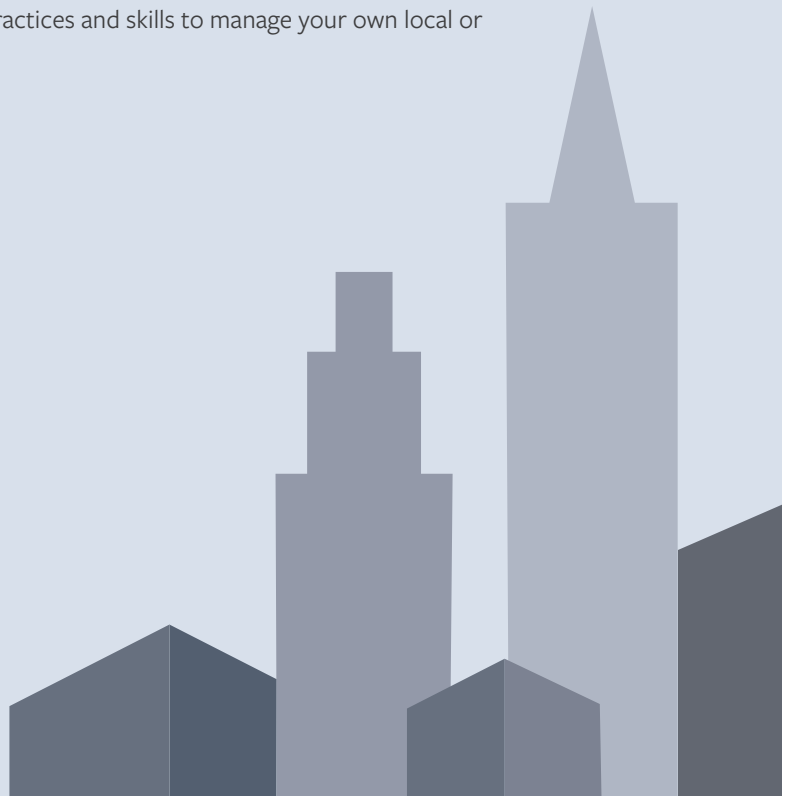




LEADING UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

**WINTER 2023 POLICY MEETING
JANUARY 20-21, WASHINGTON, DC**

Whether it's migration, public safety, COVID, or beyond, many mayors will at some point in their term find themselves thrust into the national spotlight and be asked to lead under a microscope. In these high pressure instances, communicating clearly and acting quickly is key - but communicating in a way that avoids repeating harmful narratives and attends to the needs of those affected is both critical and challenging. This session will offer experiences and lessons from city leaders who have been thrust into the spotlight and best practices and skills to manage your own local or national spotlight.



RESOURCES

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“Communicating in a Crisis: Risk Communication Guidelines for Public Officials,” Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019.

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“Mass Shooting Protocol: The First 24 Hours,” Public Health Advocacy Institute, 2021.

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“Mass Shooting Playbook,” Public Health Advocacy Institute, 2021.

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“Rising to the Occasion: How Women Leaders Prove They Can Handle a Crisis,” Barbara Lee Family Foundation, 2020.

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“US holds thousands of Haitian migrants under bridge in South Texas after mass border crossing,” The Washington Post, Sept. 16, 2022.

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“Flint Mayor: ‘Politics And Profit’ Perpetuated Lead-Tainted-Water Crisis,” NPR, Jan. 21, 2016.

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“Police shooting puts Brooklyn Center mayor in the spotlight,” MPR News, April 20, 2021.



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Communicating in a Crisis

**Risk
Communication
Guidelines for
Public Officials**

SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

LEADING UNDER MICROSCOPE | 1



Communicating in a Crisis

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Risk Communication Guidelines for Public Officials



SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.

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1. PREFACE

Public officials must be prepared to communicate effectively with the public and the media to deliver messages that inform without frightening and educate without provoking alarm whenever acts of terrorism, mass violence, natural or other disasters, and public health emergencies occur.

