



## Public Safety Media Strategies

EXPERTS IN FIRST RESPONDER MESSAGING

# 30 Years of Service. 30 Seconds to Lose It.

*Protect your people. Protect your legacy.*

January 22, 2026





# Crisis Communications



## Paul Goldenberg

**Fmr Senior Role at U.S. Dept of Homeland Security  
Office of New Jersey Attorney General  
Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe**







# Panelists



**Paul  
Goldenberg**



**Mark  
Pfeifle**



**Kimberly  
Starks**



**Mark  
Albert**





# Crisis Communications



## Paul Goldenberg

**Fmr Senior Role at U.S. Dept of Homeland Security  
Office of New Jersey Attorney General  
Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe**





# Crisis Communications



## Mark Pfeifle

**Fmr White House Dep. National Security Advisor  
Crisis Communications Expert  
U.S. State Department Trainer**





# Prepare Now: 10 Essentials Leaders Must Do *Before* Crisis Hits



## 1) Credibility Is All You Have When You Step to the Mic - Preparation prevents failure

- Israel interview after Parkland shows what happens when credibility collapses in real time
- Once lost, facts no longer matter
- The only protection is preparation *before* crisis
- When you step in front of a microphone, **your credibility is the strategy**



Fort Lauderdale, FL

9:23 AM ET

#CNNSOTU

**BROWARD POLICE TOLD KILLER WAS A "SHOOTER IN THE MAKING"**

Sheriff Scott Israel | Broward County, Florida

**CNN**

6:23 AM PT

STATE OF THE UNION



# Prepare Now: 10 Essentials Leaders Must Do *Before* Crisis Hits



## 2) Get intense media training *NOW* — not when CNN calls at 10a for a noon live hit

- **Morton County (ND) Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier** is an on-the-ground success. Running for sheriff, never imagined he'd be doing **national TV interviews**—then came Standing Rock
- **Dakota Access Pipeline (2016–17)**: LE thrown into global media storm. Nonstop livestreams, social media collapsed nuance, officers portrayed in political fight rather than public safety pros. Narrative formed before facts were known
- **Events force us onto national stage whether ready or not.** Media training is crisis insurance. Train **before** the call comes; don't improvise—perform with discipline





# Prepare Now: 10 Essentials Leaders Must Do *Before* Crisis Hits



## 3) Build a Local Crisis Plan — Now. If it's not pre-written, it won't be written in time

**Know in advance** what happens in the **first 24–72 hours of a crisis**—and how to execute it  
**Have ready and approved:**

- **Holding statements** (first-hour language)
- **Top-10 Q&A** (the questions you know are coming)
- **Emergency / curfew templates** (if applicable)
- **Media + influencer lists** with **direct cell numbers**
- **Pre-approved language** to prevent delay and contradiction

### **Reality:**

- Facts are incomplete; the narrative moves fast
- A **24-hour comms plan** must exist by Day One
- A **72-hour plan** should already be forming

### **Bottom line:**

A crisis plan isn't a binder—it's **muscle memory**. Train it now, or improvise later.





