

Effective Message Development

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Why Do We Need Key Messages?

- **They define your agenda and help you focus**
 - **Make it easy for you to “tell your story”**
 - **Make it easy for others to remember it**
- **They provide you with a “life raft”**
- **They ensure consistency**

What do you want to be “caught” saying?

How to Develop Message Points

- **Aim for sound bites**
 - **Use memorable words, phrases**
 - **15 to 20 words = approximately seven seconds**
- **Use techniques such as repetition and analogies to make your messages memorable**
- **Avoid jargon and acronyms; be simple, specific and real**
- **Practice, Practice, Practice!**

Message Development Process

DEFINE

Goals

What do you want to **accomplish**?

What do you want to **communicate**?

IDENTIFY

Audiences

Who do you want to **reach**?

What **matters** to them **personally**?
Professionally?

What **motivates** them?

SOLIDIFY

Call to Action

What do you want your audience **to do**?

Message Development Process

DEFINE

Goals

To increase understanding of the critical role mosquito control plays in protecting public health.

IDENTIFY

Audiences

Policymakers

- Constituent health and safety
- Healthy budgets

Parents

- Family and child well-being
- Government acting in their best interest

SOLIDIFY

Call to Action

Support mosquito control programs.

Allocate funding to mosquito control programs.

Once you know these things, then ... **WRITE.**

Messages That Work Are...

- **Clear, easy to understand**
- **Three or four main stand alone points**
- **Supporting facts that solidify your claim**
- **Make an emotional connection**

Messages That Don't Work Are...

- **Too wordy**
- **Full of jargon, highly technical**
- **Don't make a personal connection**
- **Take too long to understand**

The Danger of Jargon

What we say...	What we mean...
Alphabet soup	Beware the acronym – when in doubt, spell it out
Mosquito abatement	Mosquito control
Vector species	Insects that carry infectious diseases
ppb	“parts per billion”; the same as... “one second of time in 32 years” OR “one pinch of salt in 10 tons of potato chips” OR “one sheet in a roll of toilet paper stretching from New York to London”
Source reduction	Removing or treating standing water where mosquitoes tend to breed
Adulticiding	Controlling adult mosquitoes
Larviciding	Controlling mosquito larvae; preventing mosquitoes from becoming flying, biting adults

Do This - Not This

DO speak plainly

DON'T use jargon

DO spell out acronyms

DON'T use abbreviations

DO use examples to illustrate
your points

DON'T assume people
understand all measures

DO make a personal connection

DON'T rely strictly on the
science

DO use short sentences

DON'T be overly complicated

Mosquito Control Key Message Points

- **Primary goal is to protect the public health from diseases transmitted by mosquitoes**
- **Mosquito control personnel are committed to protecting families by:**
 - **Eliminating mosquito breeding sources**
 - **Increasing public education**
 - **Applying effective EPA-registered insecticides, when needed, and without posing undue risk**

Mosquito Control Key Message Points

- **The strategies and methods used to make decisions on mosquito control are based on sound science**
- **We urge communities and residents to protect themselves and take an active role in the reduction of mosquito populations**

Potential Questions from Media

Question

We just learned that we have a case of WNV in the area, what are you doing to help protect us?

Key Message Point

Mosquito control personnel are committed to protecting families.

Sample Answer

We continue to:

- **Identify and treat specific sites where mosquitoes are breeding**
- **Target areas showing large mosquito populations to kill adult mosquitoes**
- **Encourage people to eliminate standing water around their houses, which allows mosquitoes to breed, and to apply EPA-approved insect repellents for protection**

Potential Questions from Media

Question

Are you changing products you use due to increased attention on pesticides?

Key Message Point

The strategies and methods used to make decisions on mosquito control are based on sound science

Sample Answer

No, we will continue to use EPA-approved pesticides that are both safe and effective, when used as directed and pose little risk to humans, non-target organisms and the environment.