The purpose of this primer is to provide a resource for public officials on the basic tenets of effective communications generally and on working with print, online, broadcast, and social media specifically. The primer is not encyclopedic in nature, but rather an easy-to-use pocket guide on the basic skills and techniques needed for clear and effective communications, information dissemination, and message delivery.

This guide focuses on the following areas:

- A brief orientation and perspective on the media for public officials, including discussion of how the media thinks and works, and on the public as the end-recipient of information
- Techniques for responding to and cooperating with the media in conveying information and delivering messages before, during, and after a public health crisis
- Tools of the trade of media relations and public communications
- Strategies and tactics for addressing opportunities and challenges that may arise as a consequence of communications initiatives

Although this primer identifies principles relevant to and consistent with effective risk communication practices, it is neither the definitive nor the final word on the subject. Differing circumstances may raise unique questions that must be dealt with in unique ways. While this primer cannot provide you with all the answers, it can prepare you to make the decisions that will lead you to effective answers.

2. INTRODUCTION

COMMUNICATIONS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER A CRISIS SITUATION

Sound and thoughtful risk communication can assist public officials in preventing ineffective, fear-driven, and potentially damaging public responses to serious crises, such as unusual disease outbreaks and bioterrorism. Moreover, appropriate risk communication procedures foster the trust and confidence that are vital in a crisis situation (Wachinger, Renn, Begg, & Kuhlicke, 2013). Public officials can take steps in advance of any incident to better prepare communities, risk managers, government spokespersons, public health officials, the news media, physicians, and hospital personnel to respond to the challenges of managing such crises. Additionally, 24-hour cable news channels and nontraditional media—such as blogs and social media—have propelled a 24-hours-or-less news cycle that makes it critical for organizations to prepare for risk communications. Plan for communicating to the public and the news media, and shape your social media messages, by asking yourself the following questions:

- What information is crucial to convey in initial messages in order to prompt appropriate public responses after a crisis situation?
- What are the messages to be delivered prior to, during, and after an incident?
- What are the obstacles to effective communications and how can they be minimized?
- What are the opportunities for effective communications and how can they be maximized?
- What questions can we anticipate from the public in these risk situations?
- What are the news media's responsibilities and how can you help reporters meet them?

FIRST DO NO HARM

The cardinal rule of risk communication is the same as that for emergency medicine: first do no harm. A threatening or actual crisis often involves a volatile combination of public action and reaction.

This destabilized information environment makes it very important that you give thought to what you are about to say before making any public comment—be it a 30-second statement to a news person or a 30-minute news conference to a roomful of media representatives. In preparing for this speaking opportunity:

.....
RISK COMMUNICATION:
“Involves the effective and accurate exchange of information about health risks and hazards—often during an emergency—that advances risk awareness and understanding and promotes health-protective behaviors among individuals, communities, and institutions”
(DiClemente & Jackson, 2016).
.....

.....
Crisis + heightened public emotions + limited access to facts + rumor, gossip, speculation, assumption, and inference = an unstable information environment.
.....

- Assess the environment into which you are introducing information, including the social media environment, where information may already have been introduced. Gain a sense of the public's general attitude toward the situation and tailor your presentation accordingly. Are they worried and in need of reassurance? Are they overly optimistic and in need of a warning? Are they angry and in need of calming?
- Review your remarks to gauge the probable impact that your words will have on the situation, and adjust them as necessary, e.g., are you using words, like "crisis," "life-threatening," or "extremely," and can other, less dramatic words be substituted?
- Understand your audience. If it is a reporter, appreciate the demands and constraints under which reporters work and recognize the risks those constraints pose to you as a communicator.
- Don't speak unless you are comfortable doing so. Most communications mistakes are made by those who are not prepared to speak but feel compelled to do so anyway. If confronted with a demand for a quick answer, have the confidence to say, "I would like to answer that question later."
- Don't be shy about asking for help. Always take advantage of whatever professional communications support is available to you. If you have access to a public affairs office, use it. You can also hire a local public relations consultant or ask a corporate public relations executive to volunteer to help you meet your challenges.
- Watch, read, and listen to the news media and closely monitor social media; analyze how information is presented; critique the communications skills of others; and learn from their successes as well as from their mistakes.