# Prepare Now: 10 Essentials Leaders Must Do *Before* Crisis Hits



## 4) Lock Down Your Social Media - If you don't control it, the crowd will

Confirm admin access on every platform

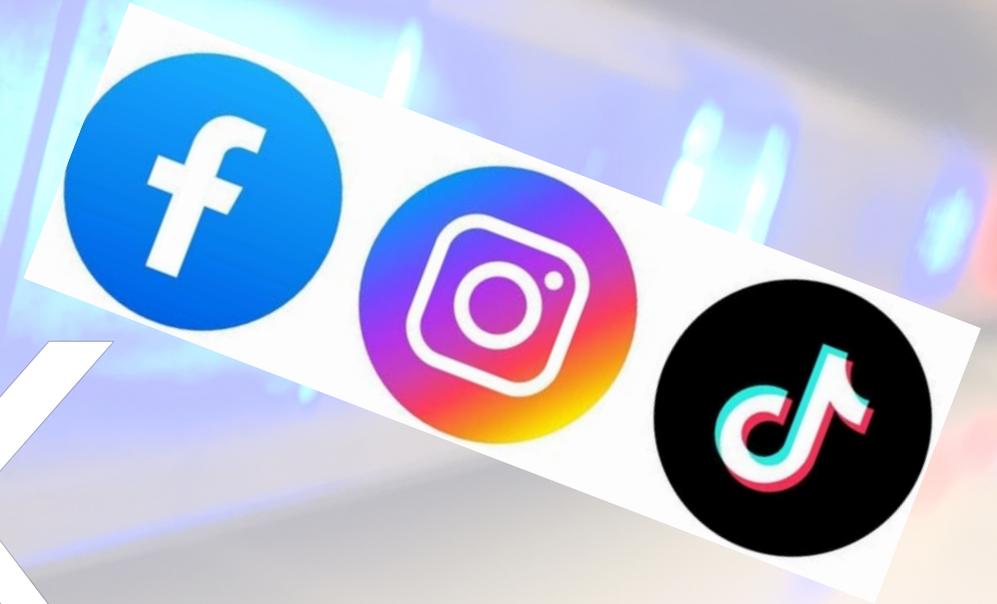
Remove former staff and vendors

Enable multi-factor authentication

Pre-assign:

- one posting authority
- one approval authority
- one monitoring team

Draft first-hour posts and video language in advance





# Prepare Now: 10 Essentials Leaders Must Do *Before* Crisis Hits



## 5) Rehearse the Crisis — Tabletop Scenarios with Communication Channels Defined

**Many failures are communication failures - dysfunction causes lawsuits, destruction and death**

Uvalde May 2022 - 21 death happen when:

- agencies operate on different channels
- no one knows which channel is authoritative
- command posts don't share the same information

**Tabletop exercises** — In Alabama LEOs—agencies discovered *mid-exercise* that:

- parallel command posts weren't synced and leaders were working off
- different radio bands and assumptions

**Tabletop scenarios must answer *before* a crisis:**

- Who leads the information flow; Primary command channel + backups
- How local, state, federal, school, and municipal partners share updates: Who clears information for public release



**Bottom line:** In a crisis, leaders fall back on **trained channels**—not good intentions.





# Prepare Now: 10 Essentials Leaders Must Do *Before* Crisis Hits



## 6) Engage Your Media — Now, Not During the Crisis

If you don't know local media **before** a crisis, you'll be working **against** them during one.

### Do this now:

- Personally know **editors, producers, reporters and local influencers**—with **cell, home, direct lines, and emails** in your phone
- **Build trust NOW:** have coffee, include them in **tabletop exercises** as observers or participants

### Why:

- **Kenosha** showed the risk of **outdated, ineffective media lists**
- When local media isn't aligned, rumors win – and when **national media arrives**, chaos follows

**Bottom line:** When local media isn't engaged early, the narrative forms elsewhere—and control is lost.





# Prepare Now: 10 Essentials Leaders Must Do *Before* Crisis Hits



## 7) Find Your “Pfeifle 50/20” - 50 Trusted Validators • 20 Ready Channels

**Build your crisis network before you need it. The 50 — Who you’ll need in a crisis**  
**Identify and engage 50 people and organizations now:**

- Community, school, business, tourism, and faith leaders
- Healthcare, nonprofit, and tribal partners
- Government and elected officials—from **Governor to City Council**

**Collect direct contact info and build trust before a crisis.**

**The 20 — How you’ll work with them - Pre-plan 20 ways to engage immediately:**

- Calls, texts, briefings
- Tabletop exercises and drills
- Email updates, town halls
- Social media message echoing

**Bottom line:** When crisis hits, relationships don’t form—they activate.





# Prepare Now: 10 Essentials Leaders Must Do *Before* Crisis Hits



## 8) Plan for the Secondary Crises — Before They Hit

**Major incidents trigger multiple, predictable follow-on challenges. Prepare now. And pre-stage:**

- **Communication access:** Sign-language interpreters, multilingual translation, transcription, and recording services **identified and on-call**
- **Video strategy:** Clear plan for **timely release of body-worn camera and supporting evidence**, with investigative context when appropriate
- **Press locations:** **Secure, safe, and accessible** sites designated for news conferences and updates
- **Doxing preparedness:** Policies and training for **staff and families** to prevent, respond to, and recover from online harassment and threats

**Bottom line:** Secondary crises aren't surprises—they're certainties. Plan for them now or fight them later.





# Prepare Now: 10 Essentials Leaders Must Do *Before* Crisis Hits



## 9) Fix Limitations — Surround Yourself with Skills & Experience

Strong leaders **identify gaps early** and close them **before a crisis exposes them**.

