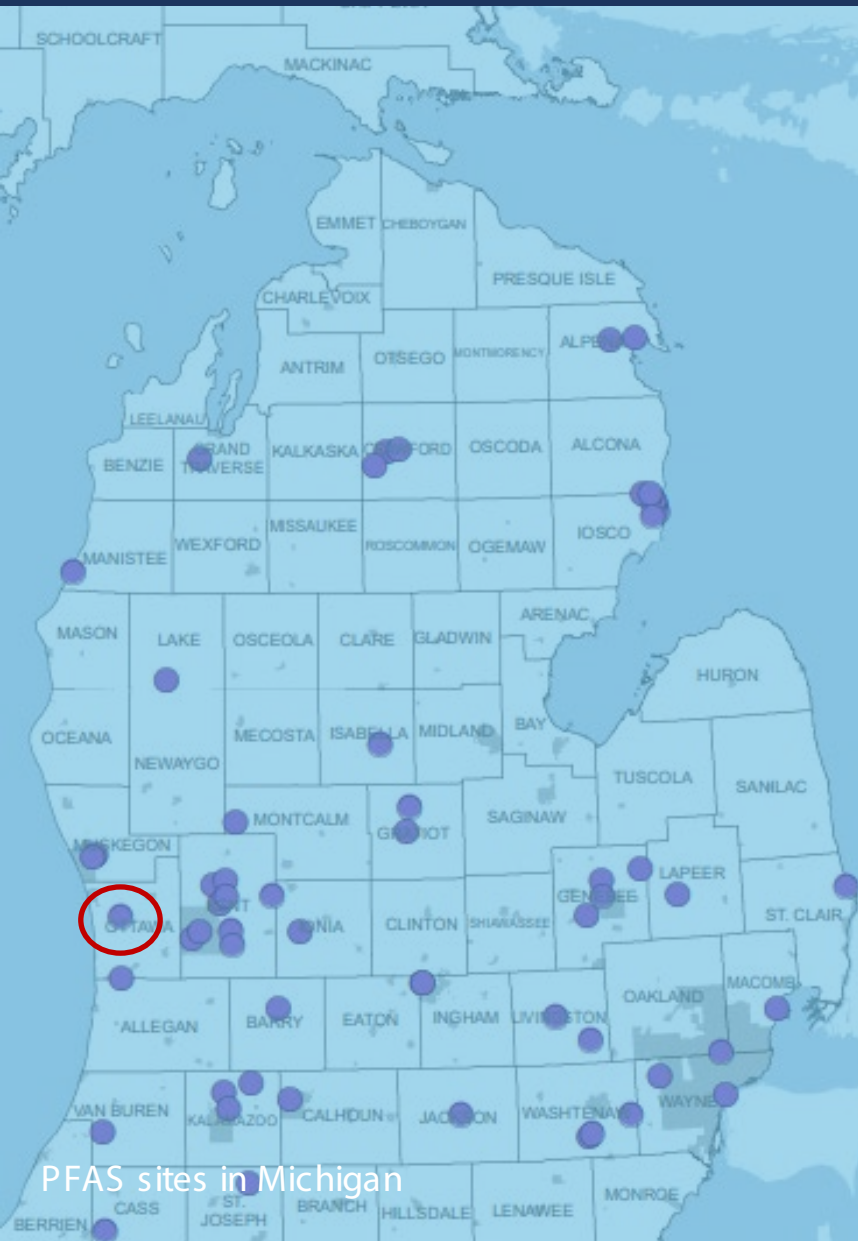
*mi*Ottawa Department of
Public Health

- 
- Situation Overview
 - Coordinated Response
 - Lessons Learned



- 1**  Be First.
- 2**  Be Right.
- 3**  Be Credible.
- 4**  Express Empathy.
- 5**  Promote Action.
- 6**  Show Respect.

Statewide Testing Initiative



PFAS sites in Michigan



Response Agencies



Coordinated Response Priorities

Address
Public Concern

WHO How WHAT
WHEN ? WHY
WHERE

Provide Consistent
Messages

Communication Methods

The image displays three overlapping news release templates from the Ottawa County Department of Public Health. Each template features a blue header with the department's logo and tagline, 'Our Vision - Healthy People', and a 'SHARE' button. The top template is dated October 29, 2018, and has the headline 'Elevated PFAS levels at Robinson Elementary School'. The middle template is dated October 31, 2018, and has the headline 'Press Conference'. The bottom template is dated May 9, 2019, and has the headline 'Robinson Township 120th Avenue PFAS Study Area Update'. The bottom template also includes contact information for Kristina Wieghmink, Public Information Officer, and Scott Dean, Communications Director.