.....
The middle of a looming crisis is not the occasion to say "No comment." "No comment" should almost never be used by a public speaker, particularly in a risk communications situation. The phrase suggests a lack of candor, conveys a sense of secrecy and connotes that you know something that you are either not willing or not allowed to share with the public, creating skepticism and mistrust.
.....

5. MYTHS, PRINCIPLES, AND PITFALLS

Disseminating information without regard for the complexities and uncertainties of risk is not effective risk communication. Well-managed communications efforts will help ensure that your messages are well formulated, effectively transmitted, and result in the intended public response. Consider how the process works and some general principles for improving effectiveness.

RISK COMMUNICATION MYTHS AND TRUTHS

Myths often interfere with the development of an effective risk communication program. Consider these myths and prepare to take action to dispel and overcome them (Engdahl & Lidskog, 2014).

Myth: Communicating risk is more likely to alarm than calm people.

Truth: Not if done properly. Educate and inform, don't simply alert and alarm. Give people the chance to express their concerns, ask questions and receive accurate answers.

Myth: Communication is less important than education. If people knew the true risks, they would accept them.

Truth: Education is achieved through effective communication. Pay as much attention to the way you inform people as you do to explaining the content of the information.

Myth: Many issues that arise in times of crisis are too difficult for the public to understand.

Truth: No, they aren't. Part of your job is to help the public understand these issues no matter how complex they may be. The public may not make technical decisions, but their opinions deserve consideration by those who are making those decisions.

Myth: Risk communication is not my job.

Truth: Yes, it is. As a public servant, you have a responsibility to the public. Integrate communication with the public into your job and help others do the same.

Myth: If we listen to the public, we may divert limited resources to concerns that are not a great threat to public health.

Truth: The better informed people are, the more likely it will be that the public's and your opinions on priorities are aligned. (Caveat: This statement does not always hold true in a social media-driven environment—please see [Chapter 7: Using Social Media Before and During Crises](#).)

EARNING TRUST AND BUILDING CREDIBILITY

Your ability to establish constructive communication will be determined, in large part, by whether your audiences perceive you to be trustworthy and believable, or whether in a social media context they perceive other sources (e.g., local blogger) as more credible than the “official” spokesperson or information source. Consider how they form their judgments and perceptions. Key factors in assessing trust and credibility are: empathy and caring; competence and expertise; honesty and openness; and dedication and commitment (Lundgren & McMakin, 2018).

Five Rules for Building Trust and Credibility

- 1.** Accept and involve the public as a partner. Work with and for the public to inform, dispel misinformation and, to every degree possible, allay fears and concerns.
- 2.** Appreciate the public’s specific concerns. Statistics and probabilities don’t necessarily answer all questions. Be sensitive to people’s fears and worries on a human level. Your position does not preclude your acknowledging the sadness of an illness, injury, or death. Do not overstate or dwell on tragedy, but do empathize with the public and provide answers that respect their humanity.
- 3.** Be honest and open. Once lost, trust and credibility are almost impossible to regain. Never mislead the public by lying or failing to provide information that is important to their understanding of issues.
- 4.** Work with other credible sources. Conflicts and disagreements among organizations and credible spokespersons create confusion and breed distrust. Coordinate your information and communications efforts with those of other legitimate parties.
- 5.** Meet the needs of the media. Never refuse to work with the media. The media’s role is to inform the public, which will be done with or without your assistance. Work with the media to ensure that the information they are providing the public is as accurate and enlightening as possible. If your agency or organization has a communications office, work with them on approaches to dealing with the media.

