

THE COMMAND POST

Institute for Law Enforcement Administration Alumni Association

OCTOBER 2012



Media Relations versus Crisis Communications ...

Over the last decade, most law enforcement agencies have come to realize the importance of communicating with the public. The majority of police departments work with the media, have their own websites, and many are utilizing social media to get their messages out.

However, when crisis hits ... like Winston Churchill said, "A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on" ... immediate, concise, and truthful communication becomes vital. That crisis can be anything from a natural disaster or officer malfeasance allegation, to terrorism concerns or a crime wave, like the arsons that occurred in Los Angeles County right around New Year's.

The most obvious difference between day-to-day public relations and crisis communications is the level of interest. There will be an exaggerated response by the media and the public to a crisis. Your job may be to quell rumor, calm a panicked public, and explain a complex situation all at once. It's important to remember that crises are "money stories" for the media ... interest will be intense, pressure will be severe, and the need to "feed the beast" overwhelming. In today's 'no news cycle' world, the pressure on your agency for information will be never-ending. Be prepared to think on your feet.

During a crisis if you are indeed the lead agency, keep in mind your job is to "keep the main thing, the main thing." After an F-2 tornado ravaged downtown Atlanta in 2008, the media ran the story non-stop for 72 hours. While the media were asking premature questions about the amount of damage and cost to the city, it was the Atlanta Police Department's job to keep the media on-point – messaging about public safety, traffic issues, and clean up.

**NEW ILEA WEBSITE
COMING SOON!**

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That leads to the second job of an agency at the head of a crisis: keep messages timely. At the onset of an incident, you may have to provide 15, 30, or 60 minute updates. Take control of the message right away by using your department's social media site as the go-to place for new information. If you don't provide a constant stream of information when it becomes available, and is releasable to the public, the media and your community will go elsewhere for information – and there's a good chance you will then be spending your limited resources correcting misconceptions and rumors. Even if there is no update, letting the public know "we have nothing more to add right now, but we will have another update for you in 15 minutes" is a great strategy that lets the media and public know you respect their need for information and are doing everything possible to provide it in a timely fashion.

Third, keep messages simple. Twitter has both pros and cons ... but it forces one to think in 140 character 'sound bites' – this actually helps departments create simple and easy to follow messages. Remember, during crisis, the media and public experience tunnel vision, just as officers may when involved in a shooting. Simple, active-voice, positive messages such as: "stay inside", "stay home" or "give blood" resonate. Messages that tell people what NOT to do, can sometimes be confusing, and leave the public asking, "OK, what SHOULD I do?"

While "inform, engage, empower" is the foundation of a strong communication strategy, in crisis it is key. People feel helpless in crisis, and look to the authorities for information and what they can do. The LA County Sheriff did a terrific job during the arsons around the New Year – telling people to "keep your lights on outside at night" and "if you see something, say something". Simple messages of diligence

led to the speedy arrest of a suspect and the calming of an entire county that was reassured their police were on the job and that the community was not helpless.

With all this said, these rules of communicating in crisis won't work if your agency has not developed a level of trust with your community. If you haven't laid the ground-work of trust before a crisis, it will be difficult to be seen as a credible source for information during one. There are numerous steps you can take before, during, and after a crisis to build trust in a community. Take those steps now to help prepare for that day ... because whether you prepare or not, "that day" will come!

With 30 years of experience in the field of management, communications and broadcast journalism, Judy Pal has overseen public affairs for police, government and private industry in both Canada and the United States. She is a past President of the National Information Officers' Association and has served as an adjunct professor, reporter, producer and news anchor. Judy's company, 10-8 Communications, exclusively services law enforcement and public safety.

ADVANCED PIO TRAINING: COMMUNICATING IN CRISIS December 3-5, 2012

Participants will gain an understanding of the difference and importance of communicating in crisis; strategies to communicate to diverse internal and external audiences; and tactics to successfully ensure the right message is delivered to the right people at the right time, so they can do the right thing.

SOCIAL MEDIA December 6, 2012

Social media is an important part of today's law enforcement agency's communications toolkit. Participants will learn how social media can work for your agency. Learn the importance of policy and tips to help get your message directly to your target audiences, and hold media accountable.



CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

GARY W. SYKES AWARD For Professional Achievement In Law Enforcement

ILEA is currently accepting nominations for the Gary W. Sykes Award for Professional Achievement in Law Enforcement.

