Communicating Extreme Events to your Audiences

1 Frame your message

Engage your audience by framing your message around values that have been shown to resonate across demographics:

Preparedness: Discuss the possible impacts of extreme events and how preparing can limit them.

Responsible management: Emphasize that practical actions safeguard current & future generations.

2 Employ Metaphors to Explain Complex Concepts

Climate closet

Weather tells you what to wear each day; climate tells you what to have in your closet.

Regular v. rampant CO_2

Regular levels of CO_2 are created by normal life processes, but rampant levels of CO2 are produced when we burn fossil fuels. We need to reduce rampant CO2; it's out of control.

Heat-trapping blanket

When we burn fossil fuels for energy, the CO2 released builds up in the atmosphere and acts like a blanket that traps heat around the world, disrupting our climate.

3 Connect the Dots between Climate Change and Extreme Events

Say what you know — **Link events to trends** — **Show footprints** — **End with solutions**

Confidently state that climate change contributes to extreme weather events.

Link current events to ongoing trends:
- severe heatwaves
- prolonged droughts
- torrential downpours
- Increased wildfires

The signs of climate change in extreme events are:
- increased severity
- greater frequency
- unprecedented events

Avoid fatalism and compassion-fatigue by ending with solutions.

4 Say This, Not That

Focus on risk, not uncertainty

Say this: The risk of our city flooding is higher than ever before because of climate change.

Not that: Although there is uncertainty about the effects, climate change is likely to cause more flooding in the future.

Use phrases of certainty

Say this: Climate change is making torrential downpours like the one we are experiencing now more severe and frequent.

Not that: No single weather event can be definitively said to be caused by climate change.

Highlight the opportunity

Say this: If we adapt our city to sea level rise now, we would save $23 million dollars in damages as well as many lives.

Not that: Adapting to sea level rise would cost our city $23 million dollars now.