Potential Questions from Media

Question

We continue to have West Nile virus even after the application of toxic products to the environment, so why do we continue to spray?

Key Message Point

Our primary goal is to protect the public health from diseases transmitted by mosquitoes.

Sample Answer

Even after these effective products have reduced mosquito populations and spread of disease in an area, migrating birds continually reintroduce the virus. Studies by public health agencies and universities have shown that incidence of WNV is significantly less in areas where mosquito populations have been monitored and controlled compared to untreated areas.

Potential Questions from Media

Question

Aren't the chemicals used to kill mosquitoes toxic to other insects, other organisms, and are neurotoxins that can harm people?

Key Message Point

The strategies and methods used to make decisions on mosquito control are based on sound science.

Sample Answer

The EPA has determined that, when used according to label directions, these products do not pose an unreasonable risk. We utilize these products at times and in a manner that minimizes contact with non-target insects and other animals and reduce the population of mosquitoes that carry disease.

Potential Questions from Media

Question

What can consumers do to protect themselves from mosquito-borne diseases?

Key Message Point

We urge communities and residents to protect themselves and take an active role in the reduction of mosquito populations

Sample Answer

Take an active role in helping to reduce the mosquito population.

Remember these three “Ds”

- **Drain any containers or areas of standing water in your yard where mosquitoes can breed**
- **Dress in light-colored, loose-fitting clothing to protect you from attracting mosquitoes and making harder for them to bite**
- **Defend by properly applying EPA-approved repellents**

West Nile Message Points

- **West Nile is here to stay**
- **West Nile is serious!**
- **West Nile is preventable**
 - **Personal protective measures – the 3 “Ds”**
 - **West Nile control efforts pose no undue risk**
 - **West Nile control is effective**

West Nile Virus – Here To Stay

- **Cases – 43,739**
 - **> 2 million infections**
- **Fever – 23,408**
 - **CDC estimate- >375,000 WNF**
- **Neuroinvasive – 20,006**
- **Fatalities – 1,872**

West Nile Is Serious!

**“These survivors struggle with memory loss, where a fiancé is heartbroken when her intended really does not remember her,
or the promise that they shared.”**

Wendy Station

West Nile Control Efforts Pose No Undue Risk

- **Exposed population – 118 million**
 - **2 definitive**
 - **26 probable**
 - **106 possible**
 - **96 public exposures**
 - **1 severe – asthma + COPD**
- **4300 WNV cases**
- **3000 neuroinvasive**
- **300 fatalities**

Putting Into Perspective



West Nile Control Is Effective

- **Dallas – 1966 SLE**
 - **Virus infection pre-spray 1/167**
 - **Virus infection post-spray 1/28,639**
- **Michigan – 2002 WNV**
 - **Residents outside MAD 10.53x increased risk**
 - **Infection rate of *Culex* 8x lower within MAD**

West Nile Control Is Effective

- **Ft. Collins, CO 2003**
 - *C. pipiens/tarsalis*
 - Treated up to 89% decrease
 - Untreated up to 50% increase
- **California, 2005 and 2007**
 - Statistically significant reductions after treatment compared with untreated communities
 - Numbers of mosquitoes
 - % infected mosquitoes
 - New cases of West Nile

Zika Virus Message Points

- **Not likely to establish itself here, but we must be prepared**
- **Known vectors not well controlled by standard mosquito control methods**
- **Control requires public education and cooperation in sanitation**
- **Novel technologies for rapid outbreak control need to be developed**

Summing It Up

- **First and foremost, seek to make a personal connection**
- **Understand your goals, who you want to influence and what you want them to do **BEFORE** you write**
- **Be simple and clear, avoid jargon**
- **Use facts, but don't rely solely on science and data**

AMCA Public Relations Resources

- **News Release Examples**
- **Complete Public Relations Program – Media Plans**
- **How to Conduct a Media Blitz**
- **Mosquito Awareness Week Program**
- **Survivor videos**