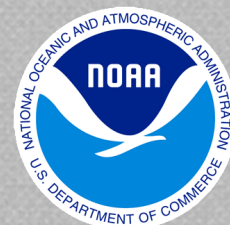


Climate Science Communications Best Practices and Resources

Climate Communications
Support Workshop

Summary of Best Practices,
Tips and Resources Available to You



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PREPARING FOR MEDIA INTERVIEW



Basic Tips for Media Interaction: “Smartening Up”

- Prepare a few key simple and memorable points
- Lead with the headline first (not chronology)
 - Lead with what you know; be honest and genuine
- Identify key quotes and use them
- Keep the answers short
- Use metaphors, imagery, links to current events
- Use concrete details, not abstract
- Let your passion show
- Repeat key messages
- Be honest (e.g. no “spin”) and genuine

Source: Susan Buhr, Susan Joy Hassol, Jane Palmer, Susan Buchanan and Chris Vaccaro



Some Suggestions on “Don’ts”

- Avoid using technical jargon
- Don’t let tough questions stump you – Bridge to Key Messages
- Avoid saying “No Comment”
- Do not speculate on hypothetical questions
- Do not comment on others’ forecasts

Source: Susan Buhr, Susan Joy Hassol, Jane Palmer, Susan Buchanan and Chris Vaccaro



The Media Interview: Two Components

1) Messaging – What Do You Say?

- Develop Three Key Messages
- Bridges from Tough Questions to Messages
- Message Supports – Anecdotes & Data

2) Performance – How Do You Say It?

- Vocal Variety (pace, pitch, volume – emphasize important points).
 Speak 20% louder than usual
- Passion & Energy
- Eye Contact
- Hand Gestures
- Posture

Media Interview – The Process

The most important thing that you can do is be prepared.

Before the Interview

- Prepare your message and sound bites.
- Investigate the goal of the interview: Ask them questions first. Control when you are interviewed.
- Investigate the goal. Determine the goal of the interview so you can prepare yourself:
- What news outlet do you work for?
- Who is your audience?
- What is your deadline?
- What is your angle for this story?
- To whom else have you talked?
- Will the interview be live or taped and edited (for broadcast interviews)?
- Are you recording this interview?
- Control WHEN you are interviewed.
- Set up a time to have the interview so you can prepare.
 - If they are on a deadline, arrange to call back in 10 to 15 minutes.

During the Interview

The Basics

- Use the same basic principles as you would when preparing sound bites.
- Keep it simple.
- Keep your audience in mind.
- Avoid jargon.
- Keep answers short.
- Be friendly but professional.
- Never guess. If you are unsure about a fact, tell the reporter that you will check and get back to him or her.

Controlling the Flow

- Stick to your main messages --- With any supporting talking points and sub messages)
- Repeat, Repeat, Repeat.
- Find every opportunity to repeat your main message so they know it is important.
- Use “bridging” to stay on course.
- If you get asked questions far afield from those you want to discuss, answer them as quickly as possible and then get back to your main talking points

Reminders

- Apply Caution
- Reframe questions if necessary.
- Rather than accepting the premise of a poorly framed question, reframe it.
- You don't have to answer all the questions.
- Be prepared to not answer questions in your “no-go” areas.
- You don't have to know all the answers.
- Be prepared to say that you don't know the answer.
- Even better, refer them to a specialist in that particular area.
- Remember: They can't quote you on what you haven't said.

Ending the Interview

- Ask the reporter questions to make sure that:
 - They have your main message clear.
 - They understand what you have told them.
- Ask if you can (or offer to) review a draft of the article:
 - Many/Most will not do this, BUT they may submit technical passages to ensure accuracy.
- If the story comes out with “mistakes” in it, let the reporter know straight away:
 - To get a correction.
 - So he or she doesn't make the same mistake again.
- If you are unsatisfied with the reporter's response
 - Go up the chain of command until you get a satisfactory response.
- Do enlist the help of your public information officer.
- Recap (“the bottom line is...”)
- Check their understanding
- Ask to review your quotes but not the story
- Suggest others to interview
- Give feedback afterward

Preparing for Key Messages and Sound Bites

Common questions journalists might ask you

General:

- What is the main result/finding?
- Why should we/anyone care?
 - What are the possible implications of the result?
 - Is it an important result?
 - Who could benefit from this research?
 - What does the result tell us?
- What is exciting or interesting about this research? (A quote getter)
- Are you the first person to look at this?
 - If not, what is novel about this research?

