### **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 unecessary 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



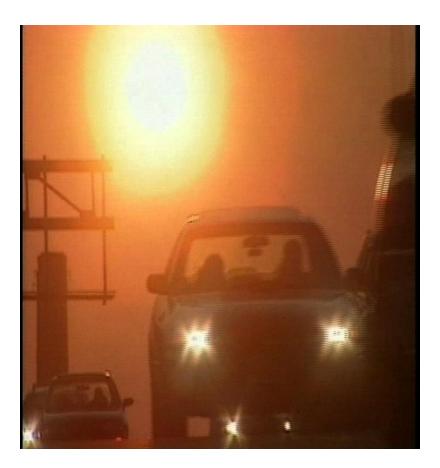
#### Journalism

# 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)

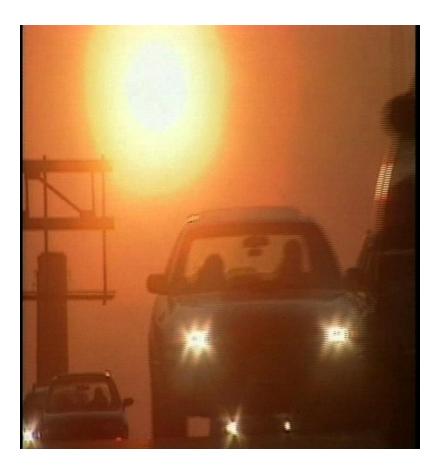
Hopeless

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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