Criteria: Recipient must be a criminal justice professional for at least 10 years, has been instrumental in bringing about significant organizational change for the good of the profession; is significantly involved in community service and civic activities; and is a role model to law enforcement officers, support personnel, criminal justice professionals, and citizens.

Please forward nominations and questions to Gregory Smith, Associate Director, gsmith@cailaw.org.

Deadline: Friday, March 8, 2013



106th SCHOOL OF POLICE SUPERVISION

The 106th School of Police Supervision graduated on June 29, 2012 with 29 representatives from 18 agencies and 5 states, including Alaska, South Carolina, Oregon; Oklahoma and Texas. Classes were held daily at the Institute's headquarters in Plano. Congratulations 106th!

ENROLLING NOW FOR 2013 MANAGEMENT COLLEGE

This is an intensive eight-week program designed to prepare senior-level law enforcement managers and administrators for leadership in the complex world of public executives.

March 4-April 26, 2013
ILEA Headquarters / Plano, TX

SEEKING PARTICIPATION IN CAPSTONE PROJECT

As a central element of the Management College experience, participants work in teams on a consulting project in a North Texas law enforcement organization. If your department is interested in participating in a project or study at no charge, please contact Gregory Smith at gsmith@cailaw.org.

Contemporary Issues Conference is Free!

The upcoming Contemporary Issues Conference topic will be **Policing in our Century: The Emerging Issues.**

The 2013 Contemporary Issues Conference will focus on a variety of issues that bring together police leaders and academicians for the serious dialogue that will enable the resolution of many of the issues and the challenges facing American policing today. Always thought provoking, the mix of attendees of this conference will bring valuable thought and attention to the real issues of the day.

Topics will include:

- ◆ Recruiting and Retention
- ◆ Ethics
- ◆ Morale
- ◆ Duty of Care
- ◆ Recent Increase in Officer Line of Duty Deaths

We are pleased to offer the 2013 Conference free of charge to all ILEA Alumni members who are current on their membership dues.

A special lunch will be available along with the annual Alumni business meeting.

Please watch the ILEA website for the full agenda for this event.

Date and Location:
April 3-5, 2013
ILEA Headquarters ((The Center for American and International Law)
5201 Democracy Drive / Plano, TX 75024

Hours:
9:00am-4:00pm – April 3-4, 2013
9:00am-12:00pm – April 5, 2013

Tuition:
FREE OF CHARGE for Alumni members*
\$250 ILEA Member/\$300 Non-member
*Dues must be paid current



Management College Rings

The 48th Management College (2012) was instrumental in designing a class ring made of sterling silver to commemorate their achievement. The Alumni Association paid for the initial die and is now offering these beautiful rings to future and past graduates of the Management College for \$225. The rings can be customized to include your class number and year. You can also add a special inscription in the inner band at no additional cost.

If you are interested in ordering a ring to commemorate your completion of this fine school and as a visible sign to others of your achievement at ILEA, please contact Tracy Harris at the ILEA office at 972.244.3430 or 800.409.1090.



108th School of Police Supervision

On October 26, twenty-nine officers will graduate from the 108th School of Police Supervision. The class is comprised of 20 different agencies from Texas, Arkansas, South Carolina and Oregon. Congratulations to the upcoming 108th Supervision School graduates!



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Upcoming Events

Police and Family Conference (Grand Rapids, MI)

November 10-11, 2012

With the goal of strengthening all personal relationships in the law enforcement community, this gathering promises two days of enlightenment, education and the opportunity for personal and professional growth.

Ethics Train-the-Trainer (Fort Wayne, IN)

November 13-16, 2012

This program will authorize graduates to present the 8-hour Law Enforcement Ethics; the 16-hour Ethics for FTO's and, 4-hour In-Service Ethics courses within their own agencies or local/regional academies.

Police-Media Relations

November 27-29, 2012

Participants will gain insight into the print and broadcast media – who they are and why they do things the way they do. Class members will develop skills in building trust with outside information groups, preparing and presenting your message, crisis management and organizing the functions of a public information office.

Basic Police Supervision

December 3-7, 2012

Designed to meet the basic requirements established by TCLEOSE for the preparation of new supervisors for success in their assignments. Participants will receive credit for TCLEOSE mandated courses 3232 and 3939.

ILEA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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