

Cool Reporting About A **Warming** Planet



Climate Change

CLEAR
COMPELLING
CONCRETE
CORRECT
CREDIBLE



Perceptions of Risk

- Trust in Authorities
- Risk Voluntary
- Control
- Risk Familiar/Old
- Danger Chronic
- Assoc. Benefits/needed*
- Risk Natural
- Risk not Talked About
- Victims Unknown
- Easy to understand
- **No Trust in Authorities**
- **Risk Involuntary**
- **No Control**
- **Risk Unfamiliar/New**
- **Danger Catastrophic**
- **No Benefits/un-needed**
- **Risk Man-made**
- **Risk Talked About**
- **Victims Known/kids**
- **Complex**

Most Appealing Risk Stories

- A **new, complex** and **unnecessary** technology exposes **children** (preferably **known**) to an **involuntary**, potentially **catastrophic** risk. The exposure is **controlled** by a corporate or government entity that people **mistrust**. There is a direct and local mechanism to link **cause** and **effect**.

Mantras of Journalism?

- Personal narratives/journeys
- Human Drama
- Novelty
- Comprehensible
- Independent Stance
- Accurate
- Balance/Fair



Journalism

Global Climate Change

Impersonal, non narrative

No easy way to see cause and effect

Bafflingly complex

Effects counter-intuitive and largely unknown

Victims live in future (? our grandchildren) or in other lands (?Maldives)

No one to blame (except ourselves)

Hopeless

Ideologically charged



Journalistic Distortions

- Scientific Distortions
- Narrative Distortions
- Distortions of Balance
(Greenhouse skeptics)



Michael Palmer, General Manager of WVII and WFVX in Bangor Maine

- “When Bar Harbor is underwater, then we can do global warming stories. Until then, no more.... Despite what you may have heard from the mainstream media, this science is far from conclusive.”

(The New York Times. 10/28/06: C8)



Hollywood Lies

“The Day After
Tomorrow”



Hollywood Lies

Instant ice age



Global Climate Change: lessons for communicators

- Don't lie or exaggerate
- Bring subject down to human scale
- Make process visible (monitoring and sensors)
- Characterizing greenhouse gases cf cholesterol
- Characterize “irreversible” legacy..cf nuclear waste.
- Grandchildren as victims
- Be honest..



CLIPS

TIPPING POINT

Consistency of Message

Winning the argument

Growing Evidence

International Consensus

Failure of Skeptics to Make
Case

Al Gore

Hurricane Katrina



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