

TALKING TO THE HAND

**IMPROVING PUBLIC SAFETY OUTCOMES
WITH RISK COMMUNICATION**


RISK COMMUNICATION VS CRISIS COMMUNICATION




U.S. International Politics Lifestyle ...

Mayor tells those not evacuating for hurricane to put Social Security numbers on arms

By MEGHAN KENEALLY
Aug 25, 2017, 1:58 PM ET

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RISK VS. CRISIS COMMUNICATION

RISK COMMUNICATION

Before the event

Avoidance of an event

Preparedness for an event

INCITING ACTION

Emergency preparedness

Risk reduction

Impact reduction

CRISIS COMMUNICATION

During the event

Information about an event
that is occurring or imminent

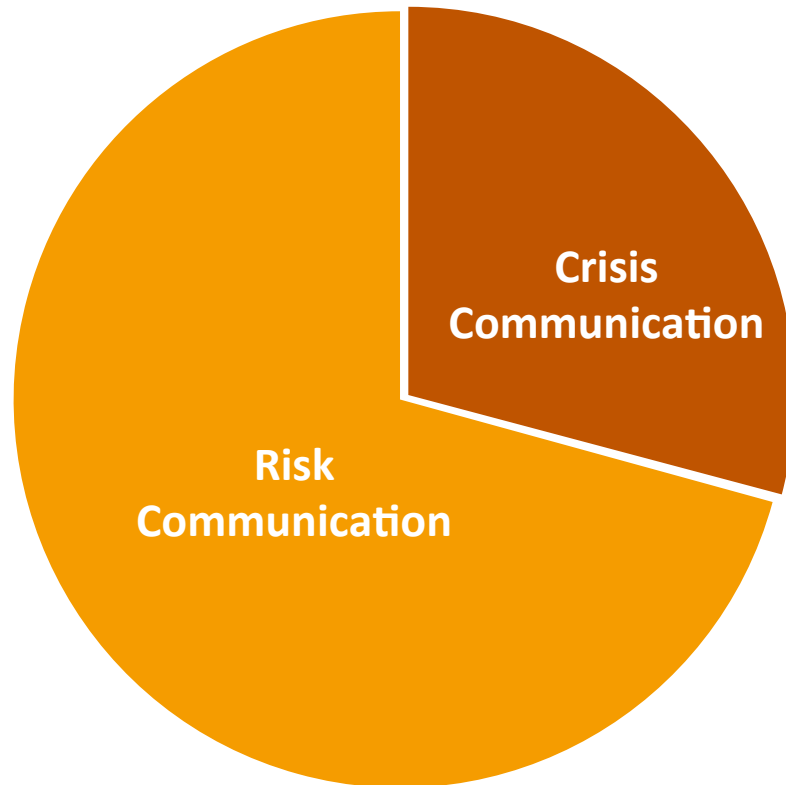
INCITING ACTION

Watches/warnings

Warning signs

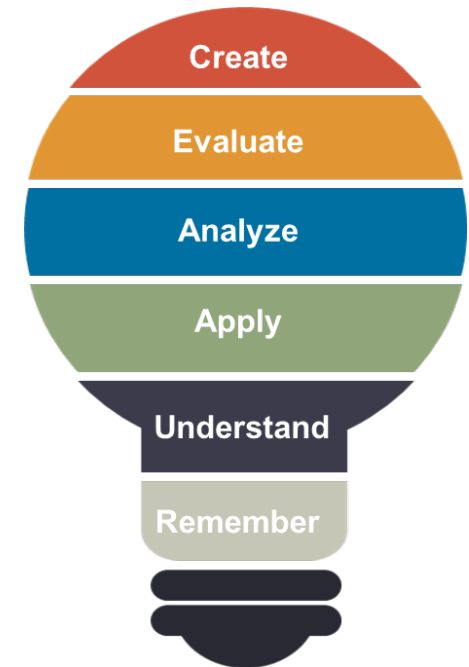
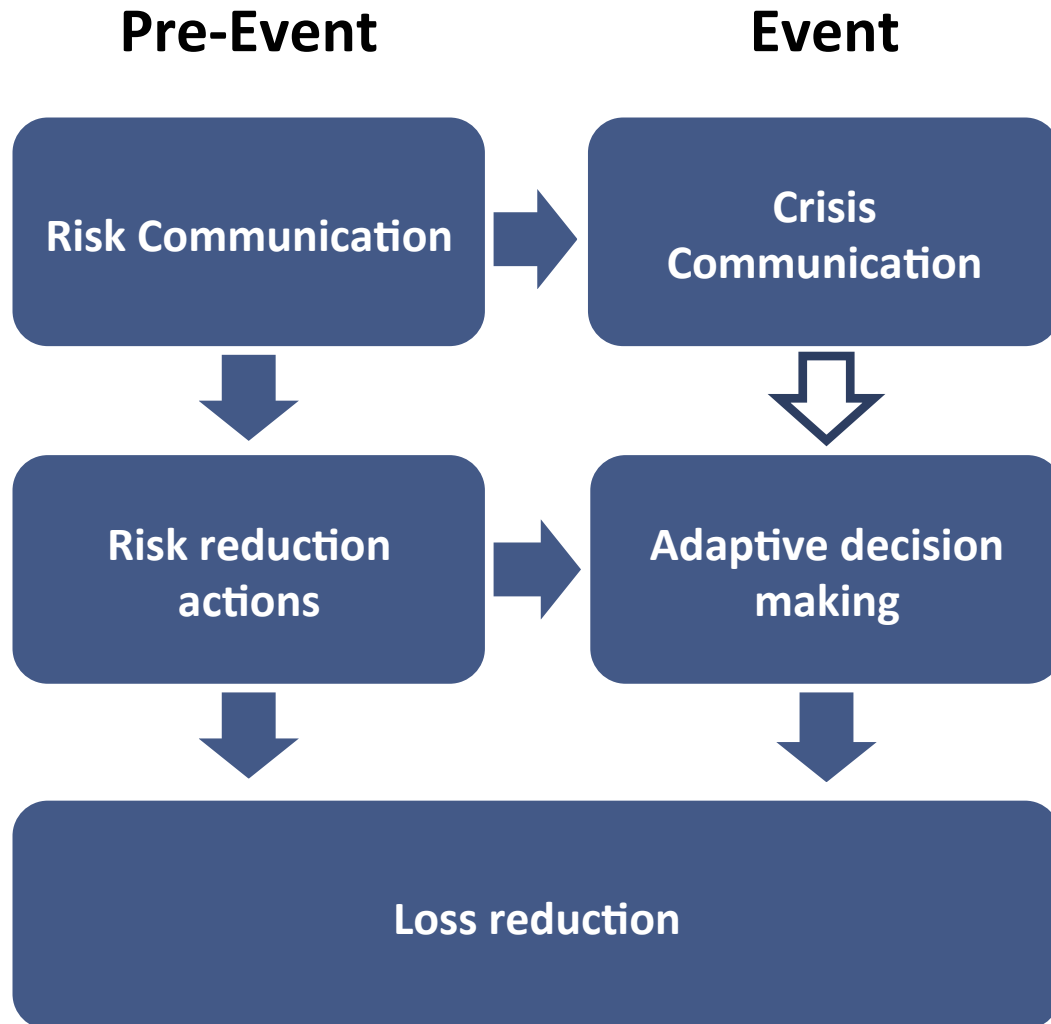
Emergency instructions

IMPROVED DISASTER OUTCOMES



If we wait for a crisis to start communicating, it's already too late.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES



***Bloom's
Taxonomy***

CRISIS SENSEMAKING

Strange smell

Warning signs

“Noticing and bracketing”

“Strange smell, hallway, home”

Mental models created through risk communication

Plausible is not the same as accurate

Plumbing | Son | Natural Gas

Plausible model created

Situation labeled

Something to be concerned about

Normalcy bias can cause signs to be disregarded

Action

Go outside and call the gas company

ENBRIDGE – MARSHALL, MI SPILL

- 1M Gallons spilled into Kalamazoo River
- “They thought they were solving a different problem”



WHEN SENSEMAKING FAILS

Bad decision making

- An inability to conceive the reality of what you are experiencing
- Continuing to make bad decisions in spite of obvious feedback

No decision making

- Feeling completely overwhelmed and helpless
- Anger, sense of betrayal, denial, panic, dismissal



CURING STUPID

IT'S ONLY COMMUNICATION IF SOMEONE ELSE IS LISTENING

RELATIVELY RATIONAL

 Like Page

Don't be angry at Trump or Trump voters.