SOURCE: Covello and Allen, 1988; Palittala, Boano, Lund, & Vos, 2012

BUILDING SUPPORT

Unless you are assured that the subject to be discussed will be tightly confined to your area of expertise, it is usually not best to serve as the sole spokesperson on an issue. Crisis situations have multiple facets and raise a range of questions. As noted, if possible, it is best to work with your agency's or organization's communications staff to find out their proposed approach to public communications, or to obtain their input on the approach you plan to take.

Having people on hand who can answer questions facilitates and speeds the communications process and better ensures that informational voids don't develop. Identify those colleagues and other officials and experts who can speak to the issues that are most likely to be raised and rely on their help when it's needed. (It is likely that most of the individuals on your risk communications team will also be those on whom you rely for spokesperson support.)

CAUTION!

Make sure goals and messages are understood and coordinated among participants.

Conflicting information, particularly when it comes from equally trusted sources, creates confusion and erodes confidence. Know what other spokespersons intend to say and support their messages.

If something that you don't agree with is said, or if wrong information is presented, do not publicly contradict the statement or disagree with the spokesperson. Resolve the matter in private and present the new information to the public as a simple correction or clarification of a previous statement and not as one opinion having prevailed over another.

Problem: At a news conference, the city manager has just cited a statistic that understates the extent of a problem.

Solution: Immediately after the news conference raise the issue with the city manager in private. Then allow the city manager to provide the new information to the press along with an explanation of how the mistake was made.

AVOIDING PITFALLS

Abstractions:

Use examples, stories, and analogies to make your point.

Don't assume there is a common understanding between you and your audience (even when you are using stories and analogies to make your point).

Attacks:

Respond to issues, not to people. Strive to end debates, not further them.

Don't respond to an attack with an attack of your own.

Attitude/Nonverbal Messages:

Remain calm, attentive, and polite. Adopt a relaxed, neutral physical stance.

Don't let your feelings interfere with your ability to communicate positively. Never convey disgust, frustration, indifference, or smugness. Never lose your temper. Don't allow your body language, your position in the room, or your dress to affect your message.

Blame:

Accept your share of responsibility for a problem.

Don't try to shift blame or responsibility to others and don't magnify the fault to be found in others in order to deflect criticism or minimize your culpability.

Costs:

Focus on the benefits to be derived, not on the costs entailed. If costs are an issue, voice respect for the need for responsible stewardship of public funds.

Don't discuss issues in terms of their dollar value, or complain about a lack of funds.

Guarantees:

It is better to offer a likelihood, emphasizing progress and on-going efforts.

Don't make comments like, "There are no guarantees in life."

Humor:

Avoid it. If used, direct it at yourself.

Don't use it in relation to safety, or health, or in describing risk.

Jargon:

Define all technical terms and acronyms.

Don't use language that may not be understood by even a portion of your audience.

Length of Presentations:

Plan, practice and deliver a cogent 15-minute presentation.

Don't believe that what you are saying is inherently more interesting than other topics and therefore warrants more time. By the same token, don't end your remarks after 15 minutes if there are important audience questions in need of answering.

Negative Allegations:

Refute allegations succinctly.

Don't repeat allegations or refer to them in ways that give them credibility.

Negative Words and Phrases:

Use positive or neutral terms.

Don't cite national problems, or make highly charged analogies, which may belittle the current situation (e.g., don't say, "This is not 9/11.").

"Off the Record":

Always assume everything you say and do is part of the public record.

Don't make side comments or "confidential" remarks. (The rule is: Never say anything that you are not willing to see printed on the front page of a newspaper.)

Personal Identity:

Speak for the organization. Use the pronoun "we."

Don't give the impression that you, alone, are the authority on the issues being raised or the sole decision-maker. Never disagree with the organization you are representing, e.g., "Personally, I don't agree," or "Speaking for myself ...," or "If it were me. ..."

Promises:

It is better to state your willingness to try. Promise only what you can deliver.

