14-002: Precise Emergency Messaging		
Agency: Indianapolis Motor Speedway	**Topic(s):**	**Emergency Messaging**
Date: Summer 2014	**Platform:**	**General**

Mass notification and public messaging about dangerous inbound weather is the latest hot button topic in emergency management because no matter the location, everyone is susceptible. This year has been especially deadly with numerous tornadoes.

You can argue the use of automatic Emergency Alert System (EAS), Integrated Public Alert & Warning System's (iPAWS) messages, and public address systems are good enough, but successful delivery still comes down to basic messaging.

On May 25, 2014, this message was put up on the main billboard on the field during the Indianapolis 500, which had 300,000+ fans during race time. The National Weather Service (NWS) declared a Tornado Warning before the start of the race.

Race Fans? C'mon, you have a captive audience at the motor speedway. And you are addressing everyone there, not just race fans. Most likely, your audience is saying "*Great, now what is a Tornado Warning?*"

Clear and concise messaging is incredibly important because seconds will matter in an immediate evacuation or leading others to shelter…especially with large, open, and unprotected public venues. This particular message was unclear, poorly worded, and definitely not concise.

A more effective messaging and follow up post should have read:

> **DANGER! TORNADO WARNING NOW - SEEK SHELTER IMMEDIATELY!**
>
> **Safe SHELTERS are located at AREA X and GATE X**

By phrasing it this way:
1. Your message is short, sweet, and to the point.
2. Capital letters will grab the attention of your audience and convey urgency.
3. Have clearly identified safe locations IN CAPITAL LETTERS will assist those reading your message.
4. Shorter messaging could allow your followers to retweet/repost and amplify your emergency messaging.
5. It is still tornado season so make sure you are prepared by having pre-scripted messages on "what is a tornado warning" and messaging on how to "shelter-in-place".

All concurrent Tweets, Facebook posts, Instagram posts, etc. should reflect this messaging. If a Tornado warning is issued, timing is of the essence. Do not be lax when it comes to emergency messaging because you don't want to ruin the fun. For the sake of your constituents, it is better to error on the side of safety.

Time is valuable, so post good stuff.

Follow me on twitter @rusnivek

Or just read the blog: www.whereisrusnivek.com