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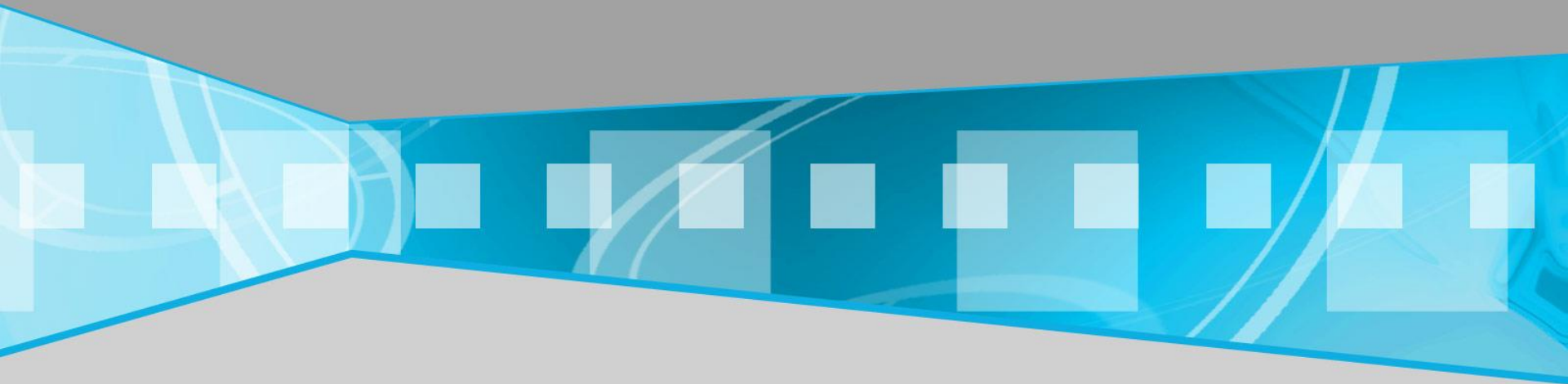
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Longtime journalist for Littleton Independent newspaper and The Colorado Sun, now focused on newsletters, social media and video content for the City of Littleton





REPORT
POLITICS

GROW IN SOUTH CAROLINA
Gov. warns of further flooding

00:00 / 00:21



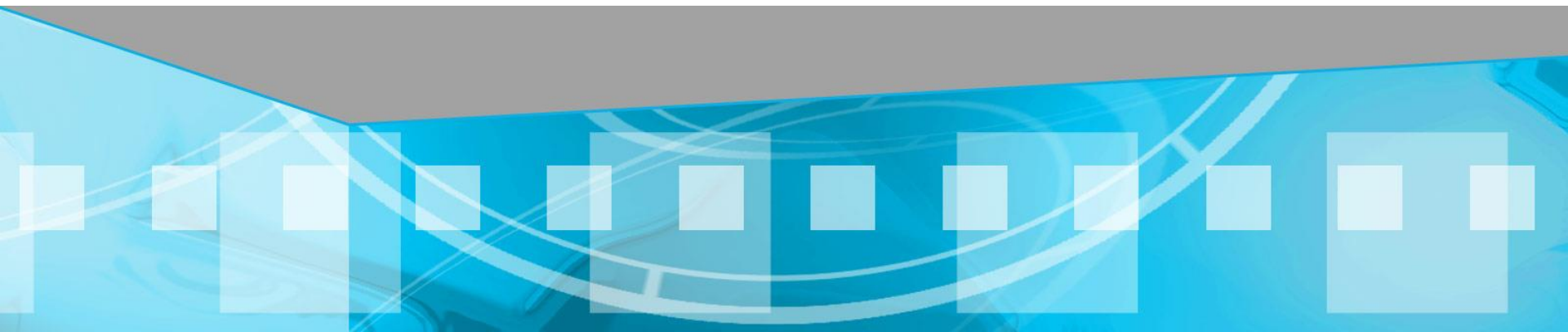
How it became normal for public officials to attack journalists

A California sheriff's targeting of a reporter is the latest instance of authorities misusing power. 'These are steps toward autocracy,' says one press freedom advocate.

Police arrest Vegas-area elected official in reporter death

By KEN RITTER September 7, 2022

Alaska state senator slaps reporter over story



This could be you



While we all make mistakes...

