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COMMUNICATION PLANNING FOR
THE INTERNATIONAL ASTEROID WARNING NETWORK

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ABSTRACT

The white paper on the 2013 Planetary Defense Conference included a number of observations and recommendations relating to communication across expert-non-expert boundaries, such as:

- The need for expanded efforts in communication.
- The need to characterize impact hazards, risks, and effects in ways that are meaningful to decision makers and other non-experts.
- The need for “a clear international chain of command for dealing with NEO risk” and a communication strategy that makes use of findings from experts in communication.
- The need for open and transparent communication of information about NEO hazards.
- The need for a common language to characterize NEO hazards and impact mitigation options.

In this paper we will report on the genesis, proceedings, and outcome of an event that addressed all of these observations and recommendations – a communication workshop conducted for the International Asteroid Warning Network (IAWN) in 2014.

At its first meeting January 13-14, 2014, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the IAWN Steering Committee proposed to hold a communication workshop that would focus on message development, evaluation of past cases of NEO hazard warnings (e.g. Apophis, 2011 AG5), and best practices in science communication, risk communication, and emergency communication. Billings and Delgado Lopez were co-organizers and co-facilitators of this workshop, which was designed to provide guidance and advice to managers and directors of IAWN member programs and institutions. The workshop constituted a first step toward institutionalizing communication strategy and planning in IAWN operations. The IAWN Steering Committee received a briefing on the workshop in November 2014 and is considering next steps.