

Communicating Radiation Risk to Public

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Learning Objective: We aim to describe how to communicate radiation risk to the public, with particular emphasis on the method of comparing risk.

Background: In communicating risk to members of the public, risk comparison is often helpful but it could be challenging. We wish to convey complex concepts of radiation to laymen but often this is fraught with ambiguity, confusion and maybe even contradictory. It is essential to know our audience and the situation. As the media, especially social media, is playing an important role in influencing public opinion, it is imperative for radiation protection specialists to educate and work with them.

Findings and/or Procedure Details: We will review some principles of comparing risk, such as using analogies, comparing to standards, and comparing to other estimates of the same risk. In this educational exhibit, we will give some examples of the use and abuse of risk comparison and explain the principles behind these. The examples will cover, amongst others, radiological examinations, Fukushima nuclear reactor accident and rare earth refineries.

Conclusion: Improper management of risk communication may lead to unnecessary public outrages. Risk comparison can be a useful tool in communicating radiation risk.
