

**LIGHTS,
LEADERSHIP,
ACTION!**

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES



Los Angeles County

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Effective Strategies for Communicating in a Crisis

presented by the National Assn. of County
Information Officers

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Planning Ahead

- Survey your vulnerabilities
- Natural and man-made disasters
- Victims
- Have pre-written messages
- Leaders and Locations





Crisis Tool Kit

- External media
- Social media
- Alert systems
- Employee messaging
- Speakers



Relationships

- Partners in Place
- Intergovernmental
- Civic Leaders and Activists
- School Leaders
- Religious Leaders
- Law Enforcement
- Military
- Others



Messaging

- Sincere expression of sadness
- Acknowledge victims
- What is known, what is being done
- Who is assisting, what's needed
- If possible, next steps

Scene and Heard

- Control of location
- Control of noise
- Control of activity
- Timing of updates
- Length of updates
- Purpose of each update



Victims

- Victims need a safe, secure area away from the tragedy.
- Request privacy for victims.
- Empathize and explain how these victims have had their world turned upside down.



Key Messages

- No more than 3-4 key messages
- Numbers injured or dead, extent of damage
- Protective actions for citizens
- Assistance available for victims and citizens
- Cause and effect, if known
- Positive, pre-emptive or heroic actions by first responders

Messaging for Media

Three Bucket Rule:



Things you must say



Things you will only say if asked



Things you will not say

Power Words that Grab Media Attention

- Urgent, Immediate, Critical, Crucial
- Emphasize, Important, Prioritize, Underscore
- Strong, Tough, Energize
- Empathize, Meaningful, Understandable

Additionally

- "I don't know" is a legitimate response
- Stay away from "what if" questions
- Stay in your lane
- Own your numbers
- Ask the reporter to restate the question
- Redirect back to key messages

Perfecting Your Message

- Write your key messages out
- Practice speaking them out loud
- Consider questions you might be asked
- Practice sticking your message

The Key to Quotes

- "What the public should know is..."
- "The most important thing is..."
- "The bottom line is..."
- "What we're focusing on is..."
- "The goal is..."

Better than "No Comment"

- "Due to the ongoing investigation, it's inappropriate for me to comment at this time."
- "I wouldn't want to speculate on that."
- "That's information that would need to comment on."
- "We will provide more information as it becomes available."
- "We don't have that information, but we are working to get it for you."

Citizen Information

- Put your Citizen Information Center into action ASAP
- Provides important information to general public
- Keeps 911 from being overwhelmed by non-emergency calls
- Helps reinforce your key messages with citizens

Plan and prepare ahead

- Do you have a crisis communications plan?

