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SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATIONS AS AN ELEMENT OF EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

ABSTRACT: Although they are an integral part of human history, natural disasters have become more frequent and more devastating. The devastating effects of natural disasters, as well as technical-technological accidents and other social conflicts, lead to emergency situations. An emergency situation is defined as a situation when the risks and threats or consequences of disasters and other events are of such scope and intensity that their occurrence or consequences cannot be prevented or eliminated by the regular action of competent services and authorities. Communication is important for the successful management of an emergency situation. It is necessary to use all available communication channels so that key messages reach the public as quickly and efficiently as possible. The use of new technologies

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and media is becoming an indispensable means of communication in emergency situations. The role of state bodies, institutions and the media are to provide timely information about the necessary measures that need to be taken, as well as the transmission of key messages to the public. For the communication process to be successful, it must contain elements such as trust, honesty, transparency, reliability and accountability.

Key words: emergency situation, communication, messages, communications channels, communications tools

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 20th and 21st centuries, the human population became more numerous and more technically and technologically advanced. That progress has brought with it numerous security risks. Paradoxically, increasing human progress has increased the sense of insecurity. With technological development, people increasingly consume existing natural resources and affect ecological systems, which leads to various forms of natural disasters. Natural disasters are often interconnected and caused. Although they are an integral part of human history, natural disasters have become more frequent and more devastating. The devastating effects of natural disasters, as well as technical-technological accidents and other social conflicts, lead to emergency situations.

The phrase "emergency situation" can be heard more and more frequently on television, read in newspapers or on the Internet. An emergency situation can be defined as a situation when the risks and threats or consequences of disasters and other events are of such scope and intensity that their occurrence or consequences cannot be prevented or eliminated by the regular action of competent services and authorities.

In emergency situations, all available communication channels should be used so that key messages reach the public as quickly and efficiently as possible. The use of new technologies and media is becoming an indispensable means of communication in emergency situations.

The roles of state bodies, institutions and the media are to provide timely information about the necessary measures that need to be taken, as well as to transmit of key messages to the public. For the communication process to be successful, it must contain elements such as trust, honesty, transparency, reliability and accountability.

EMERGENCY SITUATION

More and more frequent natural disasters are becoming a new reality. Natural disasters can cause a significant threat to the social community, endangering human lives, material goods and the environment. Social and anthropogenic factors also greatly contribute to the emergence of emergency situations.

The term "emergency situation" originated in Russian professional literature at the beginning of the 20th century. In the Dictionary of the Serbian language, the adjective extraordinary is defined as one that goes beyond the scope of normal, usual order, schedule or one that is special, exceptional, excellent, very large (Foreign language dictionary, 2011, p.122). The military lexicon defines the term situation as a circumstance, state, place, position, opportunity or influence of various circumstances and factors on combat actions (The military lexicon, 1981, p.559). Emergency situations represent a security situation, in which there is an irregular state of functioning of the social system or its parts, caused by events of a larger scale, which result in endangering the population, material goods and the environment (Mlađan, 2015, p.9). Violation of living and working conditions can be the result of natural disasters and disasters caused by unexpected events, which as a result cause unrest in and among people.

An emergency situation is characterized by unplanned disruption of normal life and work, the occurrence of material and financial damage, as well as the engagement of additional capacities from a wider area of the state for the purpose of mitigating and remediating the resulting consequences. Although it is often associated with natural disasters and disasters, the definition of an emergency situation includes any situation in which the engagement of various components is required, in response to events outside the normal course.

By means of the classification of emergency situations, it is possible to determine the place of one, concrete, emergency situation in the system of emergency situations. There are no identical emergency situations, but each is specific in itself. There are a number of characteristics, which may be universal, but by their nature and in the context of their existence, they are exclusively related to a specific emergency situation. Characteristics of emergency situations are: cause or causes of occurrence, unique and unrepeatable scenario of occurrence and development, reflections on the environment and severity of consequences. The above characteristics are the basis for the classification of emergency situations, that is, the characteristics of emergency situations are the basis for creating a list of classification criteria. Several criteria can be defined within one feature (Kovačević and other, 2020, p. 296). The most common classification is (Karović and other, 2019, str.13):

the cause of the origin, the stages of development, the speed of development and the scope and scale of the effects. The classification of emergency situations according to the cause of occurrence has the greatest practical application.

