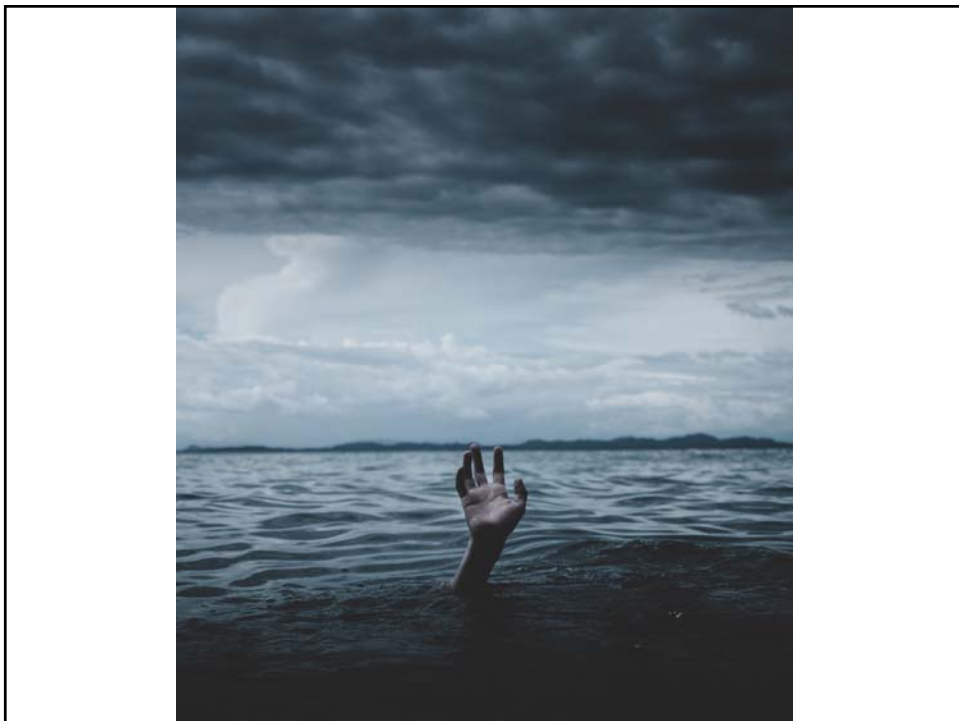


It's Not If, It's When: Preparing for a Crisis

FRPA Conference
August 26, 2018
1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

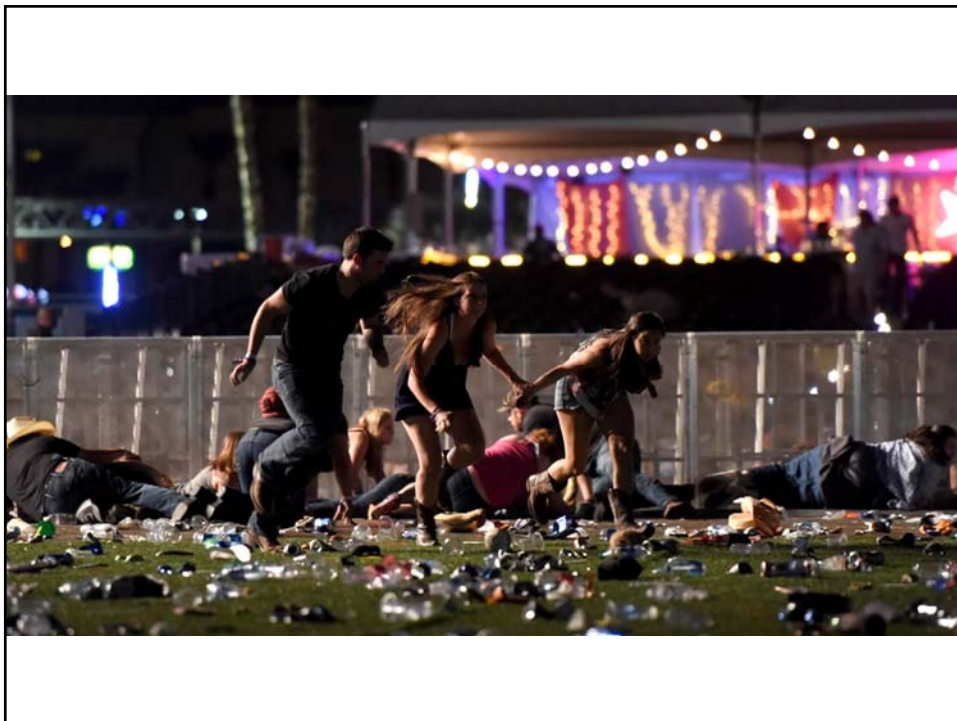
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Learning Objectives