### Do this now:

Assess where your team is **thin or overmatched**

Strengthen weak links with **training, added expertise, or outside support**

Focus on core functions:

- **PIO / communications**
- **Legal counsel**
- **Investigative unit**
- **Command staff and operations**

**Bottom line:** Crises don't test intentions—they test **capabilities**. Build the team you'll need now, not the one you wish you had later.





# Prepare Now: 10 Essentials Leaders Must Do *Before* Crisis Hits



## 10) Leave It Better Than You Found It — and Be the Happy Warrior

**Crises don't just reveal problems—they surface solutions.**

During George Floyd unrest, **National Sheriffs' Association** identified the **IGNITE jail reform program**—a crisis-born effort creating lasting improvements in education, rehabilitation, and reentry.

### **Do this deliberately:**

- Capture what works under pressure
- Turn short-term fixes into **sustainable solutions**
- Leave a **positive, lasting impact** on your community

### **Be the Happy Warrior:**

Learn from crisis. Appreciate the mission. Welcome the next challenge **better prepared than before.**

**Bottom line:** Great leaders don't just manage—they **leave things better than they found them.**





# Crisis Communications



## Mark Albert

**Former CBS News Correspondent  
Media Training & Crisis Comms Expert  
Peabody- & EMMY-Award Winner**





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# Crisis Communications



# BEFORE THE CRISIS





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# STORYTELLING





# STORYTELLING

- **REGULAR CADENCE**





# STORYTELLING

- **REGULAR CADENCE**
- **HUMAN-INTEREST STORIES**





# STORYTELLING

- **REGULAR CADENCE**
- **HUMAN-INTEREST STORIES**
- **PROACTIVE PITCHING vs REACTIVE RESPONSE**





# STORYTELLING

- **REGULAR CADENCE**
- **HUMAN-INTEREST STORIES**
- **PROACTIVE PITCHING vs REACTIVE RESPONSE**
- **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING**





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# Crisis Communications

# DURING THE CRISIS





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# DURING THE CRISIS





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# DURING THE CRISIS

# CLEAR YOUR SCHEDULE





# DURING THE CRISIS

## CLEAR YOUR SCHEDULE

*Speed is critical*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## CLEAR YOUR SCHEDULE

*Speed is critical*

*Do NOT wait to engage*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## CLEAR YOUR SCHEDULE

*Speed is critical*

*Do NOT wait to engage*

*Postpone everything*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## CLEAR YOUR SCHEDULE

*Speed is critical*

*Do NOT wait to engage*

*Postpone everything – including posts*





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# DURING THE CRISIS





# DURING THE CRISIS

## GATHER YOUR EXPERTS





# DURING THE CRISIS

## GATHER YOUR EXPERTS

*Bring best & brightest*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## GATHER YOUR EXPERTS

*Bring best & brightest  
Do NOT go it alone*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## GATHER YOUR EXPERTS

*Bring best & brightest  
Do NOT go it alone  
Clock is ticking*





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# DURING THE CRISIS





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# DURING THE CRISIS

# DELEGATE





# DURING THE CRISIS

## DELEGATE

- *Media inquiries*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## DELEGATE

- *Media inquiries*
- *Physical logistics*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## DELEGATE

- *Media inquiries*
- *Physical logistics*
- *Talk to allies*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## DELEGATE

- *Media inquiries*
- *Physical logistics*
- *Talk to allies*
- *Website/Social*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## DELEGATE

- *Media inquiries*
- *Physical logistics*
- *Talk to allies*
- *Website/Social*
- *Security*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## DELEGATE

- *Media inquiries*
- *Physical logistics*
- *Talk to allies*
- *Website/Social*
- *Security*
- *Food*