The classification of emergency situations according to the cause of occurrence can be conditionally divided into four basic groups (Mlađan, 2015, p. 28): natural, technical-technological, ecological and social. The sources of threats to the safety of natural nature include: geophysical phenomena, meteorological and agrometeorological phenomena, marine hydrological phenomena, hydrological phenomena, infectious diseases of humans and domestic animals, as well as the destruction of agricultural plants by diseases and pests. Emergency situations of man-made character include: transport accidents, fires, explosions, accidents with radioactive materials, accidents with biologically hazardous substances, hydrodynamic accidents and others, while emergency situations caused by environmental threats represent a group of emergency situations caused by man-made threatening events. The social causes of emergency situations are threatening phenomena in the form of social conflicts, which can be conditionally divided into: socio-political conflicts, military-political conflicts and complex humanitarian disasters.

An emergency situation goes through four stages in its development (Mlađan, 2015, p. 29). Deviation from the normal state is the first stage. This accumulation phase can last for days, months, years or decades. The second phase is characterized by the initiation of an extraordinary event, while the third phase is the culmination. The last, fourth phase is the calming phase, which includes the period of bringing the source of danger under control.

Depending on the speed of occurrence of threatening events, emergency situations are divided into: sudden, fast, moderate and gradual. Sudden emergency situations include explosions, earthquakes, terrorist attacks, etc. Fires, discharge of nuclear explosion products and hydrodynamic accidents are classified as rapid emergency situations. Moderate emergency situations are floods, volcanic eruptions, etc., while gradual are epidemics, environmental hazards, etc.

In terms of scope and scale, emergency situations can be: local, regional, national, international and global in nature (Mlađan, 2015, p. 30). The consequences of local emergency situations are limited to the boundaries of buildings, plants and complexes of economic entities and settlements, and in most cases, the consequences can be effectively removed by using forces and resources from the local level. The scope of local emergency situations includes the boundaries of local self-government units. Regional emergency situations are limited to the area of cities and districts, while national emergency situations cover the borders of the state or a large part of its territory. International or interstate emergency situations cross the borders of

one state and spread over the territory of several states. Global emergencies affect a large number of countries and continents.

COMMUNICATION AND EMERGENCY SITUATION

The famous Austrian psychologist, Paul Watzlawick, states in the first axiom of the theory of communication that man is a being who cannot help but communicate (Watzlawick, 1967, p. 48). Through communication, opinions, emotions, etc. are expressed, and it enables the transmission of messages and information.

The frequency and severity of natural, anthropogenic, technical-technological and social disasters highlights the importance of information transfer and proper reporting on the emerging situation. Information is crucial in all forms and phases of emergency management. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has declared information a basic need, stating that "people need information as much as water, food, medicine and shelter" (World Disasters Report, 2016, p. 275).

Communication is a form of communication between living beings. The same message can have different meanings for the participants in the communication. Understanding the message depends on a large number of factors. Incomplete and ineffective communication does not take into account the perception, knowledge and experience of individuals (the public) and is focused only on facts. Bad communication during an emergency causes mistrust, fear, panic and stress in the public.

Concept and basic characteristics of communication

The etymological origin of the word communication is in the Latin language (Latin *communicare*), which translated into Serbian means to communicate, participate, share or create something. (Latin dictionary, 2011, p. 605) There are dozens of different definitions of communication, but there is still no unified position on what communication is and how it is defined.

Communication is usually defined as the exchange of information or the exchange of ideas, attitudes, values, opinions, facts, etc. Information is a message that one actor of the communication process wants to convey to another (Čerepinko, 2012, p. 13). There are many reasons why people give or seek information, and this is why its effectiveness is important.

Communication is a process between at least two people, namely the sender and receiver of information. Every communication is characterized by information. Information represents data in a meaningful form. And meaningful information can be useless. Useful information is: accurate,

timely, complete and important. Accuracy of information refers to the reliability and indisputability of the information. Timely information is information that is provided at the right time. The information must be complete, in order to make a decision based on it. And finally, information is defined depending on the context.

