

Media Interaction Training—Practice Scenario # 1

Construction on infrastructure needed to expand Link light rail service in Tacoma begins, and despite months of public outreach and communication, some residents and business owners in the immediate area state that they were not informed of the timeline and are experiencing negative impacts from the project construction. You are attending a community meeting where these concerns are raised and you are on the “hot seat.”

- 1) Why has no one from the City done any outreach about this project?
- 2) The construction will take several years. Why do we have to put up with the disruption for that long?
- 3) The traffic detours and lack of parking on the street are hurting my business. How can I be supportive of this when my business is suffering?
- 4) What possible benefits could there be to having light rail running through my residential neighborhood? Won't that mean that there will be more people coming here?
- 5) What if construction goes on longer than projected?

Media Interaction Training—Practice Scenario # 2

As part of the 2019-2020 biennial budget process, the City Council is being asked to approve a budget that includes \$10 million to support affordable housing measures. This includes a subsidy that would be available to housing developers as well as a contribution to the Housing Authority to build more options for affordable housing. Community members are questioning why such an expenditure is necessary and whether those resources might be better spent on public safety or economic development. You are being interviewed by a reporter from the local newspaper.

- 1) Certainly the City has many priorities for its resources. Why spend this much on affordable housing? Is that more important than spending money on police and fire?

- 2) Why would the City devote \$15million to build more affordable housing but not try to to attract more good jobs to Tacoma?

- 3) What does the City hope to accomplish by building more affordable housing? Won't this just attract more low-income people to Tacoma?

- 4 It seems like most of the homeless people have mental health or substance abuse issues, so this wouldn't solve the homelessness problem anyway. Why bother?

- 5) Isn't it true that this money won't even make a dent in the problem? Why not spend more?

Media Interaction Training—Practice Scenario # 3

A serious, destructive fire started after closing on a Sunday night at the People's Community Center. Half of the facility, including the new swimming pool area, was severely damaged and the Center will be closed indefinitely pending an investigation into the cause of the fire and it will take many months to rebuild. No one was hurt. There are rumors floating around about the cause of the fire. You receive many phone calls from reporters representing media outlets across the Puget Sound region.

- 1) People are saying that a homeless person started the fire. Is that true?
- 2) Isn't it true that someone was smoking in the facility, and staff negligence caused the fire?
- 3) Why was the damage so extensive? Was Tacoma Fire's response time too slow to stop it?
- 4) Why will the facility be closed for so long? Where are community members supposed to swim?
- 5) No one has planned a budget to rebuild this facility. What if there is no funding to fix the building?

MEDIA TRAINING

Staying Cool on the "Hot Seat"

presented to:

Tacoma City Council



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BelAir Training

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HOW TO STAY COOL ON THE "HOT SEAT"

☒ THE INTERNET HAS CREATED "CITIZEN JOURNALISTS"

- Social Media is IMMEDIATE!

☒ WHY YOU SHOULD MEET WITH YOUR "TOUGH" AUDIENCE:

- You can be proactive, rather than reactive
- You have a better chance of controlling the message
- You have a 100% greater chance of correcting misinformation
- Refusing to meet looks as if you are not in control, or that you are hiding

☒ KNOW YOUR KEY MESSAGES:

- Concise
- Use jargon sparingly
- WHAT DOES THIS MEAN to the audience? (WIIFM?)

How to Stay on Message:

☒ "FLAG" YOUR KEY MESSAGES:

- " **What's important here** is that..."
- " The **key point** I'd like to make is..."
- " If there's **one thing** that matters most, it's..."
- " The **bottom line** is..."

☒ **"BRIDGE" TO YOUR KEY MESSAGES:**

- " I can see why you'd think that; however, the real issue here is..."*
- " That's one point of view; here's another way to look at it..."*
- " That's an interesting observation; what you also want to remember is..."*
- " We've heard that before; we prefer to look at it this way..."*

☒ **LISTEN CAREFULLY TO THE QUESTION!**

☒ **IF YOU WANT TO BE QUOTED...**

- Express emotions
- Give comparisons

☒ **OFF THE RECORD**

☒ **"NO COMMENT"**

☒ **IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER...**

- " I don't know the answer; I'll find out and get back to you."*
Then BRIDGE to: *" What I **CAN** tell you is..."*
- " Because that's not my area of expertise, I don't want to say anything that might be misinformed."* **Then BRIDGE to:** *" What I **DO** know is..."*
- " Since I don't have all the facts, I'm unable to answer your question."*
Then BRIDGE to: *"What I **AM** sure of is..."*

HOW TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION:

- ☒ **REMAIN CALM AND STICK TO THE FACTS**
- ☒ **BEWARE OF "WHAT IF?" QUESTIONS**
- ☒ **IF THE QUESTIONER MAKES A FALSE STATEMENT...**
- ☒ **IF A QUESTION CONTAINS NEGATIVE LANGUAGE,
DO NOT REPEAT IT...**
- ☒ **IF YOU EXPERIENCE THE "PREGNANT PAUSE"...**
- ☒ **STOP TALKING!**
- ☒ **YOU ARE ALWAYS "ON"**

HOW YOU RESPOND TO THE CRISIS IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE CRISIS ITSELF

Be visable. Be responsive. Be sympathetic.

