


NATURAL HAZARDS MISSION AREA    SAFRR Project: Science Application for Risk Reduction

## Earthquake Policy:

Communicating Information to Those in Power

John Bwarie  
*Strategy & Communications Officer,  
SAFRR: Science Application for Risk Reduction*

**Natural Hazards:** Earthquake • Volcanic Eruption • Landslide • Flood • Geomagnetic Storm • Wildfire • Tsunami • Coastal Erosion

## The SAFRR Project

SAFRR = Science Application for Risk Reduction

*The mission of SAFRR is **to innovate the application of hazard science** for the safety, security, and economic well-being of the nation.*

**Natural Hazards:** Earthquake • Volcanic Eruption • Landslide • Flood • Geomagnetic Storm • Wildfire • Tsunami • Coastal Erosion

## Who Makes Earthquake Policy?

- Mom
- Spouse
- Appointed Officials
- Emergency Managers
- Elected Officials (local, state, federal)
- Business Leaders
- Thought Leaders
- Community Leaders
- Media



Natural Hazards: Earthquake • Volcanic Eruption • Landslide • Flood • Geomagnetic Storm • Wildfire • Tsunami • Coastal Erosion

## What do You Need from Earthquake Policy-makers?

- Awareness? → Inclusion of EQ info in all speeches
- Support? → Signing up as project partner
- Resources/Funding? → Dedicate staff for effort
- Building Codes? → Concrete Retrofit Ordinance?
- New/tougher Rules? → Annual EQ eval of pipes?
- Incentives? → Tax reduction for retrofit
- Increased preparedness? → CERT train 10% of pop



Natural Hazards: Earthquake • Volcanic Eruption • Landslide • Flood • Geomagnetic Storm • Wildfire • Tsunami • Coastal Erosion

## Identify WHY you're talking to them

- What's the point?
- What **actions** you want them to take
- Have clear outcomes (so you can focus)



Natural Hazards: Earthquake • Volcanic Eruption • Landslide • Flood • Geomagnetic Storm • Wildfire • Tsunami • Coastal Erosion

## Crafting the Message

- Know Your Audience:
  - What's important to them (make it their issue)
  - WIIFM: "What's in it for me?" (What problem of theirs can you help solve)
  - What can you offer them?
- Establish your Authority (or have someone establish it for you)
- Have simple, memorable message



Natural Hazards: Earthquake • Volcanic Eruption • Landslide • Flood • Geomagnetic Storm • Wildfire • Tsunami • Coastal Erosion

## Delivering the Message

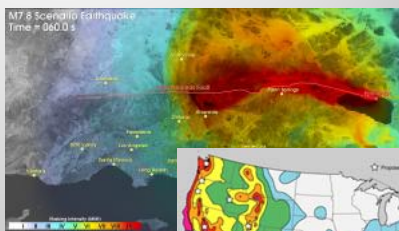
- Speak their language
- Who does the speaking (who do they listen to?)
- Have a conversation: talk don't lecture
  - People like to talk about themselves
- Be concrete & use examples...



Natural Hazards: Earthquake • Volcanic Eruption • Landslide • Flood • Geomagnetic Storm • Wildfire • Tsunami • Coastal Erosion

## Delivering the Message: Communication Tools & Products

- Be concrete as it relates to them:
  - Scenarios
  - Simple data
  - Pictures
  - Easy, powerful quotes from an independent (local?) expert
  - Media



“Sell preparedness like they sell Coke.” – Dennis Mileti



Natural Hazards: Earthquake • Volcanic Eruption • Landslide • Flood • Geomagnetic Storm • Wildfire • Tsunami • Coastal Erosion

## Delivering the Message: Illuminate the Path

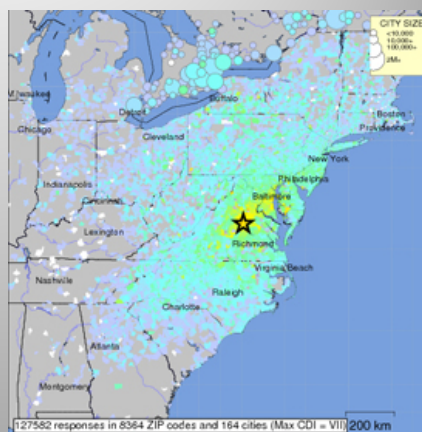
- Quickly establish a knowledge baseline
- Show them the way to success
- Remember that perception is reality in high-level policy-making



**USGS** Natural Hazards: Earthquake • Volcanic Eruption • Landslide • Flood • Geomagnetic Storm • Wildfire • Tsunami • Coastal Erosion

## Following-up on the Message

- Respond quickly and frequently (as requested)
- Use staff to communicate to the policy-maker
- Find opportunities to connect with the policy-maker
- KISS: Keep it Short & Simple



**USGS** Natural Hazards: Earthquake • Volcanic Eruption • Landslide • Flood • Geomagnetic Storm • Wildfire • Tsunami • Coastal Erosion

## Other Tools in Talking to Policy-makers

- Policy-makers aren't the starting and ending place for policy
- Don't forget ego & self-preservation
- Remember the sizzle *and* the steak
- Build a coalition (formal/informal; their peers & aides)



Natural Hazards: Earthquake • Volcanic Eruption • Landslide • Flood • Geomagnetic Storm • Wildfire • Tsunami • Coastal Erosion

## Key Points: 50 to 3

- Know what you want from your audience
- Focus on their needs, not yours (WIIFM)
- Follow-up KISS



Natural Hazards: Earthquake • Volcanic Eruption • Landslide • Flood • Geomagnetic Storm • Wildfire • Tsunami • Coastal Erosion

For more info...

John Bwarie  
Strategy & Communications Officer,  
USGS SAFRR Project  
(Science Application for Risk Reduction)  
[jbwarie@usgs.gov](mailto:jbwarie@usgs.gov)