Be angry at the lack of logic, critical thinking, and rational thought that allowed him to get there. Then do something about it.

If you don't understand behavior, you can't impact it.

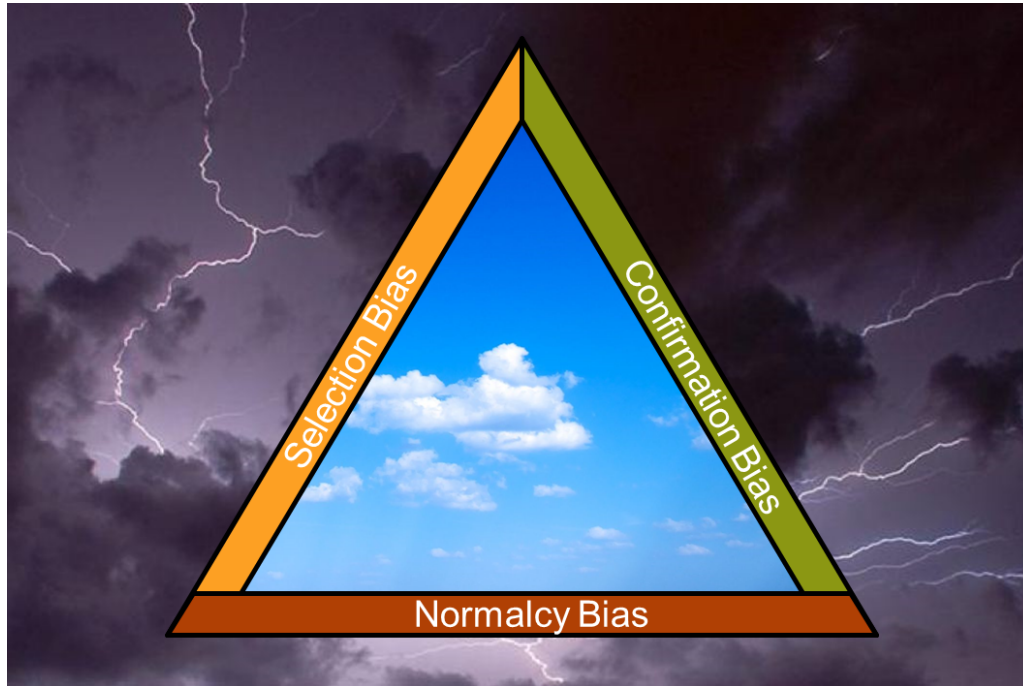
Even liberals who've accomplished a lot in their lives and have high IQs often say things on a regular basis that are stunningly, profoundly stupid and at odds with the way the world works. Modern liberalism has become so bereft of common sense and instinctually suicidal ...

Townhall Blog

RELATIVE RATIONALITY

Social Dynamics
Resources
Perceptions Anxieties
Responsibilities Experiences Abilities
Priorities
Knowledge Values Relationships

BIASES



- **Normalcy** – Assumption that what you expect to happen will always happen
- **Selection** – Dismissing what doesn't fit your expectations
- **Confirmation** – Seeking sources that support your certainty (or who don't but are easy to refute)

NORMALCY BIAS

- **“Huh, that’s strange.”**
- **Overestimating our abilities**
- **Underestimating the impact of disaster**
 - Availability of resources
 - Environmental changes
 - Physical changes



SELECTION BIAS

“That can’t be right.”



CONFIRMATION BIAS

“That’s what I thought.”

Making friends with Frankenfood: What critics, supporters miss in ...

<https://www.geneticliteracyproject.org/.../making-friends-with-frankenfood-what-do-c...> ▼

Sep 23, 2014 - What does a left-leaning, holistic food embracing American woman think about the increasingly rancorous debate over **GMOs**? Maybe there is ...

GMO/Genetically Modified Organisms - Cargill

www.cargill.com/news/issues/gmo/ ▼

Genetically modified organisms (**GMOs**) are created by transferring a gene from one species of plant or animal to a different species in order to give it a useful ...

INTERPRETING CRISIS COMMUNICATION

- Where is it coming from?
- Is it meant for me?
- What does it mean?
- What do I do?

