

Implications of Hurricane Katrina for Public Health Preparedness

Call #2: Beyond Cell Phones and Walkie-Talkies

Speaker Biographies

Robert Johannessen

Director, Bureau of Media and Communications
Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals

Bob Johannessen is the Communications Director for the Louisiana department of Health and Hospitals, a position he has held since 1998. He has more than 20 years experience in the public relations/ marketing profession, including more than 10 years in management positions with private area health care institutions.

Mr. Johannessen directed DHH's communications response to Hurricane Katrina, including issues related to public health response, special needs sheltering, hospital and nursing home evacuations, recovery of victims and reporting on the total number of people who died during and after Katrina.

His bureau responded to thousands of media inquiries from hundreds of local, national, and international reporters. Today, his bureau continues to field media inquiries related to Katrina on almost a daily basis.

Mr. Johannessen is a former president of the Baton Rouge chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, a past board member of the Public Relations Association of Louisiana, has served on the boards of the America Hospital Association's P.R./ Marketing Society and the National Public Health Information Coalition. He has received numerous awards for his P.R., advertising and marketing campaigns and events.

He is a 1981 graduate of Louisiana State University's School of Journalism, and is a graduate of the Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce Leadership Class of 1997.

Melissa Walker

Public Information Officer
Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals

Melissa Walker joined the DHH Public Information Team in the midst of the anthrax attacks in 2001 and currently serves at the Public Information and Risk Communications Officer with Public Health Preparedness and Emergency Response Unit.

Walker graduated from Millsaps College in 2000 and began her career in Consumer Marketing for technology and telecommunications companies. Since joining the Office of Public Health she has worked on public information campaigns to educate the public on topics such as West Nile Virus, Diabetes, Anti-Tobacco and Water Safety. During Hurricane Katrina, she worked in the State Joint Information Center and was the media liaison for the Victim Identification Center and the Family Assistance Center. Most recently, she has been working to develop educational materials and emergency response guides for both the general public and first responders on Emergency and Disaster Preparedness topics.

Kelly Fogarty, MS

Communications Director
Louisiana Public Health Institute

Kelly Fogarty is the Communication Director at the Louisiana Public Health Institute, a position he has held for 18 months. At LPHI, he oversees a communications staff that provides public relations, website, special events and collateral support for a variety of public health programs, which include: The Louisiana Campaign for Tobacco-Free Living and Steps to a Healthier New Orleans.

Mr. Fogarty graduated from the Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge with a degree in journalism. He also holds a masters degree in advertising from the University of Denver.

In collaboration with the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, Mr. Fogarty directed statewide paid media campaigns involving the creation of public service announcements for television, radio, outdoor and newspapers during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Mr. Fogarty is a former president of the New Orleans chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators and a former president of the Young Leadership Council's Toastmaster's Club.

Tim Tinker, DrPH, MPH

Senior Vice President & Group Director
Widmeyer Communications

As a Co-Founder of the Risk and Crisis Communication Consortium, Dr. Tinker provides strategic counsel and advice to Widmeyer and its clients in crisis and emergency risk communication. Dr. Tinker manages emergency and non-emergency risk communication programs in the homeland security, public health, environment, agriculture, and defense sectors. Examples include work for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S. Department of Agriculture, Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and numerous state and local government agencies.

Before creating the Risk and Crisis Communication Consortium, Dr. Tinker had a long and distinguished career as a federal communicator. As Chief of Communications and Research at the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), a federal public health agency and sister agency of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, he provided ongoing technical assistance and expertise to federal, State, and local agencies in a wide range of crisis and emergency risk communication issues.