The purpose of communication is: giving instructions, informing, directing, influencing, orientation, etc. Giving instructions refers to communications in the form of giving orders, which are transmitted from higher to lower levels. Informing is informing individuals or groups about specific issues. Guidance provides instructions and guidelines for further work.

The communication process includes: message sender, message content, message encoding, communication channels, message receiver, message decoding, response (feedback) and misunderstandings. Context and environment are important for a successful communication process. Successful mutual communication is one in which the receiver interprets the information as the sender intended. It is a condition that the communication participants use the same or very similar notification code. The transmission of the sender's ideas to the receiver and the receiver's response constitutes the process of communication. The process of communication begins when the sender wants to convey some information to the receiver, which has a certain meaning. The next step is to encode the message. The process of coding depends on the content of the message, the proximity of the sender and receiver, and other situational factors. After encoding the message, it is transmitted through the appropriate channel. The recipient decodes the message and responds with a response, which is a confirmation of whether the information was understood correctly or not. Misunderstandings are the products of information exchange problems in the communication process. Distortion of information, inadequate disposal of information, independent interpretation and interpretation, doubts about the veracity of information are some of the problems of information exchange.

Communications channels in emergency situation

Communication, in general, is the transfer of information between sender and receiver. The sender must choose the channel through which to send the information. The channel through which information is sent is called the communication channel and it is the medium for the transmission of information, in other words the link that connects the sender and receiver. Channels are the means by which a message travels from sender to receiver. Each medium has certain advantages and disadvantages. The public is looking for information to know if and how the emergency will affect them.

Individuals actively seek information from different sources, especially when they are aware that they have to make decisions that are of crucial importance for their lives.

The structure of information flow can also be called the network of information flow and represents the structure of the path through which information is sent and received. Information flow paths can be viewed from the aspect of oral and written ways of transmitting information. The use of these two ways of information flow is conditioned by the current situation. Verbal transmission of information is considered more effective, because the one to whom the message is sent sees and hears the one sending the message. This part of communication is manifested through tone of voice, body language, type of clothing, etc. The inconsistency of the message with the non-verbal part of the communication diminishes the importance of the message. On the other hand, conscious nonverbal influence can enhance the importance of the message.

The type of media used to transmit information is important for choosing a communication channel. The media should enable the successful transmission of information, so it is necessary to take into account: the amount and complexity of the information being transmitted, the speed of information flow, the speed of receiving feedback, ease of use, etc.

Information about an emergency situation reaches the public, most often, through the media. By the way they report on the newly created situation, the media influence its perception in the public. In addition, the media can contribute to the escalation or de-escalation of the situation, addressing responsibility, influencing the degree of trust between the public and the sender of the message. The media warn of possible dangers in the environment and represent an important source of information even before an emergency situation occurs. Response to information is shaped by social context, personal needs and belief in information. One of the problems is publicity, which is necessary for the media, so there are possible situations in which the media give information to the public for the sake of entertainment and information that the public wants to hear, and not what it really needs to know. Media representatives will report on everything if they are forced to work in a chaotic situation. This can cause huge consequences in the form of loss of public confidence in the professional team, disobedience and creating even more chaos.

In an emergency situation, the media are critical elements through which all important messages are sent to the interested parties of the public. In addition to the media, as the main communication channel, emergency situations require the use of other communication channels in order to send messages to interested parties. Communication channels can be different for different groups of actors. Sources or channels of information transmission

can be national and local television, radio, family members, friends, church, websites and others.

EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Communication is one of the key elements in emergency management. Effective communication in emergency situations means that the public, the media and all interested parties are provided with basic information related to the emergency situation and that cooperation is established, with the aim of preventing the spread of the causes of the emergency situation and its devastating consequences.

Messages in emergency situations

An emergency situation is a situation when the risks and threats or the resulting consequences for the population, the environment and material and cultural assets are of such scope and intensity that their occurrence or consequences cannot be prevented or eliminated by the regular action of the competent authorities and services. This situation brings the population into a state of fear, ignorance and panic. Authorities are required to send messages to provide certain information and reassure the public.