Don't make promises you can't keep and never make a promise on behalf of someone else.

Reliance on Words Alone:

Use visuals and hand-outs to emphasize key points.

Don't rely entirely on the spoken word to explain your point.

Speculation:

Stick to the facts of what has, is, and will be done.

Don't speculate on what could be done, or on what might happen, or on possible outcomes other than the intended one(s), or about worst case scenarios.

Statistics:

Use them to illuminate larger points and to emphasize trends and achievements. Don't make them the focus of your remarks, or overuse them.

Technical details and data:

Focus on empathy, efforts, and results. Don't try to fully inform and educate audiences on the minutia of issues.



Mass Shooting Protocol **FIRST 24 HOURS**

A RESOURCE FOR U.S. MAYORS AND CITY MANAGERS



**PUBLIC
HEALTH
ADVOCACY
INSTITUTE**

**Sarah C. Peck
Emily Nink
and
Mark Gottlieb**

The Mass Shooting Protocol & Playbook is a two-part resource intended for mayors, city managers, and their staff. The Protocol covers the first 24 hours of the response. The supplemental Playbook provides best practices and resources city officials can use to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a public mass shooting.

Mass Shooting Protocol: The First 24 hours

This Protocol is the result of research involving mayors, first responders, and others who have responded to a public mass shooting. Below you will find key decisions that you, as mayor, will need to make during the first 24 hours of the response. There are also links to the companion guide, the **Mass Shooting Playbook**, for additional information and resources to help with ongoing crisis management. Additionally, best practices for preparedness actions can be found in the Playbook. To obtain a copy of the Playbook, please visit www.UnitedOnGuns.org.

1. Communications

- Your primary role during the response is as the “communicator-in-chief.” Decide in consultation with your police chief who will speak about what. Often law enforcement officials communicate details about the investigation. The public will look to you for messaging about public safety, updates about the victims, referrals to mental health resources, and messages of unity and healing. Secure the press area to prevent unauthorized officials from speaking to the press pool.
- Your first challenge is to get as much information as possible, as often as possible, from law enforcement. Ask for a dedicated police official whose sole responsibility is to keep you informed.
- Schedule early and regular press briefings, even when there isn’t much new information to share, to prevent the development of rumors and misinformation.
- Release information relating to the shooting via one social media account (ideally operated by the public safety office), to be amplified by the city and other agencies. Direct all press inquiries to this single, monitored account.
- Host a dedicated webpage where all public information about the shooting is posted and updated, along with names of the victims. This will reduce the intense pressure to respond promptly to public record requests.
- Consider including a “How You Can Help” section for the public in press releases and all social media and online messages.
- For more information, see Playbook Chapter 1 on Communications.

2. Emergency Operations

- Confer with your City Counsel, Chief Administrative Officer, Chief of Staff, and Chief Financial Officer. This “C4 team” should meet daily to coordinate emergency operations and reduce legal exposure to the city and its employees.

Mass Shooting Protocol: Checklist

(Selected actions from the comprehensive checklists found in the Playbook)

Communications

- ☐ Establish a regular schedule for communicating with the press and follow it.
- ☐ Decide which officials will speak and in what order at press conferences.
- ☐ Keep messages simple, credible, and consistent. Correct misinformation.

Emergency Operations

- ☐ Activate the Emergency Operations Center. Request regular briefings from a designated law enforcement official.
- ☐ Assemble your “C4” team to provide coordination and legal compliance.
- ☐ Consider whether to make a declaration of emergency.

Establish Family Reunification and Assistance Centers

- ☐ Work with law enforcement, the American Red Cross, the FBI, and local partners to establish the Family Reunification Center (FRC) and the Family Assistance Center (FAC).
- ☐ Ensure both centers are located separately from the Joint Information Center (away from the press), have a secure perimeter, and are scalable.
- ☐ Communicate FRC and FAC locations and services in press briefings.
Urge the coroner to release victim’s names to families as soon as possible.

