

Dealing with uncertainty in emergency assessment:

The case of the EHEC outbreak in Germany in 2011

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EFSA's 2nd Scientific Conference, EXPO 2015, October 16, 2015

Every crisis is distinct, but frequently, response actions have common errors



Lack of preparedness

Org. cultural anomalies

Lack of knowledge transfer

Wrong managerial mantras

Ignorance of inter-dependencies

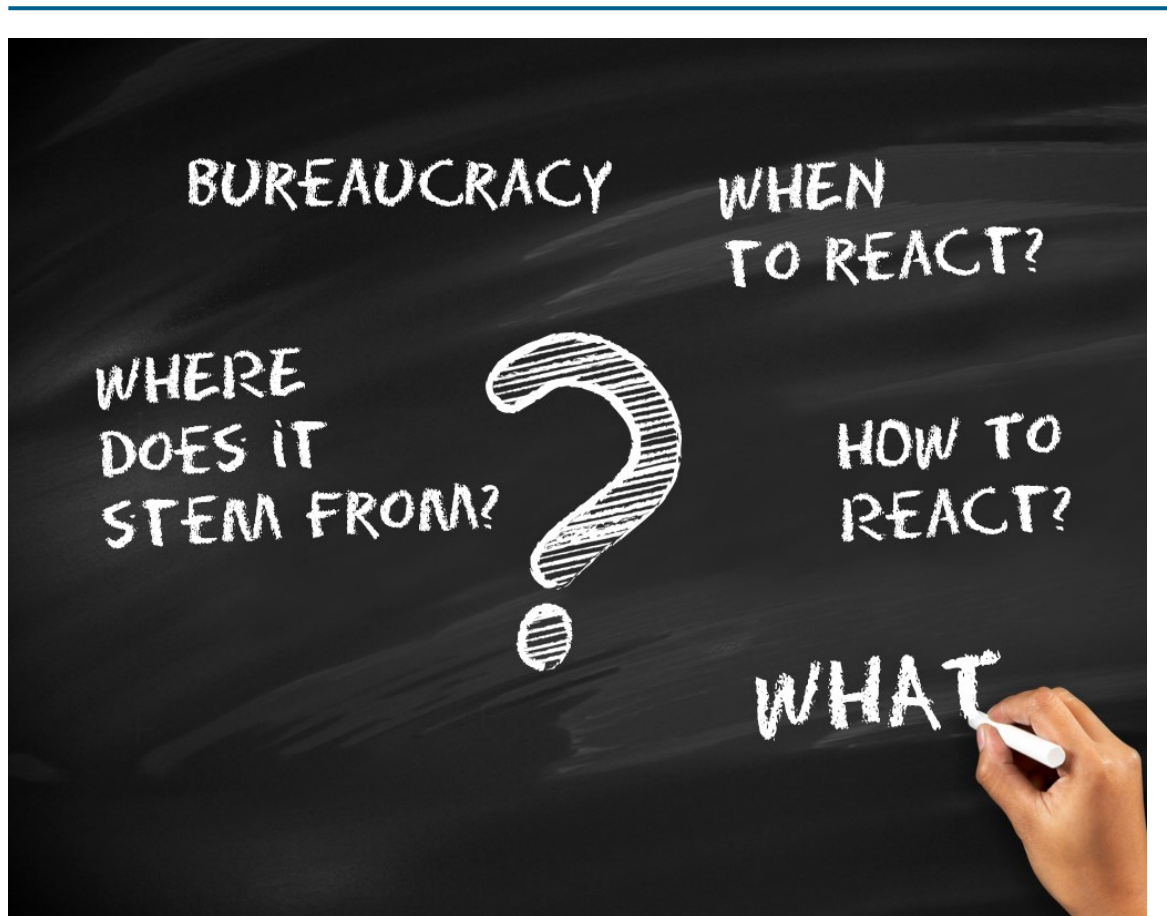


1. Recap of the EHEC outbreak in Germany in 2011

2. Lessons learned

Several barriers hindered a swift solution to the crisis

Barriers



- 1) Missing relations
- 2) Established bureaucratic structures
- 3) Uncertainty

Crisis as a trigger for change

Ad hoc solutions



1) Common frame

- Need to act
- Time pressure

2) Emergent leeway

- Actors' gains
- Modifying past experiences
- Established infrastructures

Communication is key when it comes to aligning activities and engaging with stakeholders



Communication



Sources of contamination

- Cucumbers?
- Lettuce?
- Tomatoes?
- Sprouts?

