

## AbstractID: 7984 Title: Issues Management & Crisis Preparedness

During his seventeen year career with the Minnesota Beef Council, Ron Eustice has successfully managed dozens of issues ranging from foodborne illness and “mad cow” disease to the worldwide introduction of food irradiation as a food safety technology. During his presentation he will describe a communication and response plan and consumer education initiative that have helped the beef industry increase consumer confidence in the safety of beef to the highest level in history.

Issues management and crisis communications require quick decision-making and rapid response. Therefore it is critical that a response team and crisis preparedness plan be developed well in advance of an impending crisis. It’s not “If,” but “When,” a situation will result that will bring the media to your door. How you address and respond to that issue will have a dramatic impact on your industry, profession, organization or career.

The mass media can be a powerful tool to provide an audience with accurate information. Lack of planning and poor media communications can cause loss of consumer confidence, reduced respect for your industry or profession and may have a direct impact on your career.

Eustice will provide attendees with a Crisis Preparedness Plan that includes developing an issues response team, identifying communications messages and tactics, strengthening relationships to help manage the issue, coordinating and selecting spokespeople, developing internal communications systems and preparedness team training.

Ronald Eustice is Executive Director for the Minnesota Beef Council. He has directed the Minnesota Beef Council's research and promotion efforts on behalf of Minnesota's 28,000 cattle producers since 1990. He is a graduate of the University of Minnesota with a degree in Agricultural Journalism and holds a Masters of International Business Degree from Century University. Eustice has represented the U.S. cattle industry on various assignments in more than 80 different countries and completed overseas assignments in Uruguay, Mexico and Indonesia. His career responsibilities include over 20 years of international marketing activities with major U.S. corporations and cooperatives.

In 1997, under Eustice’s leadership, the Minnesota Beef Council began a highly coordinated education effort to make beef one of the safest foods on the dinner table. Meat irradiation was a key element. The Minnesota Beef Council staff and directors studied the irradiation process and determined that consumer education was the key to acceptance. Cooperation with companies who shared an interest in irradiation began. Together with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Beef Council conducted workshops, served more than 1,000,000 samples of irradiated ground beef, sent letters to the editor and wrote press releases. Consumer interest, understanding and public support grew in direct proportion to the information available. Since the E. coli O157:H7 outbreaks in spinach and leafy vegetables, Eustice has been a major source of food safety information to the produce industry. During the past three years, Ronald Eustice has conducted educational activities and workshops on food irradiation in 30 states, 3 Canadian provinces as well as Thailand, Brazil, Spain, Argentina, Peru, India and Uruguay.