- Learn the key steps to proactive crisis communication & planning
- Apply communication techniques that build credibility in a crisis
- Evaluate and implement strategies from actual crisis situations to enhance learning
- Discover ways to help address the impact of a crisis on your own personal well being



Agenda

- Why it matters and your role
- Anticipation, planning and preparation
= success
- Getting it first hand from Parks & Rec experts
- Creating a plan
- Effectively communicating in a crisis
 - Tips to use in every situation
- Understanding the impact of a crisis on your own well being



Your Introduction

- Communication must be clear and concise
- Write down and be prepared to share:
 - Your name
 - Your city/county/agency
 - What you do in your job – not your title
- It absolutely cannot take more than 20 seconds!



Crisis

A time of intense difficulty, trouble or danger. A time when a difficult or important decision must be made



Why Effective Crisis Communication Matters

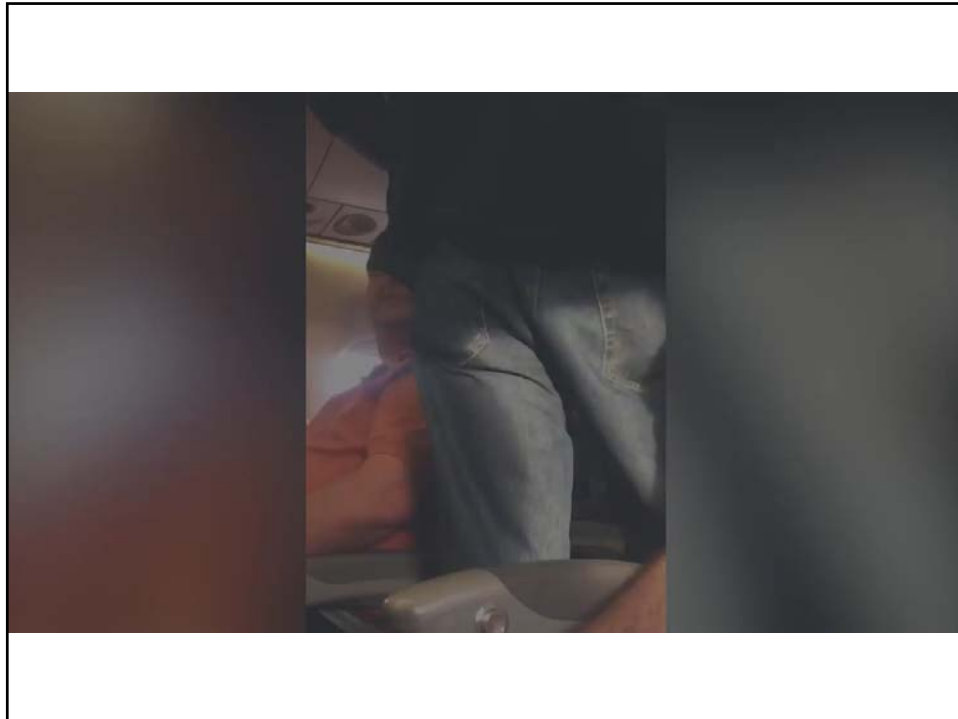
- It can save lives
- It can impact the trust your residents have in city staff
- It can position you as an effective leader and/or team member
- It can reduce stress in an already stressful situation
- It can enhance the brand of your department and city



What is Your Brand?

- What words do you think of when you hear BMW? Or Prius? Or Southwest Airlines?
- What phrase do you hear at Moe's? How about Chick-Fil-A?
- What is the “brand” of your city / department?
- How can a crisis impact your brand?
- How can that crisis be exacerbated by poor communication?





Where did United go Wrong?

Takeaways:

- This was an adult. Imagine reaction if it involved a child
- How did United's factual statement come across?
- What impact did it have on their business?
- Do you remember it's impact a year and a half later?
- Sometimes we are too close – step back and think of how others outside our business would react



Your Role is Critical

- But I'm not in charge! Every touchpoint is an opportunity to strengthen relationships.
- In a crisis, sometimes the highest ranking person is not the best spokesperson
- Your role working with people and the community may be essential in a crisis
- Be ready to step up and provide leadership
- Credibility achieved prior to the crisis can help maintain trust



The Role of Status

- What are signs of high or low status?
- How does status make us feel?
- What signals status to customers?
- How does status impact relationships?
- What role or status do you have with your residents? Your boss? The commission?
- In an emergency, it's important to hear from someone you trust regardless of status



What's Your Status?