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# DURING THE CRISIS





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# DURING THE CRISIS

# DRAFT RESPONSE





# DURING THE CRISIS

## DRAFT RESPONSE

*Fact-heavy*





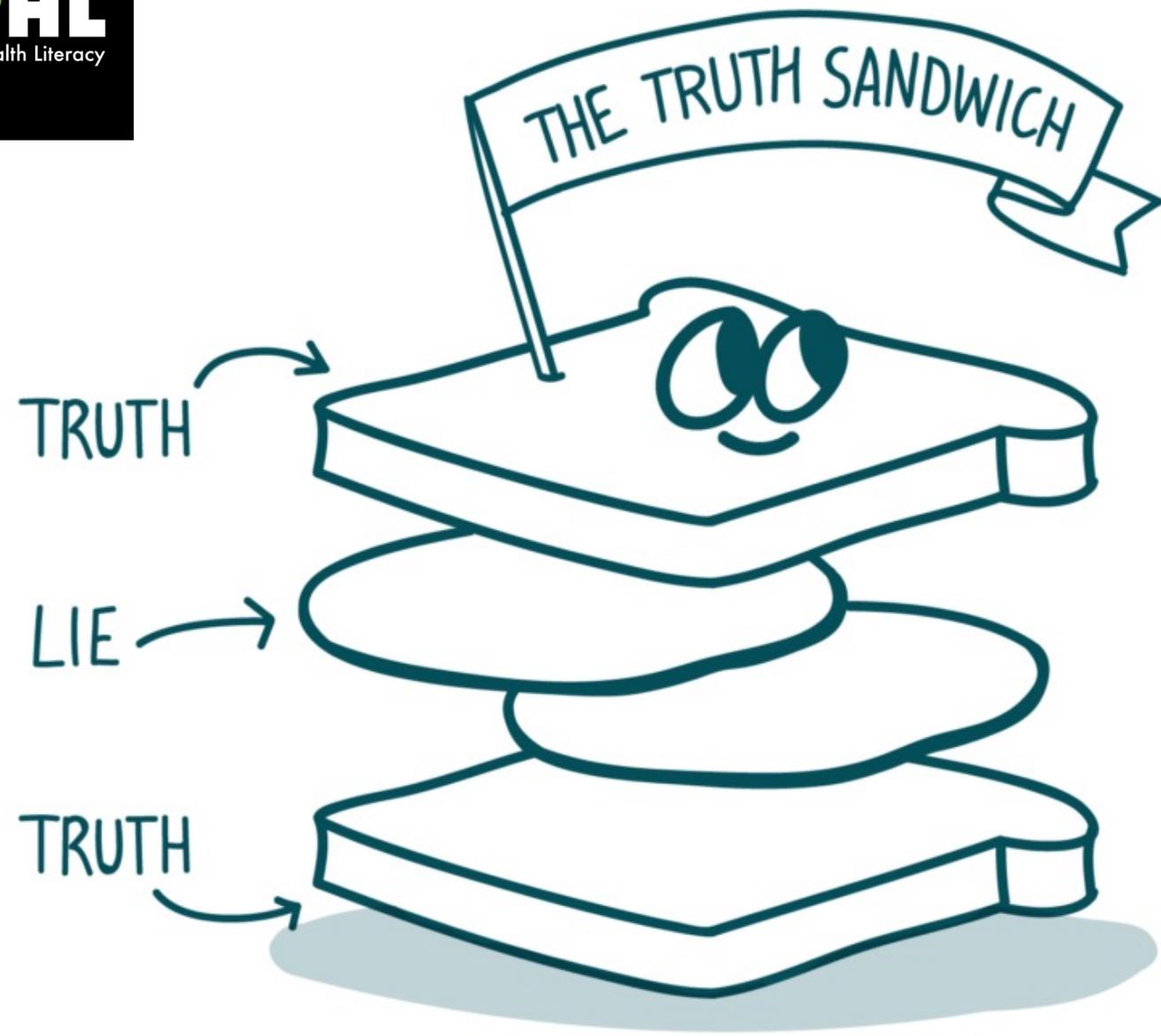
# DURING THE CRISIS

## DRAFT RESPONSE

*Fact-heavy*

*Do NOT repeat lies/misinformation*







# DURING THE CRISIS

## DRAFT RESPONSE

*Fact-heavy*

*Do NOT repeat lies/misinformation*

*Visually simplistic*





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# DURING THE CRISIS





# DURING THE CRISIS

## CRAFT RELEASE PLAN





# DURING THE CRISIS

## CRAFT RELEASE PLAN

*How will you release information?*

.