One layer deeper:

- Couldn't that result be due to x, y, or z?
 - How do you know that the result is due to what you think it is due to?
- Who disagrees with this result?
 - On what basis?
 - What do you think about their arguments?
- People connect this result with phenomenon X:
 - What are your thoughts on this?
 - Who else should we ask about this?

The Basics of Messages/Sound Bites

- Keep it simple, not simplistic.
 - Use short sentences and short words without losing the message's essence or meaning ("make it smarter").
- Remember the audience.
 - Most newspapers write for people who can read at around an eighth-grade level.
 - Explain concepts in a way that shows a connection with the day-to-day life of an average person.
- Avoid technical or scientific jargon.
 - If you must use a scientific term, explain what it means.
 - Avoid abbreviations or acronyms.

Some Typical Questions from Reporters

- What is the result?
- Why should we/anyone care?
 - What are the possible implications of the result?
 - Is it an important result?
 - Who could benefit from this research?
 - What does it tell us?
- What is exciting or interesting about this research?
- Are you the first person to look at this?
- If not, what is novel about this research?
- Couldn't that result be due to x, y, or z?
- Who disagrees with this result?
 - On what basis?
 - What do you think about their arguments?
- People connect this result with phenomenon X:
 - What are your thoughts on this?
 - Who else should we ask about this?
- How do you know that the result is due to what you think it is due to?
- What next? What do you hope this research will go next?

Nature and Science news sites sometimes will ask these questions:

- Who else in the scientific community supports your theories? (please provide contact information)
- Who else in the scientific community does a similar type of work?

“Off the Record” and “For Background Only”

Problems:

These terms can mean different things to different media outlets.
It is just an informal agreement.



Our advice:

Only say what you are comfortable with being on record.

If it seems necessary to speak “off the record”:

Reach an agreement with the reporter as to what the terms mean for this interview.

IF YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE CONDITIONS, YOU HAVE THE OPTION TO DECLINE THE INTERVIEW

Repeat, Repeat, Repeat!

“If you have an important point to make, don't try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time - a tremendous whack.”

- Winston Churchill

Other Information to Have in Your Tool Kit

Images:	Of yourself (Preferably in the field) Of the equipment you use
Links to your research:	NOAA / CLIMATE.GOV website Research publications Talks you have given/videos Previous media coverage
Related links:	Other similar research Background explanation of your science Relevant state or federal sites
People to contact:	Who will support your work? Who are other experts in the field?

OTHER TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS



Tips for Effective Communication: Do the Math

- Don't expect people to do math in their heads.
- Do the calculations for them.
- Use familiar units.
- Use analogies and points of reference.
 - Greenland annual melt: 250 times the amount of water all of L.A. uses in a year
 - Sea ice loss the size of Texas and California combined
- Sum it up, simplify, and explain what it means.