...most of them don't end up on the front page!

Five Takeaways From Today



- *Build relationships in advance*
- *Develop and stick to key messages*
- *Never say, "no comment"*
- *Be nice, assume everything you say or do is being recorded*
- *Don't be afraid to say 'I don't know.'*

Littleton Media Relations Policy


- 1. Foster a spirit of cooperation with the press.*
- 2. Respond in a timely manner.*
- 3. Respond with factual information.*
- 4. Release information simultaneously.
"Exclusives" can ruin relationships.*

Littleton Media Relations Policy

- *When the media have a question, get them in touch with the city's subject matter expert. That could be a librarian, building inspector, or mechanic.*
- *As long as you're the expert, speak with the media if you feel comfortable. If you're not the expert, be careful. A librarian shouldn't comment on a criminal investigation.*

What employees can't discuss...

Refer to the Director of Communications:

- *Matters in litigation*
 - *Personnel investigations/Disciplinary actions*
 - *Columbine High School*
 - *Council policy*
 - *The budget*
 - *Anything you're not sure about*
- 

Council Notification

- *Council members don't like surprises. If you know a story is coming, get a quick message to council and the manager.*
- *In the case of a story in Littleton but not about the city, we coordinate with other PIOs such as SMFR, Arapahoe County, LPS, ACC, or SSPR. Build relationships in advance.*

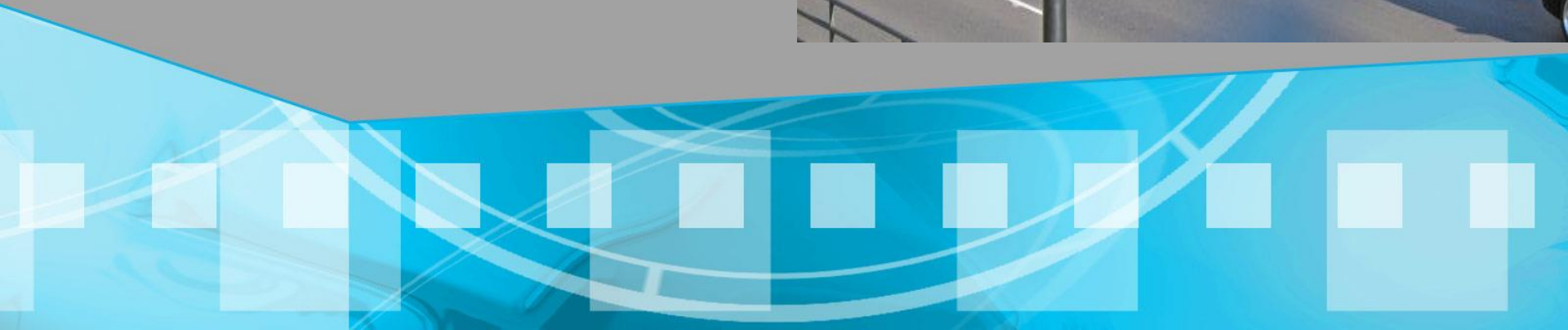
Responding to Media

- *The media will become very aggressive when covering breaking news; competition is fierce.*
- *Tell them only what you know for sure, circumstances can change quickly as an incident evolves.*
- *Don't be defensive.*



Responding to Media

- *Find out what questions reporters have and get back to them, even if you still don't have the answer.*
- *Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know."*



Responding to Media

- *Don't get sucked in to the blame game.*
- *Don't pass judgment.*
- *Don't violate privacy laws.*



Responding to Crisis

- *Show empathy but don't tell people how they should feel, i.e., "We know what they're going through."*
- *Don't use sarcasm or humor, this isn't the time or place.*



Responding to Crisis

- *Our policy and best practice is to designate one person to respond to the media, usually the PIO.*
- *The media will scramble to interview anyone remotely affiliated with a crisis – especially if no one is made available to talk to them (your critics, witnesses, ex-employees, etc.)*



Responding to Media

• As a city employee or elected official, your position as a "public official" will be highly sought. Assume that nothing you say is "off the record."



