

# Crisis Communications For Public Officials

# Three Phases of a Crisis

- Acknowledge that a crisis has begun.
- Manage through the crisis.
- Close out the crisis.

# 1. Get the Community's Attention

- Define the problem.
- Identify the spokesperson.
- Communicate the facts.
- Maintain message discipline.

## 2. Keep the Community Informed Via Media

- Plan if you can; improvise if you must.
- Gather information at the start of the day by 10:30 AM for 12 PM news.
- Gather information at the end of the day by 3:30 PM for the 5 PM news.
- Identify problems to be solved and resources being applied.
- Discuss strategies in plain non-technical terms.
- Be interesting.

## 2. Keep Key Stakeholders Informed Via Direct Communications

- Again, plan if you can; improvise if you must.
- Make sure that they have access to top leadership and facts.
- Listen for the challenges that they are experiencing.
- Be prepared to forecast how long the crisis will last.
- Understand that the crisis is costing them more than 10 times what it is costing your organization.
- Hope is not a business strategy.

# 3. Wrap It Up

- Anticipate the ending of the crisis.
- Acknowledge the workforce.
- Provide final statistics and costs.
- Crisis are expensive. Explain the budget impact.
- Prepare to provide lessons learned.

# Keep In Mind

- This is not about you, it's about your citizen customers.
- Nobody is interested in your feelings.
- Tell the truth.
- The media is not your friend or your enemy.
- You are always on the record.
- Feed the media with information regularly.

# Keep In Mind

- Be available at all times and return calls.
- Be professionally courteous.
- Give the media opportunities to shoot video on site.
- Provide facts in a consistent manner to provide continuity of storyline.
- Don't blame or speculate.
- Know that things can always get worse.