Source: Susan Joy Hassol and Daniel Glick



Tips for Effective Communication: The Language to Use

Terms that have different meanings for scientists and the public

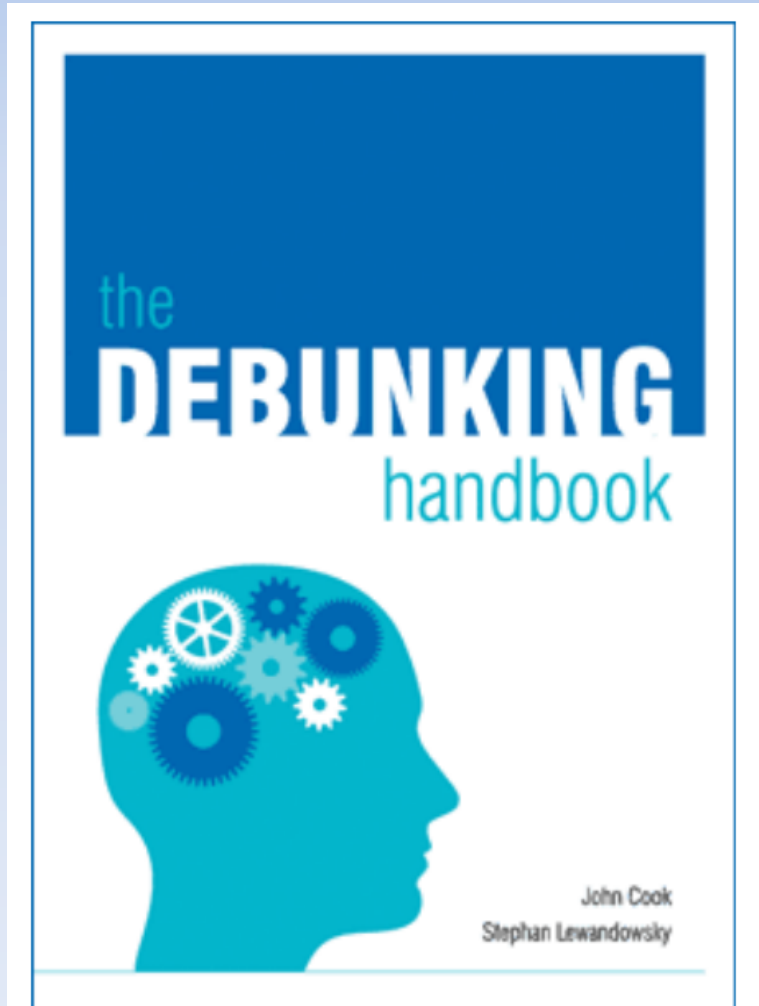
Scientific term	Public meaning	Better choice
enhance	improve	intensify, increase
aerosol	spray can	tiny atmospheric particle
positive trend	good trend	upward trend
positive feedback	good response, praise	vicious cycle, self-reinforcing cycle
theory	hunch, speculation	scientific understanding
uncertainty	ignorance	range
error	mistake, wrong, incorrect	difference from exact true number
bias	distortion, political motive	offset from an observation
sign	indication, astrological sign	plus or minus sign
values	ethics, monetary value	numbers, quantity
manipulation	illicit tampering	scientific data processing
scheme	devious plot	systematic plan
anomaly	abnormal occurrence	change from long-term average

—Richard C.J. Somerville and Susan Joy Hassol, *Physics Today*, 2011:
http://www.physicstoday.org/resource/1/phtoad/v64/i10/p48_s1?bypassSSO=1



Tips for Effective Communications: Avoid backfire

- Core fact
- Evidence
- Acknowledge myth
- Provide simple alternative explanation



www.skepticalscience.com/docs/Debunking_Handbook.pdf

Effective climate change communication

is:

- relevant to audience
- evidence-based
- uses plain language
- explains scientific process
- includes solution info
- an opportunity

is not:

- overwhelmingly detailed
- privileging authority over reasoning
- intended to trigger fear, guilt

Thank you!

The Take-Home Message

It all comes down to informed preparation:

“The bottom line is: In all your interactions with the press—whether it is an interview with a general assignment reporter at your local newspaper or a top science journalist at one of the nation’s leading media outlets—you should know beforehand what you want to say and how you are going to say it. That way, reporters will use the quotes you want them to use.

They are just waiting for you to give them something good.”

—From *A Scientist’s Guide to Talking to the Media*,
Richard Hayes and Daniel Grossman



CLIMATE INFORMATION RESOURCES / REFERENCES



NOAA and Interagency Level Resources on Climate

NOAA RESOURCES

Towards a Climate Smart Nation one-pager; new from NOAA ON February 2013

http://www.gc.noaa.gov/documents/2013/TowardAClimateSmartNation_Feb20_2013.pdf

NOAA Climate.gov portal provides information about climate data, services, impacts and resources

<http://www.climate.gov>

NCDC Website: U.S. and Global Climate data; Monthly and Annual State of the Climate Reports

<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc>

NOAA Digital Coast: Data, tools, case studies and training resources on coastal issues