The message is the central element of the communication act and the reason for the communication process. The goal of the message is to inform the target public about a specific issue. The first condition for successful communication is the use of the same code system by the communicator and the recipient, that is, the sender and receiver of the message. In addition, the messages sent must be simple and clear, in order to match the abilities of the widest audience, except when the communication is aimed at the professional public. It is crucial that the messages are understandable and devoid of jargon and professional terms. In order to arouse the interest of the media and the target public, messages should be shaped so that they have news value and answer the public's questions. The way messages are processed by the target audience depends on their interest and involvement in the situation.

In the initial response, it is necessary to provide reference information. All victims or potential victims of a crisis should receive information related to endangerment and instructions for acting in a crisis. It is necessary to say immediately what needs to be done to protect people. Key messages in the first moments should contain guiding information that helps people physically cope with the emergency situation. It is necessary to provide adequate instructions for behavior in an emergency situation, in order to protect people,

but also to prevent the spread of negative effects of an emergency situation. In addition to instructions, key messages should contain all basic and verified information about the emergency situation, as well as information about specific activities. In addition to the above, in the first moment it is necessary to show concern and sympathy with the victims of the situation.

Messages in emergency situations depend on the characteristics and type of event that occurred, as well as on the stage of development of the emergency situation. The most important are the first reactions and messages after the emergence of an emergency situation, in the first 24 hours. State institutions will send different messages depending on whether they are natural disasters, crisis and emergency situations caused by human factors or mechanical-technical accidents. The key elements that must be defined in the message are: who sends the message, what is its content, when and how it should be issued, that is, through which medium (Radovanović and other, 2022, p. 275).

When natural disasters occur, the public looks to the government and emergency services as the leaders in dealing with the emerging situation. The role of the army is also very important in those moments. The army provides information related to engagement in helping the population, and is also obliged to cooperate in communication with other organizations. Everyone who is in charge of communication must act harmoniously and send adequate messages (Karović, 2015, p. 197). From the onset of an emergency, it is important to articulate and repeat key messages.

During sudden disasters, proactive information must be offered to the community, including: currently available information, pre-preparedness information, updated information, and additional information (Karović, 2015, p. 197). Currently available information includes environmental conditions and various warnings. Information on preliminary preparation should include information on food, water, medical supplies, equipment, etc. The updated information contains reassurances to the public about preventive and other steps that emergency services and other relevant institutions are taking. Additional information includes important phone numbers and websites. All the messages sent are mainly instructive. The tone of communicating information must be soothing, but also sufficiently encouraging.

Man-made disasters can have severe psychological effects on responders, stakeholders and the public. The messages sent must be short, concise and to the point, but at the same time messages that talk about future steps. It is necessary to provide all available information, but also to explain why other important information about the investigation and other matters cannot be disclosed.

Incidents caused by technical-technological damage can create production and operational problems in various areas. Key messages, in such situations, should contain information about the details of the incident and the

events that led to the incident, as well as who is involved in the incident and what the consequences are.

An emergency situation, of any type, goes through four stages in its development: the accumulation stage, the initiation of an emergency event, the culmination stage and the calming stage. Each stage requires different information and messages. In the accumulation phase, messages are sent to take emergency and protective measures. When the phase of starting an emergency situation occurs, it is necessary to send messages rich in detailed, current information about the situation with the aim of raising people's awareness of a possible impending disaster. In the culmination and calming phase, messages and information about next steps, recovery and unwanted losses are expected.

In emergency situations, it is important to achieve continuity in communication so that the public remembers key messages. Repeating the message is necessary because not all members of the target public are able to see and hear the message at the same time. Different communication channels are often used in order to get the message to as many people as possible, using different media.

