



Narrative-Impact-Action (NIA) Framework™

What is it?

CNA’s Narrative-Impact-Action (NIA) Framework™ is a strategic tool designed to help emergency management agencies at all levels of government understand and respond to the spread of false and misleading information (FMI). The framework steers evidence-based decision-making by providing general guidelines for assessing the potential operational impact of FMI and determining the appropriate preparation and response.

How was it developed?

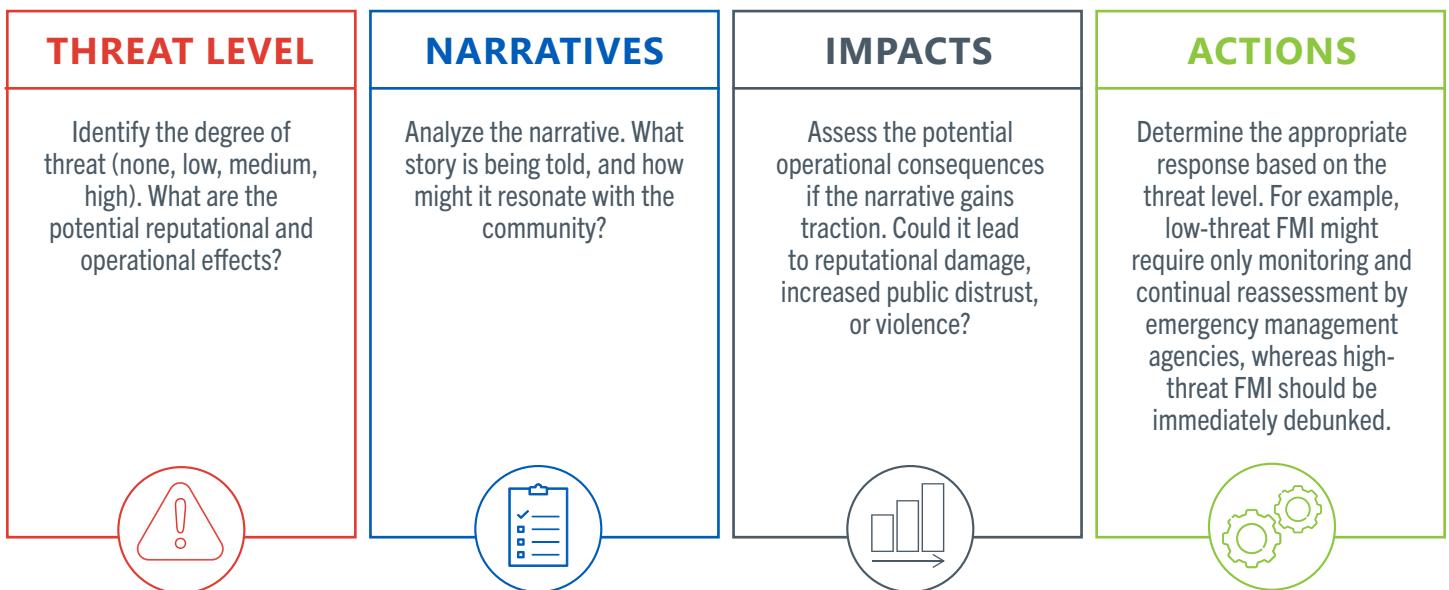
The framework is grounded in social psychology and crisis communication literature, interviews with emergency managers involved in the responses to the 2023 Hawaii wildfires and 2024 hurricanes Helene and Milton, and a review of thousands of posts containing FMI related to the 2024 hurricanes. The NIA Framework’s threat levels and impact risk assessments are informed by the narratives prevalent during these disasters and empirical evidence illustrating how similar narratives shape human beliefs and behavior.

Why does this matter?

FMI can decrease public trust in government services, complicate emergency and disaster response, create confusion, and generate fear among vulnerable populations. At its most harmful, FMI can result in decision-making—and violent action—that undermines the safety and security of American citizens. The NIA Framework™ gives emergency managers a tool to mitigate the risks caused by FMI during disasters and emergencies—to safeguard operations, maintain public confidence, and save lives.