<http://www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/>

NOAA Tides and Currents – Sea Level Trends

<http://www.tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/sltrends/>

USGCRP RESOURCES

Climate Literacy Guide

<http://www.globalchange.gov/resources/educators/climate-literacy>

USGCRP, Global Climate Change Impacts in the U.S (2009 National Climate Assessment)

<http://www.globalchange.gov/publications/reports/scientific-assessments/us-impacts>

USGCRP, Global Climate Change Impacts in the U.S (2009 National Climate Assessment) – Key Findings

<http://www.globalchange.gov/publications/reports/scientific-assessments/us-impacts/key-findings>

USGCRP, *Draft* National Climate Assessment 2013

<http://ncadac.globalchange.gov/>

USGCRP, National Climate Assessment Climate Science: Commonly Asked Q&A,

<http://ncadac.globalchange.gov/download/NCAJan11-2013-publicreviewdraft-appendix1-CAQ.pdf>

USGCRP, The Science of Climate Change, Appendix II

<http://ncadac.globalchange.gov/download/NCAJan11-2013-publicreviewdraft-appendix2-climateprimer.pdf>

Other helpful references

OTHER RESOURCES

National Research Council - America's Climate Choices – set of reports issued in response to congressional request

<http://nas-sites.org/americasclimatechoices/sample-page/panel-reports/>

National Research Council's

"Climate Change Evidence, Impacts and Choices: Answers to Common Questions about the Science of Climate Change"

http://www.climateaccess.org/sites/default/files/NRC_Climate%20Change%20Evidence,%20Impacts%20and%20Choices.pdf

National Research Council

Science Fact Sheets

<http://nrc.noaa.gov/CouncilProducts/ScienceFactSheets.aspx>

EPA: Climate Change Indicators in the U.S. 2012

<http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/indicators/>

IPCC Special Report (SREX): Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation

http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/publications_and_data_reports.shtml#SREX

National Fish, Wildlife and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy

<http://www.wildlifeadaptationstrategy.gov/>

Skeptical science

<http://www.skepticalscience.com>

Yale Project on Climate Change Communication

<http://environment.yale.edu/climate-communication/>

Center for Research on Environmental Decisions publication "The Psychology of Climate Change Communication"

<http://guide.cred.columbia.edu/>

Climate Communication Science and Outreach

<http://www.climatecommunication.org>

Other helpful references

OTHER RESOURCES

George Mason University – Center for Climate Change Communication

<http://www.climatechangecommunication.org/welcome>

Yale Project on Climate Change Communication

<http://environment.yale.edu/climate-communication/>

Union of Concerned Scientists

A Scientist's Guide to Talking with the Media

http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/global_warming/UCS_Desk_Reference_Scientists_Guide.pdf

Union of Concerned Scientists

Science in an Age of Scrutiny: How Scientists Can Respond to Criticism and Personal Attacks

http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/scientific_integrity/science-scrutiny.pdf

Climate Quotes

President Obama: “We, the people, still believe that our obligations as Americans are not just to ourselves, but to all posterity. We will respond to the threat of climate change, knowing that the failure to do so would betray our children and future generations. Some may still deny the overwhelming judgment of science, but none can avoid the devastating impact of raging fires and crippling drought and more powerful storms.” *From President Obama’s Inaugural Address on Tues, Nov. 14, 2012 in Washington, DC.*

Senator Dick Durbin: “The economic impact of severe weather events is only projected to grow. We are not prepared. Our weather events are getting worse, catastrophic in fact.”

Secretary John Kerry: “The science is screaming at all of us and demands action. From the far reaches of Antarctica’s Ross Sea to tropical wetlands in Southeast Asia, we have a responsibility to safeguard and sustainably manage our planet’s natural resources, and the United States remains firm in its commitment to addressing global environmental challenges.” - Earth Day Message, April 22, 2013

Dr. Lubchenco: “Climate change is real. It is here, and it’s happening now, in our backyards and around the globe. “

“The dialogue is now shifting gears from climate science to climate action. There's still a lot we need to learn about the science, but the events of the past year have ended much of the lingering debate and controversy. The most important question now is what can individuals, communities, states and nations do to reduce and prepare for climate change.”

Dr. Kathryn Sullivan: “The scientific and analytical consensus is ... that patterns and frequencies of weather events are changing. That alone says past is no longer prologue.”