Whether the public will believe the messages depends on several factors, namely: the credibility of the source, the context of the message and the attitudes of the audience. Public trust and the history of previous information on an issue influence the degree of acceptance and interpretation of a new message (Kameron and other, 2006, p. 181). A bad reputation causes public suspicion even when meaningful and accurate messages are involved. For this reason, building a good reputation for the sender of the message plays an important role in emergency situations. Messages sent in emergency situations must be consistent with the actions of the sender of the message. If you claim one thing and do another, the public will not believe the messages.

Messages in emergency situations should be clear, truthful and credible, so that the public can understand, accept and trust the sender of the message. The first goal of communication in an emergency situation is to inform the public. Then, with appropriate communication tools, the public should be assured that everything is being done to eliminate the causes and consequences of the emergency situation.

Communication tools in emergency situations

Communication in emergency situations is a key tool in coordinating the responses of the authorities responsible for responding. Relevant information that is necessary for response authorities includes data on affected areas, size and distribution of damage, locations of the affected part of the population, data on potential rescue actions, etc. (Durham and other., 2008, p. 101). In the

conditions of emergency situations, the increasingly frequent use of social networks as an alternative way of communication is noticeable, because they enable large amounts of information to be distributed very quickly and efficiently to large groups of people in real time.

Several public relations techniques are distinguished: written, spoken, visual and new technology techniques. Written public relations techniques include: lists of media and journalists, announcements for the media, press releases, background information, press clippings, magazines, comments and columns, brochures, etc. Spoken public relations techniques include: conversations, press statements, interviews, press conferences, meetings, telephone conversations, audio media releases. Visual public relations techniques include: television appearances, video statements, photographs, films, ads etc. Techniques of new technologies include the use of the Internet, social networks, e-mail, etc. In emergency situations, different communication tools can be used, and it is crucial to choose the ones that are most adequate for marketing key messages to target audiences.

Effective communication includes: understandability, credibility and feedback. The sender of the information must be responsible for the information and credible, and the information must be complete, harmonized and redundant and adapted to the frame of reference of the recipient (Karović, 2015, p. 164). Communication tools in emergency situations should be fast, efficient and accessible. Some of the most commonly used communication tools include: press releases, press statements, press conferences, video conferences, interviews, press meetings, call center, photo and video news, use of experts, expert meetings, electronic mail, mobile phones and SMS messages, social networks, email, instant messaging applications, radio and television, billboards, meetings, personal tours.

A press release or press release is a form of conveying information to the public through the media. In emergency situations, announcements are most often sent in order to inform and warn the public about new circumstances. Announcements should have a standard form of document ready for publication. The text of the announcement is written on the sender's letterhead, no larger than two A4 pages. The announcement is written in the form of an inverted pyramid, which means that the most important information is placed at the beginning of the announcement, and the least important information at the end. The title of the announcement must be clear and concise. In the first paragraph, you should answer the key questions: who, what, how, why and where? It is very important that all the facts in the announcement be checked. You should not use symbols, jargon, dialect or hyperbole and euphemisms when writing the text. At the end of the text, it is necessary to indicate the contact person in charge of public relations.

Public statements, as well as press releases, should provide answers to the questions: who, what, how, why, where, what are the next steps, etc. Statements can be given in writing, by sending a statement via e-mail or verbally, by including in the program or by recording the statement. In emergency situations caused by natural disasters, it is possible to make a statement at the scene.

The press conference is another communication tool and is a formal event for the media that is convened when there is a need to convey some important information to the public. The conference should be organized as soon as possible, provided that the necessary information is available. For this event, it is necessary to prepare a special press release that will be read and distributed to journalists. It is necessary to answer questions such as: what happened, are there dead or injured, how much is the damage, why did it happen, who is responsible, were there warning signs, when will it be finished. At the end of the conference, it is important to give the journalists a written statement that contains all the key factors that were announced at the conference. Additional materials may be attached to the announcement. In cases where it is necessary, it is possible to organize a video transmission of the press conference. A press conference is one of the most important tools in an emergency situation and a practical way of communicating information, because it gathers journalists in one place and thus saves time and resources.

A telephone center with operators who provide information 24 hours a day can be of great importance in emergency situations. It is necessary to inform the public about the existence of telephone exchanges for free calls and the provision of help and support.

