PIO Lessons Learned

Bob Davis
DHS Office of Health Affairs
Deepwater Horizon Response
Bob’s Big Gulf Adventure

• DHS Secretary’s role in an oil spill
• Federal response public affairs playbook
• How I got there
• Daily schedule
• Information flow
• Media relations
• Lessons learned
• Questions
Homeland Security
Presidental Directive - 5

HSPD-5: Management of Domestic Incidents

– DHS is the overall incident manager in national incidents
– Ensure that all levels of government work efficiently and effectively together, using a national approach
– Crisis management and consequence management are treated as a single, integrated function
– Initial responsibility for managing domestic incidents generally falls on State and local authorities; The Federal Government will assist when local resources are overwhelmed, or when Federal interests are involved
– DHS Secretary coordinates with private sector and NGOs
Emergency Support Function 15

• External Affairs Standard Operating Procedures
  – Establishes procedures and protocols to support Federal domestic incident management during an incident requiring a coordinated Federal response
  – When activated by DHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, Federal external affairs resources are employed to conduct sustained operations in support of the Principal Federal Official (PFO), Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO), and JFO
  – Goal is to provide accurate, coordinated, and timely information to affected audiences, including governments, media, the private sector, and the local populace
How I got there

• Former paramedic
• Journalist for 20 years
• 16 years of ‘parachute’ journalism at USAT
• OHA Communications Director since 08/08
• National JIC duty during H1N1 pandemic
• Coast Guard asked for leaders in Gulf
• 30-day deployment in busy month of July
Daily Schedule

- 0700 Command meeting USCG/ BP/ EPA/ Etc
- 0800 DHS senior leadership call
- 0830 Interagency communications call
- 0900 Unified Area Command Products/ JIC
- 1300 UAC senior staff meeting
- 1730 Liaisons and JIC leadership meeting
- 1800 Interagency strategy
Deepwater Horizon Response
COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Assistant EA Officer
Community Relations

Deputy Assistant
EA Officer, CR

Houma ICP
EA Liaison

Mobile ICP
EA Liaison

Florida Peninsula
ICP
EA Liaison

CR Reports
Specialist

Speakers Bureau
Specialist

Community
Relations
Field Administrator

Resource Manager

Last update: 10 July 2010
Deepwater Horizon Response

JIC

Assistant External Affairs Officer (JIC)
News Desk, Press Conferences, Calls/Outreach, Embed/Escort, Imagery

Special Projects

Media Relations Unit Leader

Imagery Specialist Event Coordinator

Satellite JIC Supervisors
Houma:
Mobile:
Florida Peninsula:
Galveston:

News Desk Manager

News Desk

Media Analysis

Organization Reps
TransOcean:
USDA:
NPS:
BP:
NOAA:

Assistant External Affairs Officer (JIC)
Robust information flow on web

- ERMA
- BP
- Interagency
- Pier
- Deepwater Horizon Response. Com
- Restore The Gulf. Gov
http://gomex.erna.noaa.gov/erma
Media Relations

• Problem: Story on the beach
• Issue: Lack of access
• Result: Angry press reports on “safety zones”
• Suspicions: Who is in charge? USCG or BP?
• Paid visits to “The Hive,” Houma, Mobile
• Held ADM Allen ‘pen and pad’ – access
• ADM Allen – story underwater; killing the well
• ADM Z – above the water; enormous response
Help the reporters get off the beach
See the big picture
Hunt for oil
Flooding cities
Spotting and reporting oil
Use of boom
Bird’s eye view of the response scope
Endless miles of clean beaches
Lessons learned

• Rely upon crisis communications basics
• Focus on response messages
• Give reporters access to the response
• Communicate limitations and uncertainties
• Use the web
• Keep all communication channels open
• Internally, delegate and ask for lots of help
Questions

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