

**CRISIS COMMUNICATION IN RADIOACTIVE TRANSPORTATION OR
HOW TO PUT LIPSTICK ON A BULL DOG.**

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ABSTRACT

The presentation will elaborate about the challenge of an efficient crisis communication when involved in a radioactive transportation accident called **nomadic**, versus the same case study when **static** equipment (plant, facility) is involved.

In a **“static”** incident, a good communication network should have identified in advance all the stakeholders and have developed strong interactive links.

With all the taxes located in the local communities, you are really embedded in the economic environment if not actually the main provider of jobs and money in the area.

In the same way you should have a clear understanding of the needs and expectations of your communication partners (journalists, radio, newspapers, local and national TV)

You have developed close relationship based on transparency and confidence about the information you are going to deliver in case of emergency.

In a transport accident, you would face a **“nomadic”** event.

In that case all your references are out. The event can occur anywhere else in your country or worst abroad far away from your bases.

You are obliged to act in an unknown environment, very quickly, with sometimes poor information of what really happened, and under heavy stress.

People you are addressing to are not familiar with your business, rumours and misinformation are stressing the communities, and you have to establish confident links on the spot with people you didn't know the day before. Time is working against you.

How to act with efficiency in such a nomadic world?

What to do when things went wrong?

In our company we have developed two levels of action plans:

- #1 How to develop a high level of confidence around our brand name in order to be really trusted before the accident
- #2 How to manage a crisis
 - Mobilization of dedicated personnel system
 - Involvement of communication specialists
 - Crisis room 24/7 ready to operate in relation with national and local authorities
 - Specific equipments dedicated to a crisis management
 - Real time tracking of our transport equipments
 - Speakers ready to interact professionally with the medias

A case study will end the presentation.

INTRODUCTION

The title enables the fact that it is as difficult to talk about crisis communication in radioactive transportation as putting lipstick on a bull dog.

Who are we to talk about?

The Logistics B.U. (BU-L) is in charge inside AREVA group of the securization of the nuclear material transportations realized inside the Group worldwide. The BU-L provides also his services and competences for numerous nuclear utilities in the front end and the back end. Amongst its clients, the BU-L delivers also services for Research Reactors with exotic fuels.

To serve our clients we realize more than 3 000 Transports a year .We offer design, licensing, construction of different types of casks according to our clients' specifications for transport and intermediate storage. We are the US leader in intermediate storage with around 60 to 65% of the US market.

To manage all these activities we have a modern fleet of casks for various fuels and radioactive materials, trucks and railcars specifically designed for these cargoes, ships with some partners for overseas transports. We manage as well transfer equipments as Rail/Road terminals, ports and handling equipments.

To underline the difficulties we faced off in term of communication in radioactive transportation I will elaborate a little bit about the main differences when you are acting in what I have called a **Static Environment** (i.e. a plant) versus a **Dynamic Environment** characterized by the transport.

IN A STATIC ENVIRONMENT

First of all you are part of the landscape. The picture shown is the AREVA NC La Hague Treatment Plant (see Picture 1) in the North West of France, huge plant with 3 000 employees and a lot of subcontractors.



Picture 1 : AREVA NC La Hague plant

This plant has been created in 1964, we expect to use it as an industrial tool for at least 2 or 3 decades and you can imagine 2 or 3 decades for decommissioning .That to say this

plant will be part of the La Hague country for one century plus covering many generations of inhabitants. That's what I call the Territory Settlement.

During this period you had time to establish strong relationship with your stakeholders: local authorities, communities, employee's families, subcontractors, local political leaders, administrations, journalists, press and communication media and so forth. You know them, you know how they react, and they know you ... You have invited them to visit your plant, to share information about your business, your strategy, your activities and your risks as well...

When you are in such an environment you have a strong economic impact: wages, taxes, subcontractors, sponsoring... An important part of the economic activity relies on your business, so you have an impact in term of image around the plant

Locally, public acceptance is on continuous progress... People know you, you have explained in various forums who you are and what kind of business you are involved in. You have explained the risks. People around the site used to see your cars taking samples of grass, milk, fishes, seafood to measure the impact of your activities on the environment. In a recent survey in the US, 72% of the people living at less than 5 miles of a NPP are satisfied to live close by, and quite a same number would welcome new nuclear buildings.

You had time to develop efficient communication tools as communication centre, industrial visits, Open Doors for employee's families, booklets, websites... and all the common communication devices.

Your plant is part of a big company with a brand image. People know you are reliable, developing a real safety and security culture based on transparency and dialogue.

Because of your long history and legacy you know your opponents, their networks, their arguments, their reactions in such or such situation. Eventually you meet them in forum, public inquiries, conventions.... And can adapt your communication to their messages.

Finally, in case of emergency you have on the spot all the equipments to fight an accidental situation: crisis centre, communication systems, equipments (vehicles, medical systems) and people (fire-fighters, radioprotection specialists...)

Your emergency plan has been tested on many exercises and you are confident in the ability of your system to react efficiently. You have also all the equipments to restore the safer situation after the crisis.

IN A DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENT

Let's have a look now on what happens when you are in what I have called a Dynamic Environment i.e. transport.

First of all you are not part of the landscape; you are just crossing the road, and the life of inhabitants in the community you drive into. Nobody knows you and your business.

You have no stakeholders' relationship .Usually you are far from your bases and from your familiar environment which could be stressful in case of accident.