miOttawa Department of Public Health
Our Vision - Healthy People

Ottawa County | October 29, 2018

Elevated PFAS levels at Robinson Elementary School

The Ottawa County Department of Health (DEQ) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) have provided to the school district and DHHS. The results on October 29, 2018, for the Grand Haven Area Public School District.

miOttawa Department of Public Health
Our Vision - Healthy People

Ottawa County | October 31, 2018

Press Conference

For Immediate Release: Public release of Robinson Elementary School PFAS test results

Media Contact:
Kristina Wieghmink
Ottawa County Department of Public Health
Mobile/Text 616-559-4949

WHO: Representative of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Grand Haven Area Public School District

miOttawa Department of Public Health
Our Vision - Healthy People

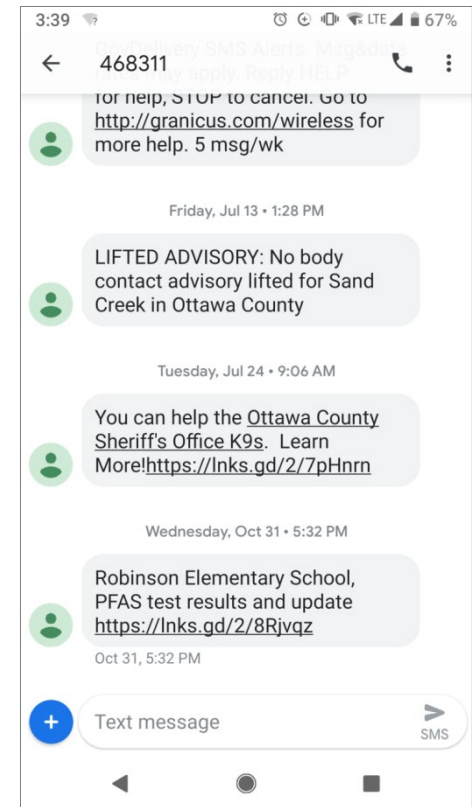
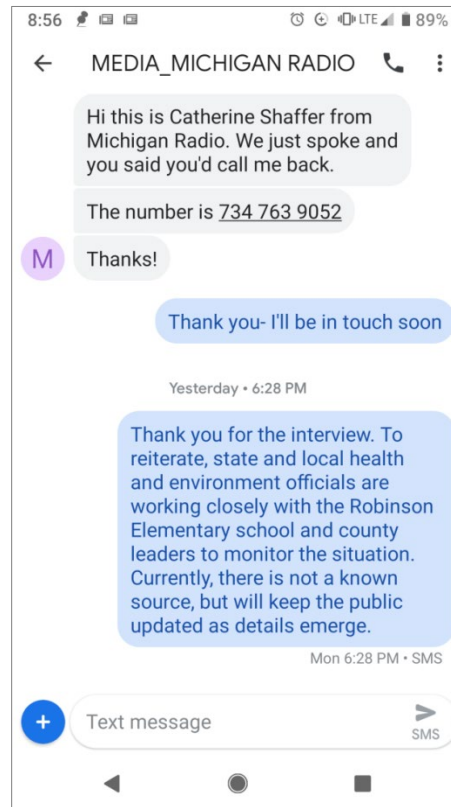
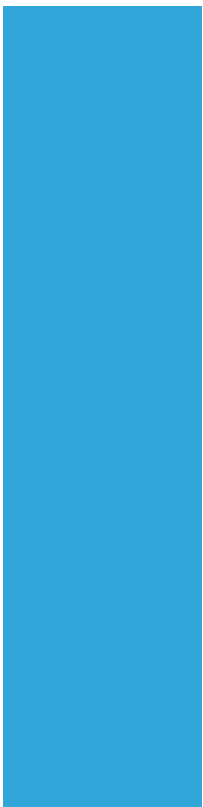
May 9, 2019 | NEWS RELEASE

Robinson Township 120th Avenue PFAS Study Area Update

Media inquiries for the Ottawa County Department of Public Health:
Kristina Wieghmink
Public Information Officer
616-494-5597 or kwieghmink@miottawa.org

Media inquiries for the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy:
Scott Dean
Communications Director

- News Releases
- Press Conferences
- Text Alerts
- Social Media
- Facebook Live
- Websites
- Town Hall Meeting
- Posters
- Interviews
- Administrator's Digest
- Newsletters/bulletins





Robinson Township Informed

Public group

- About
- Discuss
- Members
- Events
- Videos
- Photos
- Files
- Recommendations



92.1 WGHN FM @WGHNFM · 30 Oct 2018

U.S. Congressman Bill Huizenga: 'Today it was announced that elevated levels of PFAS were detected at Robinson Elementary School in Ottawa County... I am committed to working with our state & local partners to ensure our community and children have access to safe drinking water.'