☒ **IF YOU MAKE A MISTAKE, ADMIT IT.**

☒ **SHOW CONCERN FOR THE SAFETY OF THOSE AFFECTED**

*"We have evacuated the area and everyone is safe and accounted for."
"Firefighters responded quickly; everyone exited the building safely."*

☒ **DEMONSTRATE THAT YOU'VE TAKEN IMMEDIATE ACTION**

*"We immediately relieved the staff member of his duties."
"We contacted the Health Department as soon as we realized that staff members were becoming ill."*

☒ **EXPLAIN THAT YOU ARE COOPERATING WITH AUTHORITIES**

*"We have provided samples to the Health Department for testing to determine the cause of the outbreak of the illness."
"We are turning over our records to the police department to aid them in their investigation."*

☒ **EXTEND SYMPATHY, SUPPORT, GRATITUDE AND RESOURCES**

*"We have offered our full support to this employee and her family during this difficult time."
"Our thoughts are with the injured workers, and we are doing everything we can to help them and their families get through this."
"We appreciate how understanding our community has been ever since this area was blocked off a few days ago."*

TIPS FOR BROADCAST INTERVIEWS

- ☒ **KNOW THE PROGRAM FORMAT**
- ☒ **BE AWARE OF YOUR POSTURE AND GESTURES**
- ☒ **CHOOSE APPROPRIATE WARDROBE**
- ☒ **WHICH CAMERA DO YOU LOOK INTO?**

TIPS FOR PHONE INTERVIEWS

- ☒ **PUT AWAY DISTRACTIONS**
- ☒ _____ **AND** _____ **WHILE YOU TALK**

ALWAYS REMEMBER...

Every crisis or "hot seat" encounter is an opportunity for you and the Tacoma City Council to enhance your/the Council's reputation through behavior that _____

Crisis Response Checklist:

1. Actions needed:

- ☒ Medical attention?
- ☒ Evacuation?
- ☒ Lockdown?
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____

2. Contact Emergency Responders:

- ☒ 911
- ☒ Leadership and Crisis Team
- ☒ Law enforcement
- ☒ Legal counsel
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____

3. Mobilize:

- ☒ Secure building and grounds
- ☒ Identify command center location
- ☒ Implement command center/ team protocols
- ☒ Identify "private room" for family members, if needed
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____

4. Set up 24/7 communication through:

- ☒ Website (with links to resources)
- ☒ Blog
- ☒ Social media (twitter, facebook, youtube, etc.)
- ☒ Emails, text messages
- ☒ Phone tree
- ☒ Information hot-line staffed by a "real" person
- ☒ Recorded message voice message system
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____

5. Assemble supplies:

- ☒ Laptop, printer, access to copier
- ☒ Flash drive with key documents
- ☒ Cell phones
- ☒ Batteries
- ☒ Flashlights
- ☒ Blankets
- ☒ Megaphone
- ☒ Digital cameras
- ☒ Phone tree list
- ☒ Home/cell numbers
- ☒ Office supplies
- ☒ First aid kits
- ☒ Food, beverages
- ☒ Locations of emergency shut-offs
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____

6. Internal communication:

- ☒ Draft preliminary statement
- ☒ Inform staff, Legal Counsel
- ☒ Prepare script for phone operators
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____

7. Family communication:

- ☒ Notify appropriate family members
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____

8. External communication:

- ☒ Notify local, state and national agencies, as needed
- ☒ Notify local, state and Congressional legislators, as appropriate
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____

9. Develop support network:

- ☒ Hospitals
- ☒ Mental Health Professional/Center
- ☒ Local, state and national agencies, as needed
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____

10. Media communication:

- ☒ Draft press release
- ☒ Draft opening statement
- ☒ Identify spokesperson(s)
- ☒ Set up media briefing center
- ☒ Distribute backgrounder fact sheets
- ☒ Distribute FAQ sheet
- ☒ Include law enforcement officer in press briefing
- ☒ Log/track media calls/contacts
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____

11. Additional tools:

- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____
- ☒ _____