

## UGA IDM Video Transcript: Emergency Communications

### Introduction/Interview

[dinosaur noise with children's music]

**Curt Harris:** This educational video is brought to you by the South Carolina Long Term Care Emergency Preparedness Educational Program funded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Civil Monetary Penalty funds.

[paper rustling]

[lightning bolt]

[newsroom music]

**Jim Zerylnick:** Storms...Fires...Floods...

[techno dance music] and invasion of dancing zombies! You can never be sure what kind of disaster will strike but you can be prepared.

(To dancing zombie) That is so disturbing.

[lasers]

Hi, I'm Jim with the Institute for Disaster Management. Your long term care facility must have an emergency communications plan in place for any type of disaster and that plan should provide detailed answers to these three questions.

- 1) Who will you contact?
- 2) How will you make contact?
- 3) Once you reach them, what will you tell them?

During an emergency, poor communication can be the difference between life and death, so let's get it right.

[swoosh]

Joining us now is the one and only Dr. Doom

[clapping]

Welcome, Doctor

**Dr. O'Neal:** Thank you, but it's really not Dr. Doom. I'm Dr. O'Neal.

[quiz show music]

**Jim:** Agree to disagree. Dr. Doom, can you tell us a little bit about the importance of having an emergency communication plan?

**Dr. O'Neal:** I can but let me first tell you why I want to get away from the terminology of Dr. Doom. I focused on disasters and sort of doomsday events for almost half of a century and I want people to think more positive rather than negative because every single disaster gives us an opportunity to improve so that we are better able to prevent or at least mitigate the impact of the next disaster. So, I prefer to get away from the negative term of Doctor Doom. I'm just Dr. O'Neal.

The other thing I think that is so terribly important with communications planning every single disaster we have faced, there have been issues related to communications and everything that we can do to minimize those issues should be done. And I think the first step is to write a plan, an emergency communications plan. Why do we do that? We do it because we can ensure health and wellness, not only of patients and residents in facilities, but also staff. It's critically important and from a practical perspective, perhaps the most important thing for everyone to realize is, its required! It's part of our regulations.

**Jim:** Thanks for your time, Doctor Doom.

[applause]

**Dr. O'Neal:** Dr. O'Neal

**Jim:** Agree to disagree

[wind howling, thunder in background]

In a real disaster, you never know what can go wrong. Okay, shut it down, shut it down!

Look, a disaster could knock out cell phone service, [banana peel noise] internet service, electrical service, and even all of those things at the same time.

*(Jim walks over to assistant on cell phone, she's obviously frustrated that her phone is not working)*

So, that means your cell phone may not work.

*(Assistant gasps, whines, and drops phone.)*

I know. It's terrifying. Take some time.

So, your Emergency Communications Plan needs to answer the question, How Will You Make Contact?

You have to plan for all situations. Maybe the power is out but you still have cell phone service. Maybe the phones, [clang] and internet are down [alien spaceship noise] but you still have electricity. Or maybe it's all down at the same time. [skidding]

You'll also need to have emergency supplies on hand and ready to go. We recommend backup batteries, chargers and cables for any device that could help you keep communicating in an emergency.

*Jim with cell phone:* [dial up- all circuits are busy now]

During a disaster, you may get an "all circuits are busy message" when you try to call someone on your cell phone but text messages, emails, messaging apps and even some social media apps will still go through.

*(Sitting at table with laptop)*

And don't forget that many cell phones can be used as a Wi-Fi "hot spots" [swink] so if the electricity is out at your facility, your computers may still be able to access the internet through that wi-fi signal.

The cars in your parking lot can be another source of electricity. With cell phone chargers and power inverters, you can keep phones, laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots powered up for days.

Hey kids, this is called a "rotary phone" and this connected to a "land line". If your facility has a working land line that could be very useful in a disaster.

[places phone in receiver]

*(To rotary phone)* I miss you, old friend.

[rotary dial turns]

If all the phones and the internet are down, here's some options:

*(With CGI dog)*

**CGI Dog:** Ruff Ruff!

[dog barking] You could ask a friendly CGI dog for help.

"Go get help, girl!"

**CGI Dog:** Ruff Ruff! Ruff!

**Jim:** Or go old-school [knife blades scraping] with bullhorns.

[tea music]

*(Scares assistant with bullhorn)*

**Emergency!!!!**

Sure, bullhorns are great, but here's some more options for emergency communications. Two-way radios or walker talkies can be lifesavers.

[dispatch noise]

In many areas, [siren background] fire, police and EMS, Emergency Management and Public Health can be reached through Two-Way radio systems.

*Split screen with Jim in park Ranger hat and fake mustache talking to regular Jim:* But you're going to need some official permission to access those frequencies, so that's going to take some preparation.