1. Do not look at your card.
2. When we start put your playing card on your forehead facing out. Walk around the room interacting with at least five people and treat them according to their status. Aces are high and twos are low.
3. When you hear “stop,” leave the card on your forehead and move to the area directed based on how you were treated.



Takeaways

1. The ability to create a lasting and positive experience starts with establishing a relationship – being in this together.
2. Treating people- internal and external - with respect is just the right thing to do.
3. People already have a low expectation of government services. Showing respect and creating a shared experience from a crisis can knock down those negative preconceptions.



Three Keys for a Crisis

- Anticipate
- Have a Plan
- Know how to respond and practice



Anticipate

- Identify possible situations in advance
 - Google Alerts
 - Stay up with your cohorts across the state and country
 - Read audit reports
- Pay attention to social media – yours and others
 - Nextdoor
 - Facebook
 - Instagram & Snap Chat
- Listen to your stakeholders



Anticipate

- Listen to your gut feelings
- Create a climate of trust with your employees so they are willing to share concerns
- Conduct an environmental scan:
 - What is the current climate in your community?
 - What other activities in your government can impact how residents react?
 - Know your boss and your city manager in terms of how they like to receive and share information
 - Know who you can trust with confidential information
 - Recognize the inability in most cases to keep anything “under wraps” for very long

“If I had all day to cut a large tree, I would spend most of the day sharpening my axe.”

Abraham Lincoln

Create a Crisis Communication Plan

- We're all familiar with Emergency Operation Plans & Continuity of Operation Plans, but do you have a Crisis Communication Plan?
- In a crisis the need to communicate is immediate
- The Plan should lay out:
 - Who responds – comm team and spokesperson
 - Stakeholders
 - Communication channels
 - Monitoring and response responsibilities
 - Media list and plan
 - Other resources available
 - Key messages – holding statements in advance



Identify Your Target Audiences

- Always start with your internal audiences
 - Director, Assistant Manager, Manager
 - Elected leaders
 - Internal Staff
- Parks Advisory Board
- Local neighborhood leaders
- Email list of every group possible
 - Volunteers, coaches, planning meetings, etc.
 - Do you have the ability to reach all customers through email or robocalls, etc. if necessary
- Residents and businesses
- Influencers: bloggers, clergy, chamber, etc.



Your Scenario

- Summer block parties – Chunky Sunday
- Take place anywhere – community center, park, parking lot, along right of way
- Potential for large crowds
- Can result in blocking roads, parking issues, excessive trash, noise, drug and alcohol abuse, potential for fight or violence
- Request for a special events permit for a community kickball gathering
- Decision made to grant a permit with careful restrictions



In your groups

- Strategize and write down how you would prepare for this situation?
- How will you know what to expect?
- Who are your target audiences?
- What criticism are you likely to get and how do you help prepare for it?
- Do not focus on key messages yet



Understand Your Frame

- Value based structures that shape the way we see the world (Lakoff)
- Language activates frames
- Don't think of an elephant
- I am not a crook
- Bush – We do not need a permission slip to defend America
- I am not trying to tell you what to do



Know Your Frame

- What is the frame for government?
- What is the frame for parks and rec employees?
- Do you know your vision and mission – and why it matters in creating your frame?



Addressing Frame

- Commit to create your own frame and language
- Tell me what you are – not what you are not
- Understand that what you see, depends upon where you stand
- People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care
- Framing yourself and your organization takes a concentrated effort and commitment to the frame



Changing the Frame

- Learn through inquiry
- Focus on the problem, not the person
- Utilize storytelling or examples to create understanding
- Don't start off with a defensive statement or use negative words
- Demonstrate that you understand what's important to the recipient
- Make sure you are listening



Are You Really Listening?



