



# Voice of the Industry Examples

## Re-active Public Relations: Countering Myths & Negative Stories



- Thanks to USDA's Risk Management Agency for helping to make this session possible.



## World War II saying: "Loose Lips Sink Ships"

- Consumers already have **concerns about the cost** of a Real Tree ...



# Price Issue

## Reasons for NOT having a Farm-Grown Christmas Tree:

- No. 3 ... Cost of the Tree ...
  - Cited by 35% of fake tree owners



## World War II saying: "Loose Lips Sink Ships"

- So, why would someone in this industry talk with the media saying that price of Real Trees is likely to increase because of higher fuel prices?



# Story About Tree Prices

## BusinessWeek

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS November 23, 2007, 12:47PM ET

### Christmas tree auction shows price spike

MIFFLINBURG, PA.

Christmas tree shoppers should expect to pay more this season because of rising freight and fuel costs, according to the manager of a Christmas tree auction that bills itself as the country's largest.

Nearly 40,000 trees were sold Tuesday at the Buffalo Valley Produce Auction in Mifflinburg. Auction manager Neil A. Courtney said prices were about 10 percent higher than last year.

"The freight and fuel issue is the problem," he said Friday. "I hate to keep drumming that, but that's what it is."

The extended dry fall season also is expected to result in more shedding of needles, he said.

About 200 bidders, most of them buying trees in lots for retailers in the Northeast, attended the auction. The sale has grown in size from about 6,000 trees six years ago.

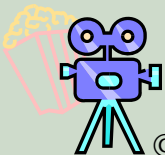
Courtney said the most commonly available grade of Douglas fir auctioned for about \$17 and should retail in metropolitan areas for \$40-\$45. A six- or seven-foot-high Fraser fir of the most common grade sold at auction for \$20-\$24 and will probably retail in urban areas for \$45-\$65, he said.

Most of the trees Courtney auctioned off were harvested from within 300 miles of the auction site in central Pennsylvania, with some Fraser firs originating in North Carolina. The trees ranged from tabletop sizes to 18-footers that can retail for a few hundred dollars.

The Missouri-based National Christmas Tree Association said Americans purchased nearly 29 million Christmas trees last year, down from about 33 million in 2005. Pennsylvania leads the nation in Christmas tree farms with nearly 2,200.

Copyright 2000-2007 by The McGraw-Hill Companies Inc. All rights reserved.

The McGraw-Hill Companies



© NCTA & Harris Interactive.

NCTA.

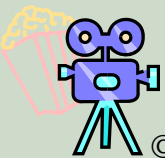


# Voice of the Industry: Example

## Coping with Loose Lips Drought & "Dry Trees"



# Sample Drought Story



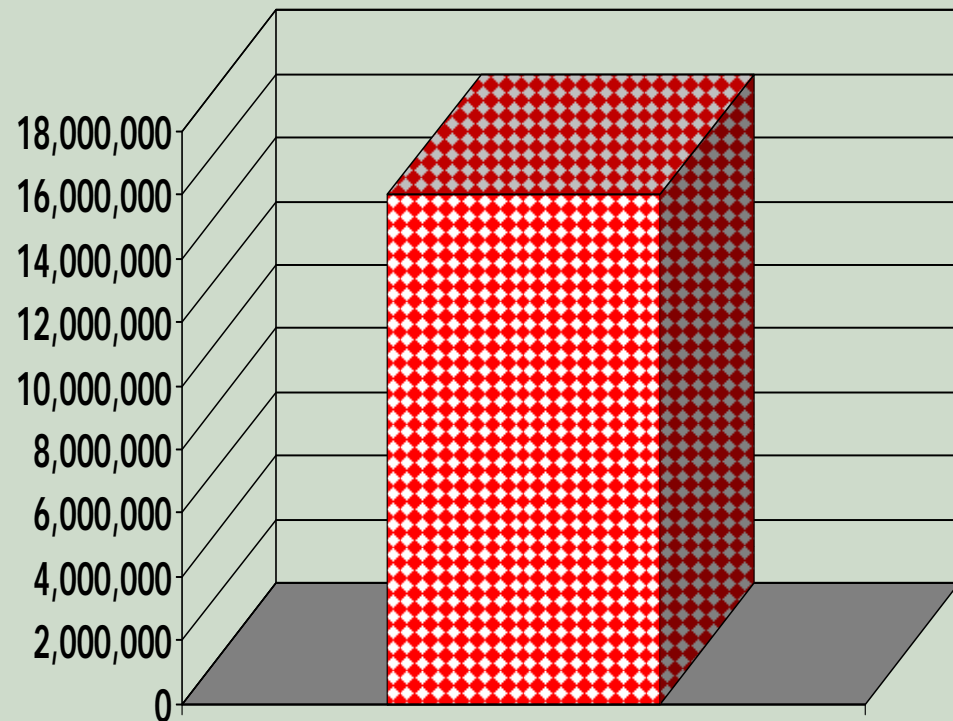
© NCTA & Harris Interactive. Distribution NOT allowed without prior written permission of NCTA.