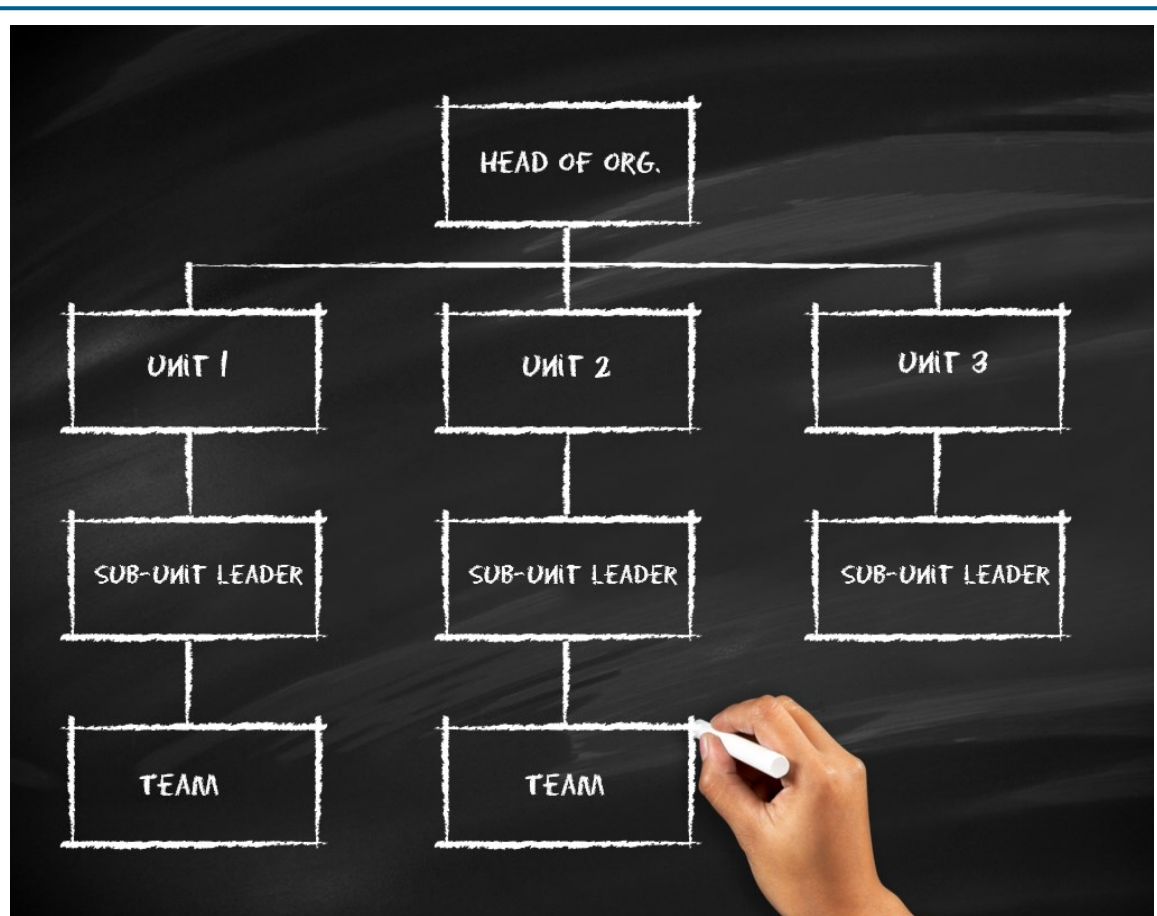


1. Recap of the EHEC outbreak in Germany in 2011

2. **Lessons learned**

Lessons learned for managing your organization

Intraorganizational implications



Implications

- Transparency is ambiguous
- Learning from and across incidents
- Redundancies are beneficial
- Make use of leeways *during* crisis

Lessons learned for managing across organizational boundaries

Interorganizational implications



Implications

- 'War for meaning' / blame game
- Seek external expertise to legitimize actions
- Collaborate to become aware of problems sooner
 - on a national level
 - on the EU-level
 - on a global level

Thank you very much for your interest

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This paper benefited from insightful comments of Olivier Berthod (FUB), Andreas Jansen (ECDC/RKI), Jan Kielstein (MHH), Georg Schreyögg (FUB), Jörg Sydow (FUB), Lothar Wieler (RKI/FUB) and Jürgen Zentek (FUB) on early drafts. Last but not least I am genuinely grateful for the medical practitioners for their time, support, insights and patience in the course of transdisciplinary collaboration.



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The EHEC outbreak took German authorities by surprise and caused havoc

Key figures

- **May – July 2011**
- **Selected intermediate figures (Infected / HUS)**
 - Germany (2.987 / 855)
 - Sweden (32 / 15)
 - Denmark (11 / 7)
- **(Northern) Germany**
- **53 fatalities**
- **EU-wide economic and political implications**