Key Messages

- The three most important things you want people to know (we speak and remember things in 3s)
- Information must be concise, clear, simple
- Dr. Vincent Covello's 27/9/3 Theory: 27 words, nine seconds, three messages
- Science Based Communication – when upset 80 percent reduction in ability to process information



Key Messages

- Develop A Message Map
 - Who is the target audience
 - What question or concern is being raised?
 - What are your three key messages
 - Have no more than 3 supporting points
- Primacy / Recency



The Closeness Problem

- Sometimes we know too much
- Think of the disconnect when giving directions
- The closer we are to an issue, the harder it is to see the perspective of someone else
- Think back to when you did not know as much
- Imagine yourself in the audience's shoes
- Remove vague terms and jargon
- Don't lose your message in a sea of data



Words Matter

- Focus on speaking about the impact of a situation, as opposed to only placing blame
- Use “and” instead of “but”
- Show your openness for feedback
- QTIP
- Expect good outcomes (with your organization and your team!)
- Make the time to find the right words to convey your thoughts
- Name your crisis



People don't care
how much you know
until they know
how much you care



Your Scenario

- Despite all the precautions taken for the Chunky Sunday event at your park, shots were fired and people got hurt as everyone ran from the event.
- The presence of police quickly brought the situation under control.
- Still, one person was shot with non-life threatening wounds, 12 were injured from the stampede and the shooter was arrested.
- As the parks director, the city manager asks you and the police chief to serve as the spokespersons for the city.
- What are your three key messages?



Covello's CCO Template

- Vincent Covello: When asked a question with high-emotion, always respond with:
 - Compassion
 - Conviction
 - Optimism
- Example: My heart breaks for the lives lost...; I believe that.....” In the future
- Mayor Giuliani of New York City used this template following 9-11, which a statement write more than five years in advance



What If Template

- Use this when asked a what if, or what might happen type of question
- Steps:
 1. Repeat the question (without negatives)
 2. Bridge to what is
 3. State what you know factually
- Example: 1) You've asked me what might happen if...; 2) I believe there is value to talk about what is and what we know now; 3) And what we know is...



You Can Anticipate Nearly Every Question

- Vincent Covello's 77 questions you'll be asked in an emergency (Google it)
- What would you ask if you were a nearby neighbor, a city commissioner, the president of the NAACP, a young person that enjoys the party, etc.
- Write down at least 10 questions



Bridging Templates

- What's most important to know...
- The real issue here is...
- With this in mind, if we look at the bigger picture...
- Before we continue, let me emphasize that...
- What matters most in this situation is...
- If we take a closer look, we would see...
- This is an important point because...
- Before we leave the subject, let me add that...
- Use a word in the question to drive the discussion where you want it to go



Your group scenario

- Identify two questions you are likely to be asked by a reporter
- Write down how you would bridge back to your message
- Include your key message



The Yes/No Template

- Use when asked a yes/no question that cannot be answered with a yes/no response
- Steps:
 - Indicate you've been asked a yes/no question
 - Indicate it would be difficult to answer it yes or no
 - Indicate why it would be difficult to answer the question yes or no
 - Respond to the underlying concern
- In our scenario, how would you respond if a citizen asked: "Will you ever allow Chunky Sunday events in your community in the future? I need a clear yes or no."



The I Don't Know Template

- Use IDK when you don't know, can't answer or aren't the best source for the information.
- Steps
 - Repeat the question (without negatives)
 - Say, "I wish I could answer that," or "My ability to answer is limited by...; or I don't know"
 - Say why you can't answer
 - Provide a follow up with a deadline
 - Bridge to what you can say
- Example: 1) You've asked me about...; 2) I wish I could answer; (3) We're still looking into it; 4) I expect to be able to tell you more by...; 5) What I can tell you is...
- In our scenario, was the response by the police department appropriate for this situation?



False Allegation Template

- Use when responding to a hostile question, false allegation or criticism
- Steps:
 - Repeat/paraphrase the question without repeating the negative; repeat instead the opposite; the underlying value or concern, use more neutral language
 - Indicate the issue of importance
 - Indicate what you have done, are doing, or will do to address the issue
- Example: 1) You've raised a serious question about x; 2) x is important to me; 3) We have done the following to address x



1N = 3P Template

- Use when breaking bad news or stating a negative
- Balance the bad news / negative message with at least three or more positive, constructive, or solution oriented messages.
- In your groups:
 - Discuss and write down at least three positive statements you could make on our scenario



Testing Out Your Communication Skills

The Blindfold Challenge



Presentation Tips

- As much as 75% of your message comes from non verbal communication
- Eyes, hands, posture
- Appearance
- Voice
- Goal – confident, but non threatening
- (Tip – Attend my presentations class on Thursday at 8:15 a.m.!!)



