2019 CASA Conference
Crisis Communications
What You Might Face

- PFAS/PFOS/PFOA in wastewater and residual
- Aging Infrastructure and Infrastructure
- Increasing and Expanding Federal and State Regulations
- Unexpected shutdowns of critical collection and/or treatment equipment or systems
- Water quality permit violations or sanitary sewer system overflows (SSOs)
- Citizen litigation
- Environmental group challenges to local agency action
- Impacts to public health and the environment that capture the public’s attention:
  - algae blooms
  - levels of mercury in fish
  - bacteria issues resulting in beach closures
  - perception issues associated with land application of biosolids, and safety of recycled water
- Environmental disaster in another state/area
- Overturned tankers/explosions
Crisis Communications

> When social media lights up.
> When traditional media turns the cameras on you.
> Who we are.
> What we do.
Legal controversies today are tried in the Court of Public Opinion – as often as in the Court of Law.
The Damage Control Playbook

Rule #1: Tell the truth

Rule #2: Tell it first

Rule #3: Tell it all

Rule #4: Tell it fast

Rule #5: Tell it to the people who matter most

Rule #6: The media’s job is not to inform or educate
The Damage Control Playbook

Rule #1: Tell the truth
Rule #2: Tell it first
Rule #3: Tell it all
Rule #4: Tell it fast

**Rule #5: Tell it to the people who matter most**

Rule #6: The media’s job is not to inform or educate
The Damage Control Playbook

Rule #1: Tell the truth

Rule #2: Tell it first

Rule #3: Tell it all

Rule #4: Tell it fast

Rule #5: Tell it to the people who matter most

Rule #6: The media’s job is not to inform or educate
The Three Vs

Villain

Victim

Vindicator
NO COMMENT = GUILTY!
What happens when you ARE the villain?
Case Study
PFAS in the City of Blissville

PFAS ≠ CRISIS  PFAS = ISSUE

City of Blissville found PFAS in ground water near its production wells. We helped the city conceive and execute a communications program for its water department, which serves more than 400,000 people. Source of PFAS was nearby Fire Training Center who was not being particularly cooperative.
Things to Consider

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Who is going to say it?

What is City going to say?

When is the City going to say it? Proactive or Reactive?
- Proactive, Vindicator
- Reactive, VILLIAN

Whom will the City say it to? Identified all key stakeholders.

How is City going to say it? What tools were we going to use?
Five Objectives

1. Reinforce City’s history of protecting the water that serves the community, its role as a champion for the environment and an advocate for public health.

2. Demonstrate City’s responsiveness, even though it did not create the problem.

3. Put the issue into context for the residents.

4. Education. Education. Education.

5. Ensure the City was the trusted source of information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suite of Documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. City of Blissville Cease and Desist Email/Letter to Fire Training Ctr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Informational Email to Communities that use Blissville water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Call-to-Action Email to Community Leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Press Release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. City of Blissville Water Customer Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Talking Points for Public Officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. City of Blissville Employee Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Talking Points for City Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Master Q&amp;A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Fact Sheet on PFAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Blissville Email to State Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Talking points for sit down with reporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guiding Principles

- Be proactive
- Put the story in context
- Be transparent and responsive
- Reinforce appropriate framing through tone
- Humanize your communication
- Craft all communications with the understanding that they will be forwarded to the media
- Use outside resources/3rd party verification
Crisis Management & Crisis Communications

Hennes Communications
Crisis Management
Crisis Communications
Litigation Communications Support

Because the Court of Public Opinion is always in session.

Crisis Management Today Newsletter
Twice a month, best practices for crisis managers.

For a *gratis* subscription, send your email address to hennes@crisiscommunications.com

Follow us on Twitter @crisiscomm
Friend us on Facebook at CrisisComm

In The Headlines

The Scout Lesson: If Trump Comes to Speak, Be Prepared (for Anything)

When President Trump spoke before the congressional Black Caucus leaderboard, he departed from his prepared remarks, creating controversy. Could the Boy Scouts have been better prepared?