Facts matter only if *You* can *Communicate* them

(Public Communication isn't Peer Review)

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Objectives

- **Identify necessity and challenges of communicating technical information to non-technical audience**

- **Discuss communication principles and attributes of effective presenters**

- **Define "community"**

What are the challenges?

- **Competing, more visible issues**
- **Generally low technical literacy**
  - **Doesn't allow you to ignore them…**
- **Complex content**
  - **Natural-resource exploitation**
  - **Land-use decisions**
  - **Infrastructure**
  - **Climate change, other hazards**

What are the needs?

- **Technical knowledge**
  - **Are you a fox or a hedgehog?**
- **Credibility**
  - **Subjective assessment**
    - **Audience**
    - **Presenter's organization**
      - **Real/perceived conflict of interest?**
    - **The presenter (You!)**
- **Evidence-based methods**

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What are the needs?

- **Communication skills**
  - **Determine message**
  - **Communicate message**

- **What is the message?**
  - **Consistency and focus (CEA/Harris): SOCO (Howard)**

- **Distinguish between message and what one actually says ("Don't worry.")**

- **Frame the message (CRED, 2011)**

Controversy?

- **Scientific vs. social/political**
- **Context in one domain may have no bearing on the other**
  - **Not a scientific debate**
  - **"Balance"**
  - **"Proof"**
- **Add context while avoiding advocacy**
  - **Is advocacy wrong?**

Who is the community?

- **Possible defining criteria**
  - **Geographic location**
  - **Cultural/ethnic/religious**
    - **Language**
  - **Economic status**
    - **Home ownership**
    - **Public, private, non-profit sectors**
  - **Physical characteristics**
    - **Pre-existing medical conditions**

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Who is the community?

- **Is there an actual community?**
    - **Common interest(s)**
    - **Common (self-)identification**
    - **Beware assumptions**
    - **Social cohesion**
    - **Identifiable leaders (official vs. actual)**

- **FEMA Whole Community project**

- **US DHHS: cultural competence**

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How best to engage?

- **Community "DNA"**
  - **Definitions**
  - **Constraints**
  - **Concerns**
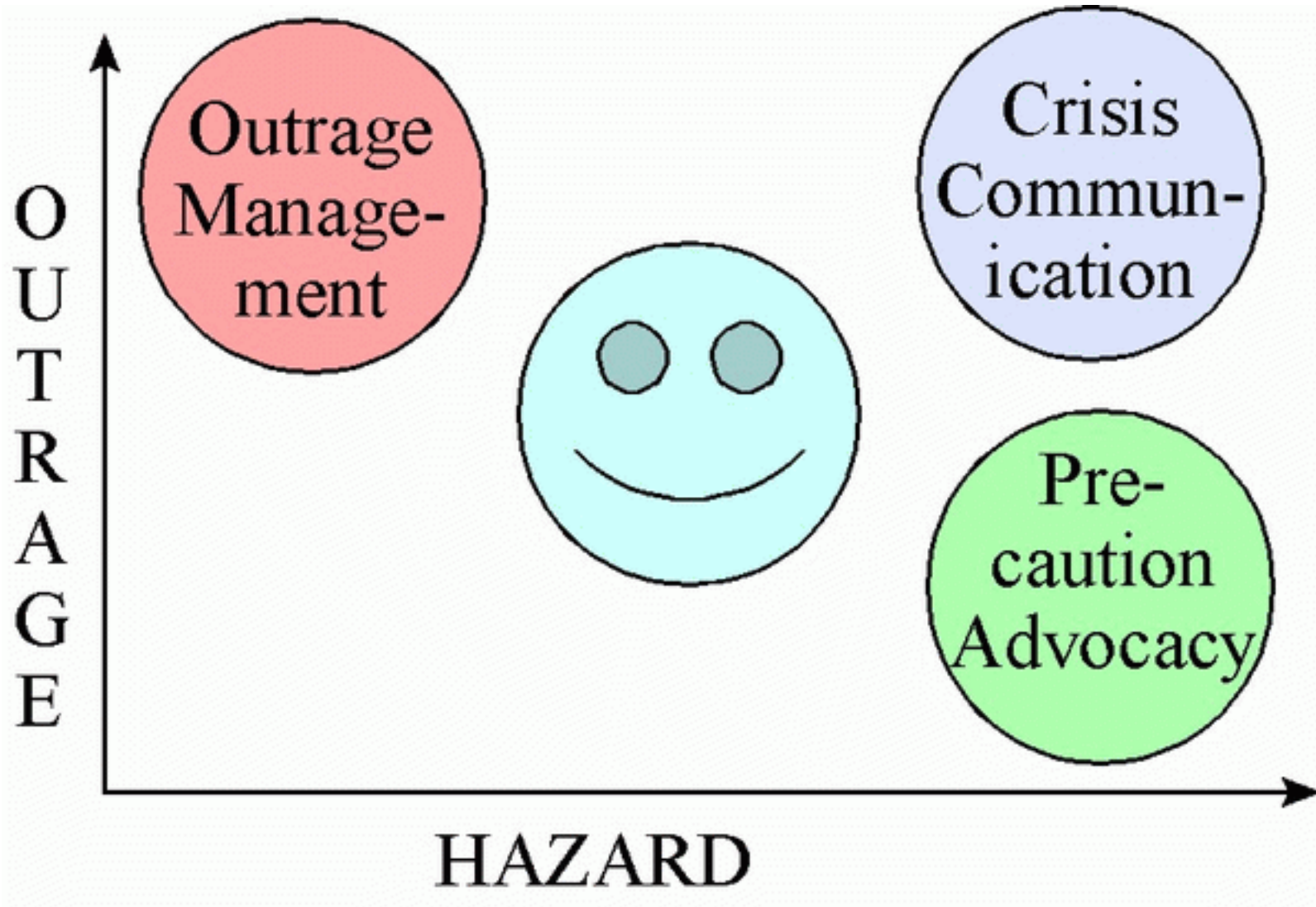 - **Vulnerabilities**
  - **Leaders and trusted sources**

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What's important?

- **Subjective**
  - **Recognize audience perspective**
- **You don't get to determine this**
- **"Hazard vs. Outrage" (Sandman)**
  - **"Don't worry…"**
- **"In the absence of understanding, perception is reality."**

Concern vs. hazard (Sandman)

Being a credible source

Outcome = Audience + Message + Medium

- **Start from the left…**
- **Respect your audience**
  - **Don't "dumb it down"**
- **Know your topic (and your limitations)**
- **Be consistent, but admit uncertainty**
- **Medium ≠ Message**

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