Responding to Media

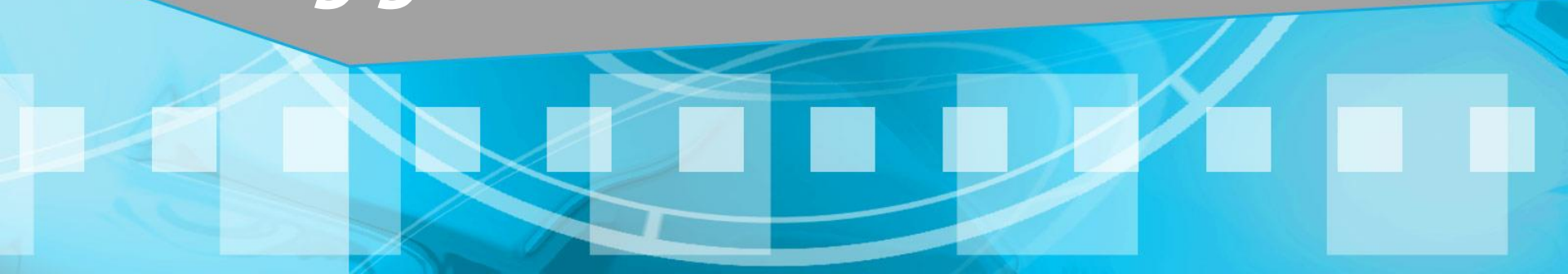
- *40% of the public believe you are hiding something if you don't respond immediately after a crisis.*

- *The number rises to 60% when attorneys are visibly involved.*



Responding to Media

- *A lack of response implies that whatever the media report is true.*
- *Polls indicate that a "no comment" response is almost the same as admitting guilt.*



Keep Coming Home to Key Messages

- *"The bottom line is...."*
- *"We must not lose sight of the fact that..."*
- *"The critical point is..."*
- *"Keep in mind that..."*

Know what you want to say, regardless of the questions asked. Think of the Sunday morning network news shows.

If you are 'ambushed...'

- *Stay calm*
- *Never put your hand in front of the camera or touch the reporter*
- *Never say "No Comment"*
- *Try to be nice and acknowledge the reporter*
- *Let them know you are happy to set up a time to answer their questions*
- *And then follow thru*

Question Types

- *What if?*
- *Out of bounds*
- *Probing*
- *Loaded preface*
- *Hit list*
- *Loaded*
- *Don't you agree?*

Crisis Communications Plan

What it contains:

- *Initial notification-key personnel*
- *Template for "Critical First Statement"*
- *Media and council contact information*



Crisis Communications Plan

City of Littleton

April 2008

Crisis Communications Plan

What it contains:

- *Forms to help gather and update facts*
- *Forms to write "Key Messages"*
- *Tips to prepare the spokesperson*
- *Tips to prepare for a news conference*



Crisis Communications Plan

City of Littleton

April 2008

Pre Crisis Mitigation

Add to your "to do" list

- Build relationships – with the press, neighboring jurisdictions, Red Cross, schools, etc.*
- Make sure everyone knows how to get a hold of everyone – don't forget employees.*



Pre Crisis Mitigation

- *Write a Media Policy so everyone is clear.*
- *Practice, practice, practice. Disaster exercises are organized chaos but everyone learns from them.*
- *Invite other local agencies to join you.*
- *Create a few templates in advance as a starting point.*



Social Media Metrics

- Know your audience!
- Facebook: Versatile, trends older, big engagement driver
- Instagram: Shifting toward video content, good for showing relief efforts
- Twitter: Typically a cornerstone of comms, but losing trust
- Nextdoor: Good for talking to community, but can be a rumor mill
- Littleton's follower counts:
 - Twitter: 11,200
 - Facebook: 9,700 (main account)
 - Instagram: 3,380
 - Nextdoor: visible to 22,100