# DURING THE CRISIS

## CRAFT RELEASE PLAN

*How will you release information?*

*As soon as logistically possible*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## CRAFT RELEASE PLAN

*How will you release information?*

*As soon as logistically possible*

*Get input from allies*





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# DURING THE CRISIS





Public Safety Media Strategies  
EXPERTS IN FIRST RESPONDER MESSAGING

# DURING THE CRISIS

# ALERT THE MEDIA





# DURING THE CRISIS

## ALERT THE MEDIA

*Any/all local media contacts*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## ALERT THE MEDIA

*Any/all local media contacts*

*Include: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## ALERT THE MEDIA

*Any/all local media contacts*

*Include: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY*

*Lean on delegation*





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# DURING THE CRISIS





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# DURING THE CRISIS

# TAKE A MOMENT





# DURING THE CRISIS

## TAKE A MOMENT

*Gather yourself*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## TAKE A MOMENT

*Gather yourself*

*Key people should stand behind you*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## TAKE A MOMENT

*Gather yourself*

*Key people should stand behind you*

*Visual symbols*





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# DURING THE CRISIS





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# DURING THE CRISIS

## SHOWTIME





# DURING THE CRISIS

## SHOWTIME

*Speak calmly, slowly, enunciate*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## SHOWTIME

*Speak calmly, slowly, enunciate*  
*Eye contact with journalists – not cameras*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## SHOWTIME

*Speak calmly, slowly, enunciate*

*Eye contact with journalists – not cameras*

*Be a trusted voice*





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# DURING THE CRISIS





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# DURING THE CRISIS

# TAKE QUESTIONS





# DURING THE CRISIS

## TAKE QUESTIONS

*If possible, do not walk away*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## TAKE QUESTIONS

*If possible, do not walk away*  
*Rely on expertise*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## TAKE QUESTIONS

*If possible, do not walk away*

*Rely on expertise*

*Avoid “I don’t know”*





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# DURING THE CRISIS





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# DURING THE CRISIS

# POST POST POST





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# DURING THE CRISIS

# POST POST POST

*On all company platforms*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## POST POST POST

*On all company platforms  
Create continued content*





# DURING THE CRISIS

## POST POST POST

*On all company platforms  
Create continued content  
Link to full news conference*







# Crisis Communications



## Kimberly Starks

Reputation Management Expert  
Government Consultant & Advisor  
Former Journalist





# Quantifying Reputation Outcomes

- Define measurable outcomes: awareness of policies, shifts in public attitudes, and changes in behavior (e.g., cooperation, calls for service, and complaint patterns).
- Tie communications efforts to these metrics to see what actually changes, not just what gets coverage.
- Use data to refine strategies with different publics instead of treating “the public” as a single audience.





# Internal Publics: Your First Audience

- Officers, staff, and unions are critical stakeholders in reputation; their buy-in affects how the public perceives reforms.
- Inform internal audiences first when possible, so they are not surprised by external statements or policy shifts.
- Treat internal communications as part of reputation work, not separate from community messaging.





# Know Your Publics: From Latent to Active

- Publics can be unaware, aware, or actively organizing around an issue (e.g., use of force, protests, hate crimes).
- “Hot-issue” publics surge after media exposure—almost everyone talks about the incident at once.
- Reputation work means anticipating which publics will activate and preparing different, consistent messages for each.





# Foundations of a Department's Reputation

- Three foundations: operational performance, social responsiveness, and the ability to deliver outcomes that matter to the community.
- Performance: crime reduction, response times, case quality, and disciplined use of force.
- Social responsiveness: how quickly and respectfully the agency listens, corrects errors, and adapts policies when concerns arise.





# Daily Environmental Scanning for Threats & Trends



- Monitor local and national news, social media, and advocacy feeds daily for issues that could connect to your agency.
- This scanning supports issues management, risk communication, crisis management, and long-term reputation building.
- Assign clear ownership: who reviews, who flags concerns, and who decides when to elevate to command staff.