Body Language

- In an interview, always look at the reporter, not the camera (back and forth looks shifty)
- At a news conference keep your gaze straight ahead unless responding to a reporter's question
- Talk in a normal way – don't be formal
- Smile if appropriate; use your hands
- Showing emotion is typically OK; don't fall apart
- When necessary, pause to collect your thoughts, then answer



Body Language

- Take off the sunglasses (looks like you are hiding)
- No hand in front of the camera
- No running away
- No gum
- No fidgeting, swaying, jingling coins/keys
- Try to relax and be yourself



Body Language

- Stand, or if sitting be on the front of your chair
- Speak 10 percent louder than usual
- Be engaging – not formal
- Don't be defensive
- No long sighs, eye rolling – steady look
- In an interview with a single reporter, if you make a mistake ask to do again



The Interview / News Conference Setting

- You are in control
- Where to conduct?
- Never behind your desk
- Green, outdoors is good unless hot; shade for you & reporter
- Not up against white wall
- Look what is behind you and ask to move if not good
- No employees smoking, hanging out
- Flags, maps, graphics



A contrast in approach

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ccO62hQyeA>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Engnau7qla4>
- What do you see?



The Personal Impact of a Major Crisis

- Hand off the work baton and give yourself a break after 12 hours (even if you don't feel like it)
- Understand your team will follow your lead
- Talking through the stress helps
- Find activities that take you completely away from the incident
- Others in your social circle will pry for details; let them know you don't want to discuss it
- Anticipate incredible acts of kindness
- Pour your energy into helping people in your community show their love – it is restorative



The Personal Impact of a Major Crisis

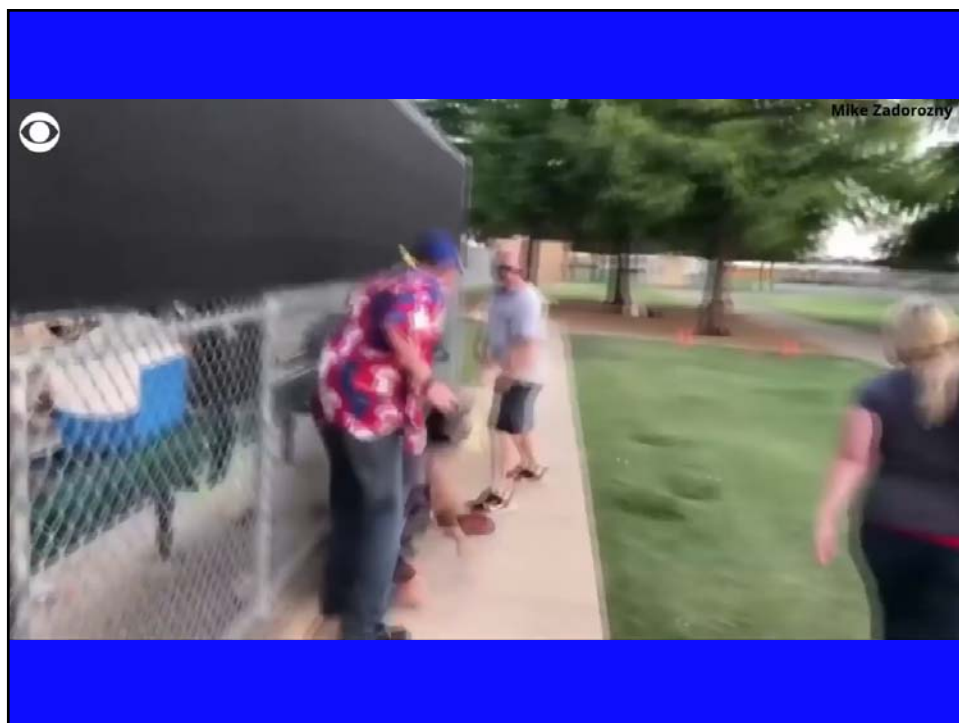
- Understand it takes time. When someone says it's been a year, it's OK to feel that it has only been a year. We all heal differently
- Find a way to seek stability – get back into a routine as quickly as possible.
- Create an environment where you and others understand it is not only OK, but helpful to seek assistance.
- Ensure you provide counseling assistance – maybe more than your employer EAP



A Crisis Can Happen Any Day

- A crisis can be any event that can negatively impact your brand, reputation and trust
- A crisis can take place without opening your emergency operations center
- A crisis can be escalated or reduced based on how you respond
- A key is being honest, upfront, telling your story first (before impressions are created), and hanging a lantern on the issues





You Have the Tools: You Can Do This

Practice is Essential!



Thank you!

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