

### Session 3: Workshop 3: Risk Communications

David P. Ropeik ([dpr@dropeik.com](mailto:dpr@dropeik.com); 978 369-5675)

#### **Abstract:**

The International Atomic Energy Agency's Chernobyl Forum on Health states "the mental health impact of Chernobyl is the largest public health problem unleashed by the accident to date." Communication is a vital tool for mitigating such harms. Indeed, communication is key tool at all stages of preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergency events. In radiological emergencies, unique circumstances arise that heighten the emotional nature of events, creating difficult communication challenges, which can be met through the discipline of risk communication. This four hour workshop will introduce participants to the ideas of risk communication, defined as;

**Actions, words, and other interactions that incorporate and respect the perceptions of the information recipients, intended to help people make more informed decisions about threats to their health and safety.**

The workshop will combine lecture, discussion, and role play, to introduce participants to both the ideas and practical tools of this unique and important form of emergency risk management.

#### **Biographical Sketch of David P. Ropeik:**

David Ropeik is an international consultant and speaker on risk communication and risk perception to government, business, trade associations, health care and consumer groups, and educational institutions. He is an Instructor in the Harvard University Extension School's Environmental Management Program. He was an Instructor at the Harvard School of Public Health, and was co-director of the school's professional education course 'The Risk Communication Challenge'.

He served for two years as the risk communication member of the congressionally mandated Veterans Advisory Board on Dose Reconstruction, which oversees the joint Department of Defense and Veteran's Administration program to compensate veterans exposed to nuclear radiation.

He has taught courses on media coverage of risk issues at the Harvard School of Public Health, the Kennedy School of Government, the Neiman Fellowship Program at Harvard, the Knight Science Journalism Fellowship program at MIT, Boston University's Program in Science Journalism, the Emerson College program in Health Communication, and to the National Association of Science Writers, the Council for the Advancement of Science Writers, and the Society of Environmental Journalists.

Prior to joining Harvard, Mr. Ropeik was a television reporter for WCVB-TV, Channel 5, in Boston for 22 years. He specialized in reporting on environment and science issues.

He has Bachelors Degree ('72) and Masters Degree ('73) in Journalism from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. He was a Knight Science Journalism Fellow at MIT, 1994-95, and a National Tropical Botanical Garden Fellow in 1999. He has taught journalism at Boston University, Tufts University, and MIT.