# How Law Enforcement Can Avoid a Reputation Fail



- Engage proactively with communities year-round—not just after controversial incidents.
- Listen to advocates, even critics; they are early-warning sensors for emerging issues.
- Do not ignore or minimize historical grievances in your jurisdiction; acknowledge them and explain what is different now.





# 24/7 Monitoring & Rapid Editorial Adjustments



- Build around-the-clock monitoring of media and social platforms for mentions of the agency, officers, and key incidents.
- Evaluate and adjust your content strategy daily as topics, rumors, and narratives shift.
- Use scheduled posts cautiously during sensitive events; silence or neutral content may be better than “business as usual” posts.





# Brushing Off Debates Have Long-Term Costs

- Attempting to dismiss community debates, protests, or online criticism can cause reputational damage that lasts for years.
- Unanswered narratives harden into “what everyone knows” about your department, regardless of later facts.
- Develop a deliberate approach: when to listen, when to clarify, when to correct, and when to show you are changing practices.





# Early Contact with Platforms During Attacks

- At the first sign of organized misinformation, doxing, or coordinated targeting, contact platform safety/designated teams.
- Request removal of explicit threats and clearly false, dangerous content under platform policies.
- Document all outreach and responses; this record supports later legal or legislative action.





# Learning From Each Incident

- Systematically review what worked, what failed, and how the public responded; treat each major incident as a case study.
- Monitor the impact of your changes on knowledge, attitudes, and behavior in the community over time.
- Capture lessons in doctrine, training scenarios, and command checklists instead of letting them live only in memory.





# Call to Action for Command Staff



- Designate reputation management as an ongoing command responsibility, with clear owners and expectations.
- Integrate environmental scanning, stakeholder engagement, and post-incident reviews into existing command and training cycles.
- Start with one upcoming risk—major event, election, or high-profile trial—and apply these principles before it hits.





# Crisis Communications



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**Fmr Senior Role at U.S. Dept of Homeland Security  
Office of New Jersey Attorney General  
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# The Mindset That Protects Careers



# Leading With Credibility During Critical Incidents





# The Mindset That Protects Careers



## Core Principle

A press conference is not about winning the news cycle.  
It is about credibility.

## What Ends Careers

- Speculation
- Defensiveness
- Saying something that later proves wrong

## What the Public Needs to Believe

- You care about the people affected
- You are taking the incident seriously
- You are committed to truth and due process





# The Mindset That Protects Careers



## The Opening Statement: Your Shield

- 60-90 seconds maximum
- Controlled, deliberate, rehearsed

### Include

- Acknowledgement of seriousness
- Empathy for those affected
- Confirmed facts only
- What actions are underway now
- Clear statement that the investigation is ongoing

### Exclude

- Cause, motive, blame, or fault
- Officer intent or discipline decisions
- Unverified details





# The Mindset That Protects Careers

## What Reporters Want vs. What You Should Give

- Narrative → High-level timeline using confirmed facts
- Conclusions → Process and investigation

## Questions the Ruin Careers If Mishandled

- “Was the force justified?”
- “Why didn’t officers do X?”
- “Was this racially motivated?”
- “Will anyone be fired?”

## Safe Pattern

- Do not speculate
- Point to the investigation
- Emphasize evidence, process, and timing





# The Mindset That Protects Careers

## What Builds Trust Without Creating Risk

- Commitment to transparency
- Independent or external investigation involvement
- How evidence is being preserved
- Timeline for the next update
- That accountability processes exist

## Information to Avoid

- Tactical or technical details
- Officer training specifics in the moment
- Internal communications
- Personal opinions or emotional reactions





# The Mindset That Protects Careers

## Demeanor, Presence, and Final Discipline

### Demeanor That Saves Careers

- Calm
- Measured
- Empathetic
- Deliberate

### Avoid

- Defensiveness
- Arguing with reporters
- Appearing rushed or annoyed
- Humor of any kind

### Physical Presentation

- Stand still, hands visible
- Neutral expression
- Slow your speaking pace
- Silence before answering is your friend





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Complementary 30-min Consultation  
[contact@pubsafemedia.com](mailto:contact@pubsafemedia.com)





# Crisis Communications



# QUESTIONS





Orlando

# SRLEE 2026



SAVE THE  
DATE  
JULY 26-28  
2026





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January 22, 2026