# Impact of negative stories

## Example: drought & quality ...

- ✓ More than 16 million households read/saw/heard news stories about the drought "causing" drying trees or poor quality trees ...
- ✓ Most of these stories quoted people in our industry???!!!





# Voice of the Industry: Example

## Coping with Negative News

### 2007 Mold "Research"



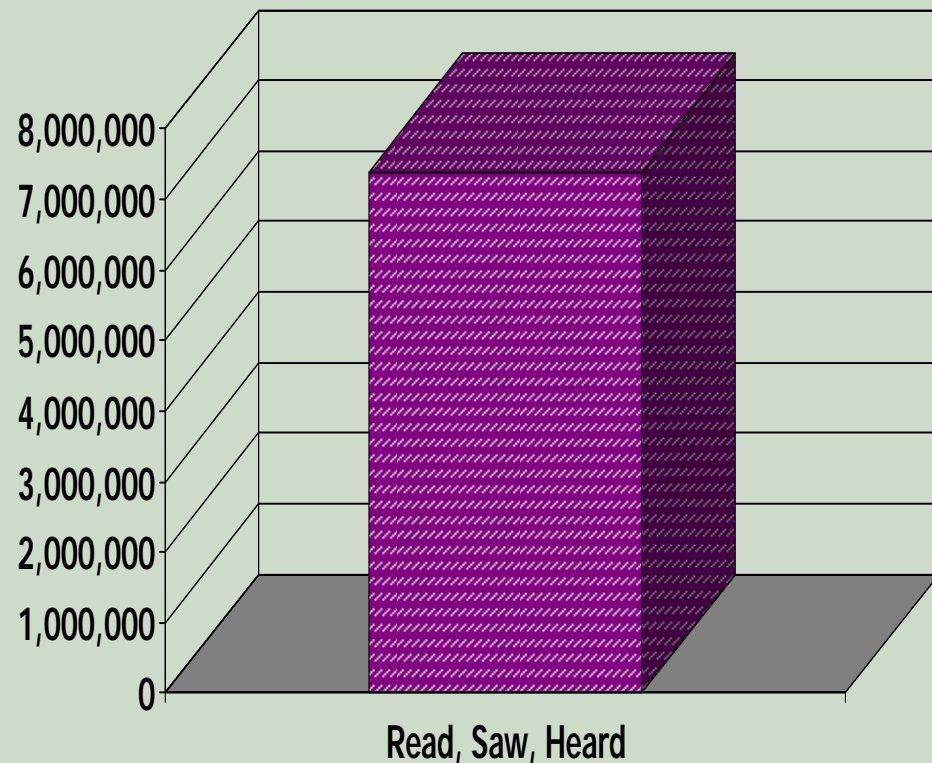
## **November 26: Breaking News**

Connecticut researcher “discovers” Real Trees create mold in households.



# Minimizing negative stories about mold & allergies ...

- ✓ More than 7 million households read/saw/heard about the "mold research" ...





# Voice of the Industry: Example

## Quelling the Mold “Research” Story



# Quelling the Mold "Research" Story

UK Research Journal reported in *Connecticut Post* on 11/26: "Mold in homes with Real Christmas Trees"

Want to know more about the research report that Real Trees produce allergy-causing mold in homes.

NY Times Reporter

Rick

John Ahrens

UConn Expert  
[Sharon Douglas]

Outcome:  
~~NY Times story quoting doctors saying people should NOT use a Real Tree.~~



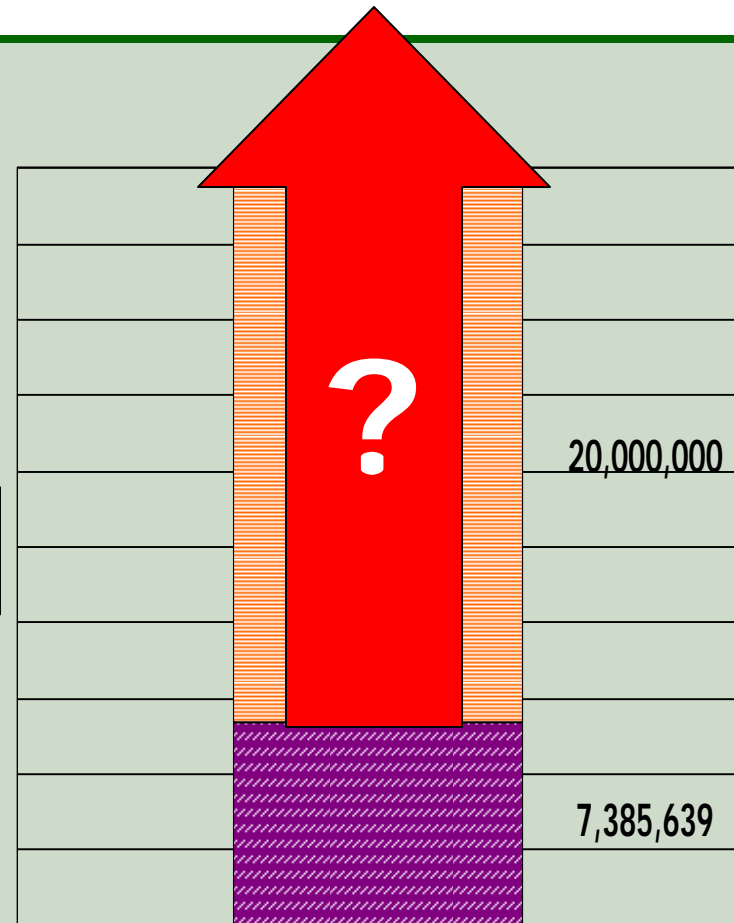
## So what ...