The infographic is divided into several sections. At the top left, a bar chart shows the popularity of communication channels: TV, RADIO, ONLINE, APPS, and SOCIAL. The bars for APPS and SOCIAL are the tallest, indicating they are the most popular. To the right of this chart, text states that mobile apps and social media are tied as the 4th most popular source for emergency information during a disaster, citing the American Red Cross (2013). Below this, there is a section for 'Friends & Family' with a phone icon, a Twitter post from Lansing EM about a power outage, and icons for Twitter and Facebook. On the right side, there is a box for 'Wireless Emergency Alerts' with a smartphone icon showing a signal. At the bottom right, the text 'Sight, Smell, Sound' is written in orange.

TV RADIO ONLINE APPS SOCIAL

Mobile apps and social media are tied as the **4th** most popular source for emergency information during a disaster.
(American Red Cross, 2013)

Wireless
Emergency Alerts

Friends & Family

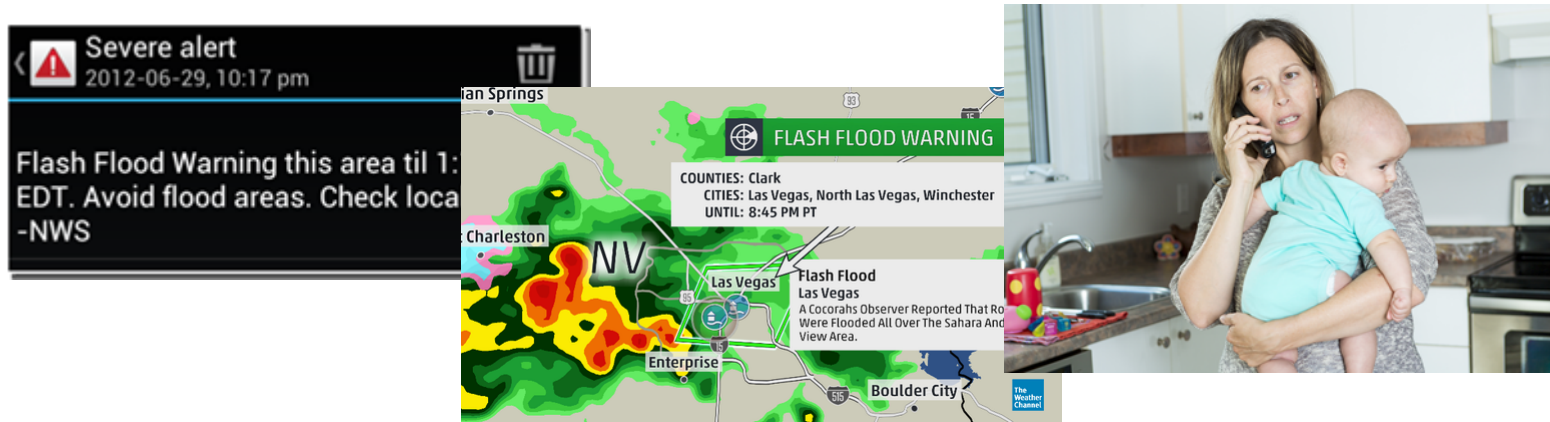
EAS
Emergency Alert System

Lansing EM @LansingEM · Jul 17
504 customers on the southside of Lansing are without power. Crews are en route & will provide updates when... fb.me/3Q9sAJ5bw

