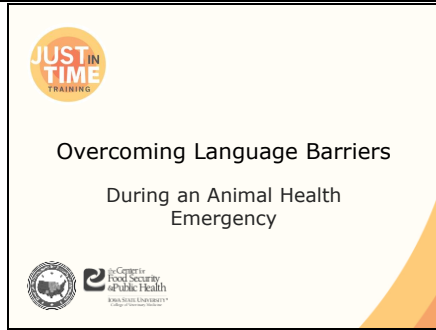


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*December 2015*  
During animal health emergency situations, communication among individuals involved will be essential. This includes relaying information between responders or conveying information with animal owners or producers, or animal health workers. In some instances, language barriers may impede communication. This Just-In-Time training will discuss ways to work around language barriers during an animal health emergency.

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It is important to understand when language barriers may occur during an animal health emergency. While every situation varies, language barriers may involve animal owners or producers whose animals are affected by the emergency. There may be a need to convey instructions to follow (such as evacuation or sheltering directions), or to explain response measures needed (such as quarantine of a premises or depopulation of animals for disease control). Any of these situations will be stressful for the animal owner, making the need for effective communication across the language barrier that much more essential. Another situation may involve the need for assistance from farm employees with response tasks such as animal handling or implementing biosecurity measures or safety precautions. In some situations, these employees may not speak or understand English, but their training and assistance may be essential.

Photo: Asian pet owners reunited with this pet cat following a disaster.  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/10824207/Cat-missing-since-Japan-tsunami-reunited-with-owners.html>

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The agriculture workforce has become increasingly diverse in language, culture and education. Many agricultural workers are immigrants who have limited English language skills. The majority are Hispanics from Latin America, particularly from Mexico; however a diverse number of other immigrants from Asian and European backgrounds may be included in language barrier situations. A 2012 survey indicated 47 percent of farm laborers and supervisors were foreign-born; 50% of workers and supervisors were Hispanic and 31 percent had less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education. Additionally, in U.S. homes, Spanish is the most spoken non-English language. Providing information and possibly training to these non-English speaking individuals will be challenging and require creative approaches to convey essential information during the response.

Source: The National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) and USDA Economic Research Service <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor/background.aspx#demographic>; Photo: University of Florida Agricultural Extension Agent Cesar Asuaje talking with a Hispanic agriculture worker.  
<http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/global/2015/10/05/worker-safety-training/>

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### Overcoming Language Barriers

- Find someone that is bilingual
  - Farm supervisor or crew leader
  - Community member
  - Interpreting service
  - Other responding agencies




There are some key strategies to addressing language barriers during animal health emergencies. One of the first steps is to identify an individual that speaks the language as well as English. This person can serve as an interpreter to convey your message. This might include a farm or crew supervisor, perhaps a respected community member or an interpreting service. Check with other agencies involved as well for bi-lingual responders.

Photo: A Hispanic dairy worker.  
<http://umash.umn.edu/portfolio/multidisciplinary-network-to-address-agriculture-worker-health-and-safety-issues/>

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### Visual Identification

- Visual identification
  - Colored vest
  - Colored tape on outerwear



Once identified, this person should be uniformed with some type of visual indicator, such as a colored vest or colored tape on their protective outerwear, for easy identification when an interpreter is needed.

Photo source:  
[http://www.dupont.com/content/en\\_us/home/products-and-services/personal-protective-equipment/chemical-protective-garments/brands/tyvek-protective-apparel/products/tyvek-800-j/\\_jcr\\_content/openareapar/productanimation/images/image\\_2.png](http://www.dupont.com/content/en_us/home/products-and-services/personal-protective-equipment/chemical-protective-garments/brands/tyvek-protective-apparel/products/tyvek-800-j/_jcr_content/openareapar/productanimation/images/image_2.png); <http://www.fullsource.com/ml-kishigo-3704i/>

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### Tips for Communicating

- Remain calm and professional
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Avoid using acronyms or jargon
- Use everyday language
- Repeat important information
- Be patient
- Communicate with respect

As with anyone you may interact with during a response, remain calm and professional. If the individual does understand some English, speaking slowly and clearly can help provide them time to assimilate words you are saying. Emergency response tasks can contain a number of acronyms or disciplinary jargon, such as PPE or C&D or donning and doffing. Try to avoid using these terms or explain them using everyday language. Repeat important information several times to emphasize the key points. Also be aware of cultural factors. For example, immigrants may be reluctant or apprehensive to communicate with governmental entities. Animal owners will be distraught following a emergency situation as well as from the loss of their pet or livestock. Be patient and communicate with respect to help build trust.

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### Tips for Communicating


- Give information in small parts
- Verify comprehension before continuing
- Frequently check for understanding
  - Look for signs of confusion, agreement, or disagreement, apprehension
  - Watch the eyes, facial expression, or body language

Provide information in small increments to allow processing and comprehension of the information. Frequently check for understanding and verify before continuing with additional information. Watch the individual's eyes, facial expression or body language for signs of comprehension, confusion, agreement or disagreement.

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### Additional Communication Tips

- Information by various methods
- Verbal
- Visual
  - Translated signage or handouts in various languages
  - Language boards
  - Picture sets or drawings
    - Premade or paper/pencil



Just In Time Training Language Barriers: Overview

Whenever possible, provide information in various forms, including spoken and visual methods. Provide translated signage or handouts in the needed language whenever possible. Language boards can be helpful for communicating in the field, as can picture sets or drawings. These may be premade or drawn in the field.

Photo: University of Florida Agricultural Extension Agent Cesar Asuaje talking with Hispanic agriculture workers.  
<http://news.ifas.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Cesar-Asuaje.jpg>.

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### Resources

- FEMA IS-242.B: Effective Communication. February 2014. <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=is-242.b>
- Arcury TA, Estrada JM, Quandt SA. Overcoming Language and Literacy Barriers in Safety and Health Training of Agricultural Workers. J Agromedicine. 2010 Jul;15(3):236-248. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2914347/>

Just In Time Training Language Barriers: Overview

Information on overcoming language barriers during animal health emergencies is limited; however these resources address the topic for health and safety training, medical emergencies or law enforcement situations and can be applied to animal health.

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Just In Time Training Language Barriers: Overview

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