

RELATED TERMS

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**Lessons Learned
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- Public Health
- Emergency Management
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LESSON LEARNED

Crisis Communications: Using the Internet to Disseminate Crisis Information

SUMMARY

Following a major emergency, a comprehensive website can provide the media and public with an additional source of reliable information and reduce the strain on public information officials (PIOs).

DESCRIPTION

During the anthrax attacks of 2001, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) acted as the lead agency for the nation's public health response. Tasked with providing the public and media timely and accurate information about potential health risks and hazards, the CDC used the Internet as part of its communications plan. The CDC posted up-to-date instructions on how to respond to the anthrax attacks and also provided background information on the bacteria itself.

The CDC found that a comprehensive website was a crucial tool for relaying information to the public. Websites can alleviate the backlog of information requests by allowing PIOs to direct the media and public to an alternative source of reliable information. Providing an alternate information source gives emergency personnel more time to focus on the crisis itself, rather than on public information efforts.

For more information see the *Lessons Learned Information Sharing* Best Practice: "[Crisis Communications Planning: Preparing Communication Mechanisms.](#)"

CITATION

General Accounting Office. *Bioterrorism: Public Health Response to Anthrax Incidents of 2001*. October 2003.
LLIS.gov ID# [7526](#)

Shine, Kenneth M.D. *Risk Communication: National Security and Public Health, Hearing before the Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans Affairs, and International Relations of the House Government Reform Committee*. November 2001.
(<http://www4.nationalacademies.org/ocga/testimon.nsf/0/2d04c080a441cbbf85256b130064a736>)

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