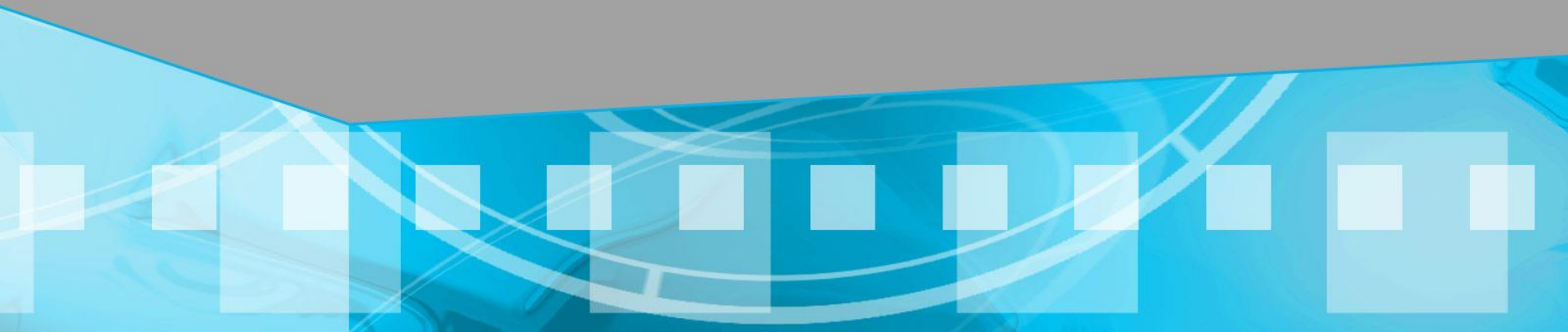
Social Media Tips

Before a crisis: Educate community on how to prepare for disaster.

During: Stay connected, go live, share time-sensitive information. Pin a post and frequently respond to questions and comments.

After: Post clear information about where community members can find official information, receive aid or help in the community's recovery efforts.

Optimize for discovery. Make sure you're tagging partners, providing real-time updates and cross-posting on other platforms.



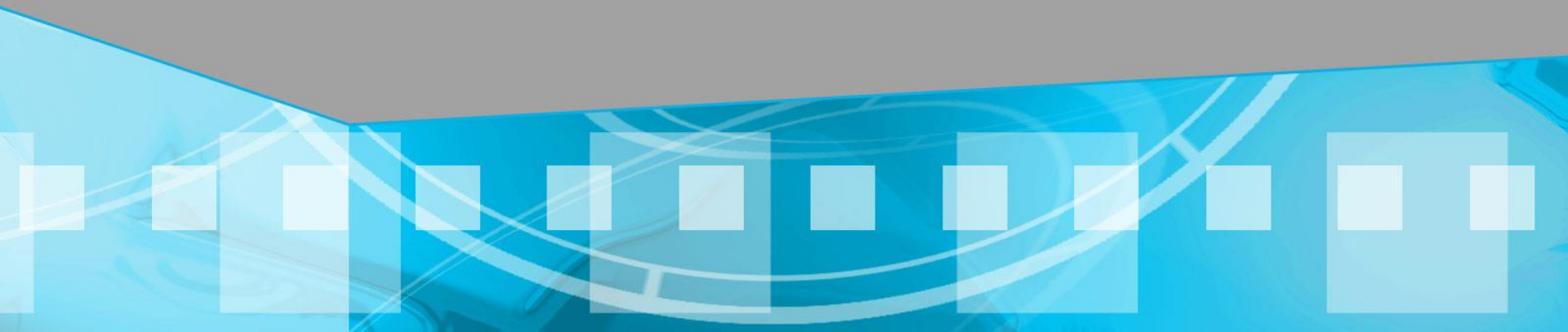
Social Media Do's and Don'ts

DO:

- Set strong passwords and enable two-factor authentication.
- Develop social media policies that allow for content moderation.
- Be ready to enact crisis communications via social media on the spot.

DON'T:

- Allow rumors and misinformation to run away without response.
- Neglect direct messages.
- Stay narrowed to one platform.



Help is Here

*Don't be afraid to
ask for help:*

- *CML PIOs*
- *ESPIOC*
- *Arapahoe County
PIOs*
- *COGOVWM*



Words of Wisdom

- *"By being cooperative, quotable and confident, a clever public figure can often get the media to make him look good."*

(Newsweek)

- *"There's an essential link between government and news reporting and when that link is strained or broken, things go wrong for government."*

(Cecil King)



Famous Last Words

"I have no power to prosecute. I have only the power to embarrass, to humiliate, to expose."

Geraldo Rivera



TODAY AT NOON

NEWS
BE
FUNNY