**Copy that.**

*Jim with trucker hat and CB:* Other radio options include FRS Radios, GMRS Radios and CB Radios. [truck horn] Breaker, Breaker. Got your ears on? [elephant noise]

*[technology beeping noises]*

*Jim floating in space:* Another choice for communications is a satellite phone. They work well in remote areas, and they don't depend on a cell tower.

*Jim:* There's Amateur Radio, also known as "HAM" Radio.

*(Ham with antennas pops up)* No.

You need a license and special equipment to broadcast on HAM radio, but you can monitor emergency frequencies. [swoosh] HAM radio actually has a fantastic volunteer group called ARES, that are dedicated to helping in emergencies and you can contact them right here.

[dispatch noise and talking]

You can also monitor activity using a police scanner. It's a good way to keep informed of the emergency response that is happening around you. Keep in mind, that all of these radios require preparation and training to use effectively. You need to make training on this equipment part of your emergency communications plan.

In order to use public safety frequencies, or even emergency management frequencies, you'll need to build good relationships with those agencies before a disaster. That

includes getting their permission ahead of time in order to use those emergency frequencies.

And that brings us to this very important point. Do not assume that help is on the way to your facility just because there has been a disaster in your area. If you're in trouble, it's your responsibility to make your situation known and ask for help.

It's also your responsibility to train your staff on your emergency communications plan and the equipment they may need to use.

*(Jim walks over to two assistants at table with mix of communications gear, they are clearly confused about what they're holding)*

All new staff members should be trained as soon as possible, and we recommend all staff go through a refresher training at least once a year.

[same swanky music]

*(To assistant with upside-down walkie-talkie)* Uh, I think you want to turn that. Like no, not like ... uh.

[racecar passing]

**Jim:** So, we know who to contact in a disaster and we looked at options for how to make contact. Now, we have the big question, What Will You Tell Them? [sparkle]

Every disaster is different, but the most important part is to clearly communicate your most critical needs. That means anything that poses an immediate or impending threat to the health and safety of your residents and staff.

**Assistant #2:** Is this the fire department? I don't know, I guess we have a problem, can you just do something?

**Jim:** See, that's no good.

*(To assistant)* Ok you can go, thank you

You need to be clear and specific about your emergency situation.

Describe the overall status of your facility. Do you have residents facing critical medical needs? Are the heating and air conditioning systems working? Does the facility need to be evacuated? Are there people in danger?

You need to communicate clear and specific information, externally [whoosh] and internally [squish]

Yes, you need to alert emergency services outside your facility, but clear communication within your organization is absolutely vital to protecting health and safety in a disaster.

[whoosh]

What equipment is broken? What supplies do you need? How long will they last?

Everyone on your internal Emergency Contact list needs to be aware of what exactly is going on. That means everyone up and down the chain of command and staff members on every shift and in every department.

Good communication can save lives. Poor communication can be tragic.

Here's Dr. Doom with a true story.

*(Cut to interview of Dr. O'Neal telling Hospital Oxygen Tank story.)*

**Dr. O'Neal:** Actually, this follows a very large hurricane event, and the hospital was out of power, they had a unit with many patients who required oxygen to survive. Unfortunately, after a period of time, oxygen was exhausted. What that unit did not know was that in a separate section of the hospital there was actually an abundance of bottles of oxygen but there was no communication between the two units. Patients died because of this. That's why internal communication is so absolutely critical. The right hand has to know what the left hand has and does.

**Jim:** I hope after hearing that story you can really see the need for clear Emergency Communications.

Your organization should be part of a Healthcare Coalition which may have a Communications Flowchart with a list of Essential Elements of Information. Of course, you'll always want to follow that carefully. *(Show Sample Flowchart and EEI)*

Always keep in mind who you're talking to. For example, some people may be confused by E.U.A.As. That's, Excessive Use of Acronyms and Abbreviations.

**Assistant #1 on Walkie-Talkie:** 10-4, that's A-OK, our LTCs use DHS CISA for their EEIs.

**Jim:** See? That's totally TMA. (Too Many Acronyms)

## CONCLUSION

**Jim:** We hope you've learned something about Emergency Communications. We've covered the basics but there's so much more to it.

*(Massive list scrolls by and keeps going)*

In fact, there's a long list of rules and regulations you need to know.

Yeah, it's a lot.

*(Assistants walk in and join Jim)*

But the takeaway is to be prepared and have a detailed Emergency Communications Plan in place and train your staff on it so you're ready to respond to any disaster.

*(Dancing DJ Zombie appear)*

Even Dancing Zombies. Okay. Thanks for watching!

*(To assistants)* It's disturbing, right? Yet strangely mesmerizing.

[Upbeat Music]

*(End credits)*