Today it was announced that elevated levels of PFAS were detected at Robinson Elementary School in Ottawa County, Michigan. School officials for the school and township have already been notified and testing is continuing in the surrounding area. We are working with our state and local partners to ensure our community and children have access to safe drinking water. For more information on the PFAS Response please visit <https://www.ottawacounty.gov/health-services/department-of-health-services/pfas-response>



Commissioner Zylstra @OCCommZylstra · Jan 10
Robinson Township 120th Avenue PFAS Study
 Friday, February 8, 2019; 5 pm-7:30 pm
 Main Conference Room
 Ottawa County Administrative Offices
 12220 Fillmore Street, West Olive



Alex Sinn · Robinson Township Informed

Dec 12, 2018 · Hello Robinson residents, I'm a reporter with the Grand Haven Tribune hoping to talk to some residents who have had their water recently tested for PFAS. Please message me or reply here if you would be willing to share your experience with us. Thanks very much.

4

11 Comments 1 Share



Grand Haven Area Public Schools

1.4K like this · Grand Haven, Michigan · Public School

Oct 29, 2018 · ROBINSON ELEMENTARY PARENTS: Today we were notified by the Michigan DEQ that Robinson Elementary School's water supply tested positive for the presence of per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in an amount greater than the EPA's Lifetime Health...



3

7 Comments 3 Shares



13 On Your Side

Page · 261K like this · Grand Rapids, Michigan · TV Channel

Oct 31, 2018 · WATCH LIVE: PFAS test results of Robinson Elementary School revealed



17

31 Comments 11 Shares



WOOD TV8

Page · 269K like this · TV Channel

Oct 31, 2018 · UPDATE: Follow-up tests at Robinson Elementary near Grand Haven have confirmed the school's well water contains elevated levels of PFAS. Report: dtv.com/1564910990



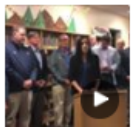
11

19 Comments 11 Shares

Irizarry

1 like this · Journalist

...found elevated levels of PFAS in elementary's drinking water.



FOX 17 @FOX17 · 31 Oct 2018

Higher PFAS levels found in Robinson Elementary water after 2nd test
bit.ly/2P3rQha



WOOD TV8 @WOODTV · 31 Oct 2018

Tests confirm elevated level of PFAS in water at Robinson Elementary near Grand Haven:



Robinson Elementary School

Updated: M

At Robin
Public S
filtratio

Project His

As part of th
sampling p
2018.

On October
Robinson E
were:

- PFOS
- PFBS
- PFHxS
- Total

EGLE imme
Departmen
officials from
Elementary
bezan using



PFAS Response

The Ottawa County Department of Public Health (OCDPH) continues to work with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE, formerly MDEQ), Grand Haven Area Public Township on a public health action plan. A plan was developed in response to the Statewide Testing Initiative Fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in the water supply well for Robinson Elementary School in Grand Haven. The EPA Health Advisory Level (LHA) of 70 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOS and PFOA combined. Immediately upon all water fountains and provided the students and staff with bottled water for drinking and cooking. The school is working on system design for an on-site water filtration system taken at Township buildings in the area.

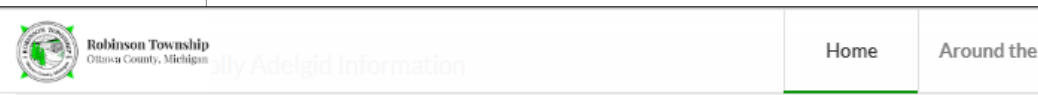
The results of the school's water supply well led to establishing two water wells, one of which exceeded 70 ppt for PFOS and PFOA combined. Upon detection of PFAS were offered and had installed a point of use water filter. Township Fire Department (RTFD) and Township Hall to further investigate the cause of the PFAS contamination. Soil and groundwater testing indicated PFAS likely historically released on both properties. However, a distinct boundary was identified between the two properties. Grand Haven Area Public Township and GHAPS to fully delineate the extent of PFAS in groundwater.

Details of the investigation results are provided below in the timeline. Results are shown in different colors based on sample results.