Benefits for Emergency Management Agencies

- **Evaluate FMI threats.** Quickly assess whether and how a false narrative might disrupt operations.
- **Prioritize response.** Strategically allocate resources to counter the most dangerous narratives.
- **Build public trust.** Communicate effectively to counter harmful false narratives without amplifying rumors.



| THREAT LEVEL | EXAMPLE NARRATIVES | IMPACT RISK ASSESSMENT | RECOMMENDED ACTION |
|--|--|--|--|
| None (no or minor reputational impacts and no operational impacts) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Politician X is staging photo ops while ignoring the suffering of the American people. Celebrity X is helping survivors while others are doing nothing. | These narratives are false and possibly harmful to a individual's reputation but do not touch on XEMA's reputations or operations. | <p>Blue Sky: Do not respond.</p> <p>Disaster: Do not respond.</p> |
| Low (reputational impacts and/or low operational impacts) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The government manipulated the weather to produce the disaster. The government is willfully ignoring the needs of the people because they don't belong to the same political party as the President. XEMA mismanaged funds and cannot afford to help disaster victims. | These narratives are unlikely to result in direct operational impacts but could harm the government's reputation or XEMA's reputation, possibly resulting in a decreased level of trust. | <p>Blue Sky: Do not respond.</p> <p>Disaster: Monitor and continually assess.</p> |
| Medium (significant reputational impacts and/or significant operational impacts that fall short of violence) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> XEMA is refusing to help find deceased individuals or provide resources to locate victims. The government is intentionally destroying supplies. XEMA is arresting volunteers for rescuing disaster victims. | These narratives indicate that the government or XEMA is involved in activities that might elicit anger or inspire people to act in ways that increase risk to themselves or to responders but are unlikely to elicit violence. These actions might include defending supplies with drones, hoarding supplies or panic buying, going into dangerous areas to look for victims, or treating XEMA personnel with hostility. | <p>Blue Sky: Do not respond.</p> <p>Disaster: Debunk.</p> |
| High (significant reputational impacts and/or significant operational impacts, including violence) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> XEMA is commandeering the homes/businesses/property of victims. XEMA is preventing people from leaving the disaster area and reaching safety. Local shelters are not allowing pets. Local shelters are demanding proof of citizenship before allowing people to enter. XEMA is planning to use the disaster as an excuse to confiscate firearms. | These narratives indicate that the government or XEMA is involved in activities that pose a direct threat to the safety and security of the public. The narratives are highly likely to result in active hostility toward XEMA personnel or acts of violence committed in a misguided attempt to protect loved ones. Such actions could include prompting people to violently defend their property, family, etc.; causing people to engage in decision-making that will threaten their safety (e.g., refusing to evacuate from a mandatory evacuation zone); and inspiring emotions of panic and fear that result in risky behavior (e.g., causing people to travel unnecessarily). | <p>Blue Sky: Distribute content-based inoculation material online to counter high-impact narratives that are known to spread frequently during disasters.</p> <p>Disaster: Debunk immediately.</p> |

Note: "XEMA" represents emergency management organizations at any jurisdictional level.

Resources

Heather Wolters, Kasey Stricklin, Neil Carey, and Megan McBride, [The Psychology of \(Dis\)information: A Primer on Key Psychological Mechanisms](#), CNA, 2021.

Megan K. McBride, Pamela G. Faber, Kaia Haney, Patricia J. Kannapel, and Samuel Plapinger, with contributions by Heather M. K. Wolters, [Evidence-Based Techniques for Countering Mis-/Dis-/Mal-Information: A Primer](#), CNA, 2024.

Jamie Biglow and Heather Marshall, with contributions by Dawn Thomas, James Baney, Zoe Dutton, John Milton, and Leola Abraham, [Best Practices in Social Media Crisis Communications for State and Local Emergency Management Agencies](#), CNA, 2023.

Lauren K. Hagy, [Disinformation 101 for Emergency Managers](#), Virginia Department of Emergency Management, 2024.

About CNA

CNA is a nonprofit research and analysis organization dedicated to the safety and security of the nation. It operates the Institute for Public research—which serves civilian government agencies—and the Center for Naval Analyses, the Department of the Navy's federally funded research and development center (FFRDC). To learn more, contact Dawn Thomas, Director of the Center for Critical Incident Analysis, at thomasdh@cna.org or 703-824-2160.