By construction you have no economic impact. By the way your trucks could be accused to damage the roads and to endanger the road traffic.

There is a very light public acceptance. Far from the nuclear sites inhabitants could have no ideas of your business and you don't know their position about nuclear activities. In the best case you can face a NIMBY syndrome, i.e. "I am not against nuclear but I don't want to see their transport on the next road"

You are not able to develop some communication tools to inform the people of your activities. In the worst case of an accident you will face a lot of actors (local authorities, police, fire fighters, journalists, opponents...) you never met before, and you have to build a confident relationship on the spot under the stress of a crisis.

People on the way you are using don't know you or have a poor image of your activity. May be they know your parent company or the group you belong to but not precisely the business you are developing especially in their surroundings.

Finally, your activity could be a better opportunity for your opponent. From time to time we are confronted to opponents who block the roads or the tracks to avoid transports of nuclear materials.

SO WHAT TO DO IN SUCH NOMADIC WORLD ? AND WHAT TO DO WHEN THINGS WENT WRONG ?

Our behaviour will be to act efficiently in the first case and to react efficiently in case of emergency as I will develop later.

Act efficiently: prepare and secure your communication environment

You should have an offensive and attractive corporate communication: be present in the worldwide media and national network, be involved in big partnerships on famous events (i.e. The America Cup boosted the AREVA Brand image 3 years ago and did the same this year).

Edit attractive booklets, advertising messages to be recognized as a professional (AREVA campaign)

Take benefit of this notoriety to foster your image in the field of your business especially in term of reliability and safety/security.

Map your stakeholders: amongst all the actors you have to identify those who can help you to be accepted as a responsible industrial. Let's establish a confident relationship.

In the L-BU we have a program dedicated to this objective: we intend to train around 10 managers to introduce our business, and select some places where it will be relevant to talk about us : transport associations, business schools, high civil servants school, mayors

association, harbour authorities....In that case we consider communication as not only the job of specialists...

On the international business we have a lobbying program through the countries we are crossing (Ex: Panama) to explain again and again what and how we are shipping our cargoes.

We try to do our best to inform our partners especially the local authorities to develop links and confidence for our future relationships.

Acting efficiently: treat the media as professional partners

We have to consider the media as our best partner. You have to know their rhythm and the way they are delivering information. You should know the difference between radio and TV, between image and newspapers, and adapt your communication to the different media .It's a matter of success to avoid misunderstandings, rumours, suspicion, and finally to kill your message.

To address to the media is a very specific exercise .We have at the L-BU a special training session for internal speakers on how to talk efficiently with the media in normal situation and in crisis situation

We need to watch carefully our opponent's messages and actions. Transports in open field could be the best target for people who want to stop our activities and sometimes crossed the border of the law.

We should use against this action all the support of the law and the public authorities to restore the free circulation of our goods and services.

To **act efficiently is also be ready to face a crisis** and the best way for us is to be fully partner of all crisis exercises.

Once or twice a year, the French Safety Authority organizes a transport accident drill (see picture 2) on the French territory. Like in a real accident we are informed as soon as possible and we have to react technically and in term of communication to restore the integrity of the transport and the confidence of the public opinion through the media.



Picture 2 : 2006 crisis drill

We take a lot of benefits of these exercises to increase our reactivity and our professionalism.

We act efficiently preparing our best equipment to respond a crisis

In our headquarters near by PARIS we can start very quickly 24/7 a crisis room (see picture 3) in case of emergency. This room is fully equipped with tracking system of some of our cargoes, emergency processes, phone connexions, communication plans... We have used it successfully during the last crisis drills and are always trying to benefit from our experiences.



Picture 3: Command and Decision center

Now I will elaborate a little bit more in case of emergency or “**how to react efficiently**”

React efficiently in case of emergency

We have some experiences on that matter and I have considered the main problem as the **TIME**.

Four months ago I was struck to see on the TV a short movie of a plane crash occurring in Ukraine, I mean instantaneously filmed by a witness with a cell phone camera. Could you imagine such a scenario, with a witness filming a nuclear transportation accident with his cell phone camera and sending these images on the web, long time before we could start our emergency process!!!!

We have as in every dangerous goods business an emergency list of employees able to be mobilized on the spot to start the Crisis Room and be ready to go to the accident scene. We have the same process in term of communication with our internal and external partners.

We have developed a product data base with all the characteristics of the products we are transporting (chemical forms, radioactivity, contamination risks, toxic risks and all technical information on our containers, transport systems...) in order to give the best and safest information on the way to manage these products and to restore safety on the ground.

We have also a tracking system on some of our cargoes, specific trucks dedicated to some materials and the possibility to plot the accidental scene to help our teams to intervene.

We have also an emergency vehicle ready to secure any accidental situation which can be mobilized immediately to reach an accidental scene and to help and give advices to the local teams to restore the safety on the public environment.

We can also mobilize very quickly transport vehicles and handling capacities to recover the cargoes and the trucks or transport systems after the damages.

All this equipments, people and processes can always be involved in an accidental scenario .We are using the benefit of crisis exercises to have the best competences to minimize any accidental sequence.

CONCLUSION

To end my presentation, I would underline the way we act to resolve transportation crisis.

We intend to be ready to identify the best technical and communication processes to resolve properly, and we do our best to be professional in our area.

Our motto in that respect is **transparency and dialogue**. We are deeply convinced these are the ways to lead us through the best respect of our customer and the environment.