

# **Risk Communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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# In this talk I will:

- Provide a definition of Risk perception and communication and put it in context with examples
- Discuss why risk communication is important ;

# Risk perception 1

- Importance of heuristics and biases (Kahneman and Tversky)
- Anchoring effect;
- Simplifying heuristic;
- Availability heuristic;
- Understanding base rates;
- Hindsight bias

# Introduction to Risk perception 2:

- Work of Kahneman and Tversky influenced others: Fischhoff, Slovic, Lichtenstein
- People viewed risks differently:
  - Natural – Technological
  - Voluntary – Involuntary
  - Familiar – Non Familiar
  - Control – Non Control
  - High Frequency/Low Consequence Risk VS  
Low Frequency/High Consequence Risk
  - Female - Male

# Introduction to Risk Communication:

- Based on these findings, regulators and industry took the view that one should develop risk communication programmes
  - Build nuclear power plants
  - Site nuclear waste facilities
  - Build waste incinerators
  - Convince publics that certain foods are safe

# Introduction to Risk Communication:

- Three risk communications strategies put forward:
  - Top-down
  - Dialogue
  - Bottom-up

# Introduction to Risk Communication:

- Risk communication still difficult to do!  
(Kasperson, Pidgeon, Renn, Slovic, Weinstein)
  - Social / Amplifications / Attenuations
  - Narrative
  - Deliberation
  - Optimistic bias
  - Trust / No trust

# Introduction to Risk Communication:

Over the years, risk communication efforts have experienced both successes and failures:

## ■ Failures

- Swedish (2002) acrylamide scare
- Shell – Brent Spar oil storage buoy
- US Dept of Energy – siting nuclear waste storage facility

## ■ Successes

- UK – FSA building trust post-BSE
- Johnson & Johnson – Tylenol scare
- Sweden-EON – Barseback nuclear power plant incident