- Does NCTA's action to convince the *New York Times* and Fox News Chanel mean to you who are selling farm-grown Christmas Trees?

# Minimizing negative stories about mold & allergies ...

- ✓ More than 7 million households read/saw/heard about the “mold research” ...
- ✓ But millions more would have been impacted if NCTA had failed to convince the *NY Times* & Fox News NOT to run a story

■ Might Have  
□ Saw/Heard





# Voice of the Industry: Example

## Reducing Perceptions of Fire Hazard



## World War II saying: "Loose Lips Sink Ships"

- Consumers already have **concerns about fires** in Real Trees ...



## Fire Issue

### Reasons for NOT having a Farm-Grown Christmas Tree:

- No. 4 ... Fire / safety concerns with having a Real Tree ...
  - Cited by 33% of fake tree owners



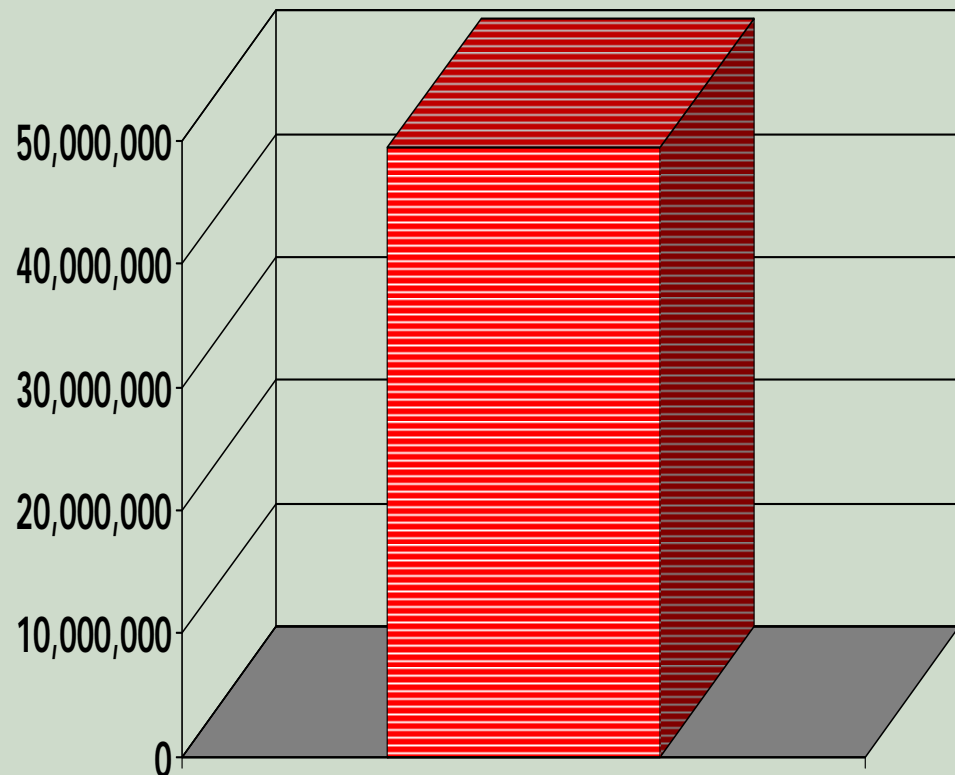
## World War II saying: "Loose Lips Sink Ships"

- Consumers already have **concerns about fires** in Real Trees ... so, why would people in this industry talk to the media about the drought causing poor quality Real Trees that are dryer?



# Stemming impact of negative fire stories ...

- ✓ More than 49 million households read/saw/heard news stories about fires in Christmas trees
- ✓ But ....





## Stemming impact of negative fire stories ...

- ✓ 18% fewer households say fires a reason for not having a real tree ...
- ✓ Even so, more fake tree users are saying being less concerned about fires would motivate them to buy a farm-grown tree