Meanwhile, the school will continue to provide bottled water until further detection in drinking water wells are using bottled or filtered water. If you have any questions or concerns about PFAS exposure, please contact the MDHHS toxicology department. For more information about PFAS exposure and health can be found at the National Toxicology Program's Toxicology and Carcinogenesis Studies of Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctyl Sulfonate (PFOS) in F344/N Rats and B6C3F1 Mice. For more information about PFAS exposure and health can be found at the National Toxicology Program's Toxicology and Carcinogenesis Studies of Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctyl Sulfonate (PFOS) in F344/N Rats and B6C3F1 Mice. For more information about PFAS exposure and health can be found at the National Toxicology Program's Toxicology and Carcinogenesis Studies of Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctyl Sulfonate (PFOS) in F344/N Rats and B6C3F1 Mice.

- » Town Hall Meeting February 8, 2019 Presentation | Video
- » PFAS Fact Sheet
- » PFAS in Drinking Water
- » Testing and Treatment
- » Sampling and Lab Information
- » PFAS Sampling Guidance for Residential Wells
- » PFAS Exposure and Your Health
- » Talking to Your Doctor about Exposure to PFAS
- » Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

Timeline



PFAS

On October 29, Robinson Township was informed that the Ottawa County Department of Public Health and Grand Haven Public Schools were notified of elevated levels of PFAS at Grand Haven's Robinson Elementary School. School leaders immediately restricted access to drinking water in the building; bottled water is being provided to the school. Other than Robinson Elementary, all other schools in the Grand Haven Public School District are served by Northville Public Schools. All other schools were as below health.



- CALENDARS
- ENROLLMENT
- SCHOOL MENUS
- TRANSPORTATION
- PARENTS

- OUR DISTRICT
- BOARD OF ED
- ACADEMICS
- ARTS
- ATHLETICS
- PARENTS
- BUILDINGS

Our District

- Superintendent & Cabinet
- » Robinson Elementary PFAS Water Issue
- Calendars
- Spotlight District Newsletter
- Staff Directory
- Enrollment
- Capturing Kids' Hearts
- Community Partnerships
- Grand Haven Schools Highlights Show
- Departments
- Grand Haven Schools Foundation
- National Blue Ribbon Schools Awards

Robinson Elementary PFAS Water Issue

On Monday, October 29th, 2018, Grand Haven Area Public Schools were notified by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality that Robinson Elementary School's water was positive for the presence of per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in an EPA's Lifetime Health Advisory (LHA) level. School officials were immediately notified and we were taking every precautionary measure. The letter below outlines the background behind this newly-emerging contaminant and our Grand Haven Area Public School's continued plan to ensure the safety of our students.

5-9-2019 Update on PFAS in Robinson Elementary Water

To our GHAPS Families,

Thank you so much for your patience and support as we continue to work through the issue with Robinson Elementary School's water. Our student's safety is our utmost concern. We are actively working on system design for a new water filtration system. These systems are a long-term, cost-effective solution for the district. The water continues to be safe, since the route of exposure to PFAS is ingestion. Rob confirmed that similar safety steps have been taken at Township buildings in the area.

Public Relations

miOttawa Department of
Public Health

Our Vision - Healthy People

SHARE

January 23, 2019 | Robinson Township

TOWN HALL MEETING

Robinson Township
120th Avenue PFAS
Study Area

Friday, February 8, 2019
5 pm-7:30pm
Main Conference Room
Ottawa County Administrative Offices
12220 Fillmore Street, West Olive



12:44 468311

Preview not available

Wednesday, Jan 23 • 9:27 AM

<https://lnks.gd/2/98hTjr>

TOWN HALL MEETING Robinson Twp PFAS Study Area. Fri, Feb 8, 2019; 5pm-7:30pm -Main Conference Room, Ottawa County Administrative Offices. <http://bit.ly/2UbSZMW>

Jan 23, 10:17 AM

Tuesday, Jan 29 • 10:46 AM

Ottawa County officials urging residents to stay home & stay indoors. Ottawa Co will continue to monitor conditions. Having trouble viewing this email? <a href=

Jan 29, 10:46 AM

Text message SMS



Lessons Learned

Emergency responses don't have to be chaotic.

- Develop relationships with media before an emergency.
- Coordinate consistent communications with all stakeholders.
- Respect each other's expertise and role in the response.
- Look at the situation through the eyes of those affected.

Don't ever think it can't happen to you!



Helpful Tools

- Analyze headlines - headlines.sharethrough.com
- Hootsuite – social media management platform
- Prdaily.com – communication tips
- PolishMyWriting.com
- Hemingwayapp.com
- GovDelivery
- Qualtrics
- Adobe Creative Cloud
- Free photo and vector sites

Contact me if you want any links.



THANK YOU

Kristina Wieghmink, Public Information Officer
kwieghmink@miOttawa.org | 616-494-5597

*mi*Ottawa Department of
Public Health

Q & A



Thank You