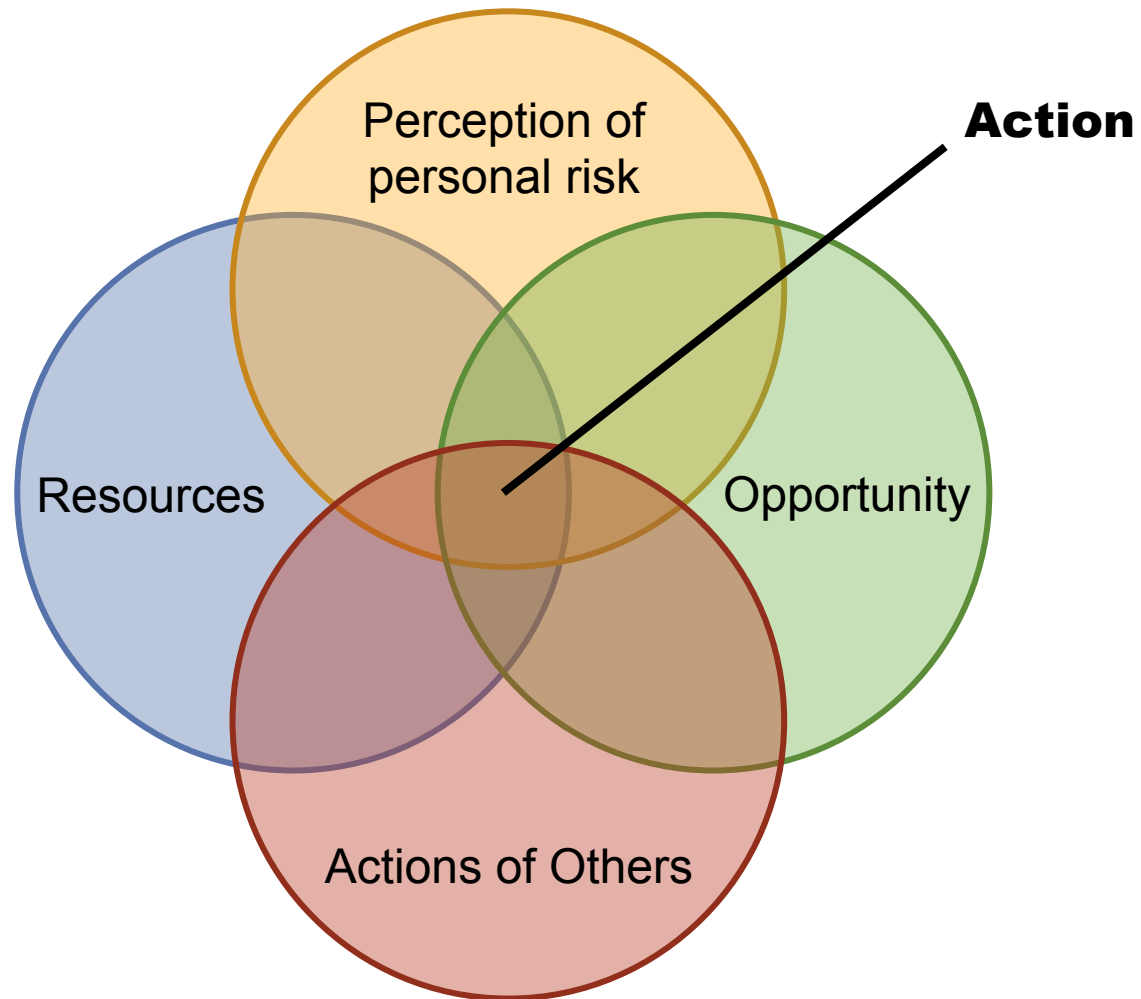
Sight, Smell, Sound

INFORMATION SEEKING

- It takes three messages (or a message and two confirming sources) to move most people to action
- In short fuse events, there may not be time for information seeking



DECISION MAKING INFLUENCES



DECISION MAKING INFLUENCES

Probability x  Severity = Risk

- **Probability is more important than severity**
- **Severity is only a factor when probability becomes high enough for concern**

INFLUENCE OF OTHERS

INFORMATION

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

CLEAR CHOICES

INFLUENCE
OF OTHERS

INFORMATION

PERSONAL
EXPERIENCE

CLEAR CHOICES

INFLUENCE OF OTHERS

EFFECTIVE RISK COMMUNICATION

- **Creates personalized knowledge of how a disaster will impact you and your family**
- **Creates a mental framework to help you correctly interpret and act on warnings**
- **Reduces stress by improving self-efficacy, creating a better decision-making environment**
- **Improves disaster and emergency outcomes**



IMPROVING RISK COMMUNICATION

STORYTELLING IN RISK COMMUNICATION

- **Intention is more likely to become action when it develops from:**
 - Personal experience
 - Vivid descriptions
 - Not statistics
- **Builds knowledge**
 - Connecting and constructing
 - Exploring
 - Reflecting
- **Builds trust**
 - Expresses empathy
 - Changes dynamic

"When I got in the shower earlier today the sky was blue. When I got out, the sky was black."