The information technology revolution has resulted in new forms of connection and communication between people. The development of new technologies also led to the development of applications better known as social networks. Social networks enable interaction and exchange of information in a way that was not possible twenty or thirty years ago. Social networks can be used as a primary means of communication or as an additional means of communication. Thanks to its options, social networks provide an opportunity for quick, cheap and effective dissemination of information. The combination of the ability to spread information to a network of people, who are online, and the ability to further spread information from the original group of people, electronic and non-electronic, to those who are not or need not be online, indicates a segment whose strengthening can improve the characteristics of the social networks themselves. networks as communication tools (Šekarić, 2015, p. 118). A key feature of social networks is the possibility of two-way communication between a large number of people. In recent years, the most dominant social networks are Twitter and Facebook. In addition to social networks, social media also includes: blogs and microblogs, services for

sharing multimedia content, video content and photo sharing, content tagging services, Internet forums, review services and virtual worlds (Vučinić, 2015, p. 220).

Social networks can also represent a platform for spreading incorrect information. Inaccurate information can cloud the perception and level of awareness of the current situation and compromise safety. The spread of inaccurate information hinders or prevents efforts to respond adequately to emergency situations.

CONCLUSION

Emergency situation requires special measures, forces and means with an increased work regime of competent and other authorities, in order to prevent or eliminate the consequences for the population, the environment, material and cultural assets. In such a situation, messages that provide information to the public are important. Messages in emergency situations depend on the characteristics and type of event that occurred, as well as on the stage of development of the emergency situation, but the most important are the first reactions and messages after the occurrence of the emergency situation, in the first 24 hours. The key elements that must be defined in the message are: who sends the message, what is its content, when and how it should be issued, through which medium. The sender of the information must be responsible for the information and credible, and the information must be complete, harmonized and redundant and adapted to the frame of reference of the recipient. The main goal of successful communication in emergency situations is to create trust. Communication tools in these situations should be fast, efficient and accessible, and social networks provide the opportunity for quick, cheap and effective dissemination of information.

Communication, in general, is the transfer of information between sender and receiver. One of the problems when using the media in emergency situations is publicity. Publicity is necessary for the media, so situations are possible in which the media give information to the public for the sake of entertainment and information that the public wants to hear, and not what it really needs to know. Media representatives will report on everything, if they are forced to work in a chaotic situation. This can cause huge consequences in the form of loss of public confidence in the professional team, disobedience and creating even more chaos. The problem with social networks is the ability to spread incorrect information at the same speed as the spread of true and useful information. Inaccurate information can cloud the perception and level of awareness of the current situation and compromise safety. The spread of

inaccurate information hinders or prevents efforts to respond adequately to emergency situations.

REZIME

USPEŠNE KOMUNIKACIJE KAO ELEMENT EFIKASNOG UPRAVLJANJA VANREDNIM SITUACIJAMA

Iako su sastavni deo ljudske istorije, prirodne katastrofe su postale sve učestalije i razornije. Razorni efekti prirodnih katastrofa, ali i tehničko-tehnoloških nesreća i drugih društvenih sukoba, dovode do nastanka vanrednih situacija. Vanredna situacija se definiše kao stanje kada su rizici i pretnje ili posledice od katastrofa i drugih događaja takvog obima i intenziteta da njihov nastanak ili posledice nije moguće sprečiti ili otkloniti redovnim delovanjem nadležnih službi i organa. Za uspešno upravljanje vanrednom situacijom značajna je komunikacija. Neophodno je koristiti sve dostupne kanale komunikacije kako bi ključne poruke što brže i efikasnije došle do javnosti. Upotreba novih tehnologija i medija postaje neizostavno sredstvo komunikacije u vanrednim situacijama. Uloga državnih organa, institucija i medija jeste da pruže blagovremene informacije o neophodnim merama koje je potrebno preduzeti, kao i prenos ključnih poruka javnosti. Da bi proces komunikacije bio uspešan, mora sadržati elemente poput poverenja, iskrenosti, transparentnosti, pouzdanosti i odgovornosti.

Ključne reči: vanredna situacija, komunikacija, poruke, komunikacioni kanali, komunikacioni alati

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