Alberta resident Sandra Hickey in the Canadian Press

STORY ELEMENTS

- **Single protagonist**
- **Whether real or fictional is clear**
- **Familiar environment**
- **Powerful point**
- **Positive**
- **Call to action**

COST BENEFIT

- **Reducing Costs**
- **Increasing Benefits**



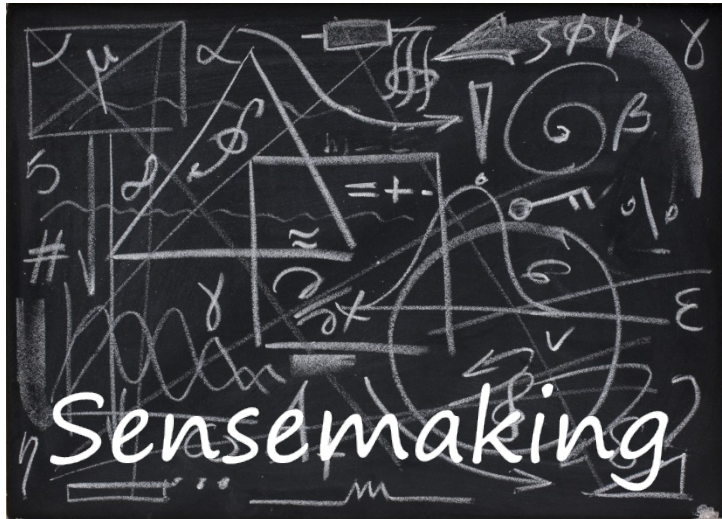
SELF-EFFICACY

- **Small steps lead to large steps**
- **Reduces stress**
- **Increases sense of control**
- **Improves decision making**

METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS

- **Increases knowledge creation**
- **Encourages personal responsibility**
- **Empowers action**





$$M(H^0) = \pi \left(\frac{1}{137} \right)^8 \sqrt{\frac{hc}{G}}$$
$$3987^{12} + 4365^{12} = 4472^{12}$$
$$\Omega(t_0) > 1$$

SENSEMAKING

- Building a framework to understand an unfamiliar situation
- Required for decision making

FACILITATING SENSEMAKING

- Plausible beats accurate
- Communication as a foundation for decision making
 - Information
 - Reinforcement
 - Leverage sources



ACKNOWLEDGING CHOICE

- **Engages them as active participants in disaster decision making process**
- **Promotes a sense of personal responsibility**
- **Empowers them**
- **Helps personalize risk**
- **Legitimizes their unique perspective**
- **Shows respect**

ACKNOWLEDGING CHOICE

Hazardous materials warning. Please evacuate the building immediately.

A hazardous materials release has occurred. Please evacuate the building immediately. If you do not evacuate, you may suffer serious health consequences.

PERMISSION TO ACT

- Encourage them to notice and not dismiss
- Give them permission to act

Panic?

OR

Making a rapid decision based on knowledge of recent events, which may or may not be correct, but for which the consequences of being wrong and acting are minimal, and the consequences of being right and not acting are significant

RISK COMMUNICATION AS TRAINING

- **Tie to existing knowledge/experience**
- **Create knowledge**
 - Guided discussions
 - Reflection
 - Discussion-based exercises
 - Practical exercises/drills

RISK COMMUNICATION PHASES

Stage	Mindset	Needs
1. Unaware	Open minded, but not seeking information	Hazard information and experiences (personal or from trusted sources)
2. Unengaged	“Security lodged in ignorance” Understand the hazard, deny personal risk	Personalized information, tools to explore risk, change normalcy bias
3. Deciding about acting	Can I do something? Will it work? Is it worth it?	Cost-benefit, short and long-term, influence of trusted sources
4. Decided to act	Intends to act when opportunity arises	Motivation, personal resources
5. Decided not to act	Rejected cost-benefit, or unrealistic optimism	Persuasion; Increased benefits, reduced costs
6. Acting	Positive/empowered or reluctant/resentful	Opportunity, choice
7. Maintenance	Accepting or rejecting	Reinforcement

**Michael | Ronald
Lindell | Perry**

**Communicating
Environmental Risk
in Multiethnic
Communities**

2004

Neil Weinstein

**The Precaution
Adoption Process**

Health Psychology | 1988

**Weick, Sutcliffe
& Obstfeld**

Organizing and
the Process of
Sensemaking

**Organizational
Science | 2005**

Ronda Oberlin 

**Lansing Office of
Emergency Management**

ronda.oberlin@lansingmi.gov
www.do1thing.com