Establish the Victims Fund

- ☐ Establish a victims’ fund right away using city-operated 501(c)(3) charitable entity, the National Compassion Fund, or a local foundation.

Begin Planning for Recovery

- ☐ Seek the guidance of mental health experts to develop trauma-informed messaging and to ensure appropriate mental health services are available.
- ☐ Plan vigils in consultation with families and the affected community.

Mass Shooting Playbook

A Resource for U.S. Mayors and City Managers

Public Health Advocacy Institute

Sarah C. Peck, Emily Nink, and Mark Gottlieb

**This Playbook may be downloaded
for official use by mayors, city managers, and their staff.
Visit UnitedOnGuns.org**

Public Health Advocacy Institute

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Foreword

In the early morning hours of August 4, 2019, a disturbed young man fatally shot nine people and wounded 27 others with an AR-15 style pistol outside a bar in my city's downtown entertainment area. Our outstanding police responded in less than a minute of the first shot and killed the attacker. I received the news no mayor wants to receive in the early hours of the morning, when the city attorney knocked on my door.

Of course, every mayor must be prepared to handle a crisis, whether snowstorms in the Northeast, wildfires in the West, hurricanes in Florida, or flooding along the Mississippi. Less than three months before the attack, my team and I responded to a tornado that ripped through Dayton. But these are familiar challenges. We know how to plow our streets even if there is a record amount of snow.

Mass shootings are a different kind of crisis. They are sudden, unexpected, and extremely traumatic to large numbers of people in your community. As mayors, we are not responsible for the law enforcement response, but we are responsible for the aftermath. How we handle this crisis will permanently affect the lives of our residents and could be the most important work of our tenure in office.

Having lived through the experience, I now tell other mayors, "it isn't if, but when" a mass shooting happens in your community. You need to prepare. The best way to start is by planning a tabletop exercise with your staff and the relevant stakeholders.

Fortunately, you have in your hands a resource that can help you to be as ready as you can be. Researchers at Northeastern University's Public Health Advocacy Institute interviewed me, Dayton Police Chief Richard Biehl, and 13 others including mayors, law enforcement officials, and city staffers who responded to a public mass shooting. The hard-earned experience of those interviewed is consolidated in this Protocol, which can help you get through the first 24 hours of a shooting, and the Playbook, which is filled with the best practices you can use to prepare, respond, and help your community recover from a mass shooting.

I am proud to have been a part of this important project.

Mayor Nan Whaley
Dayton, OH
July 15, 2021

Chapter 1: Communications

"You are communicator-in-chief."

– Mayor Nan Whaley, Dayton OH

Chapter Summary

Your primary role after a mass shooting is to share facts with the community, correct misinformation, and communicate messages of safety, unity, and empathy. Your public speaking experience will guide your messaging. However, a public mass shooting is traumatizing and presents unique challenges. This chapter presents crisis communications resources and best practices from mayors that you can use to prepare for and respond to a mass shooting.

In the **preparedness** phase, you can develop a crisis communications plan in partnership with your chief of police, plan the location and operations of a Joint Information Center (JIC) (separate from the family reunification center), arrange crisis communications training for yourself and your team if needed, review communications systems and capacities, and learn about trauma-informed messaging.

During the first 24 hours after the shooting (the **response** phase), your goal is to stay ahead of the news cycle. Communicate early and often to prevent the spread of inaccurate information. Coordinate with law enforcement to get regular updates, deliver the facts as they become available, proactively correct misinformation, and coordinate your message with other agencies to present unified leadership. As "communicator-in-chief," you decide who will speak, about what, and when. You may opt not to be the lead spokesperson, instead allowing law enforcement officials to deliver information about the investigation. Your messages might instead highlight safety, unity, and healing. Above all, transparency is the goal.

You may be responsible for managing a stream of dignitaries. One mayor advised directing visitors to where they can provide comfort to the victims and their families. During visits of elected officials, you may need to work closely with them to prevent remarks that could politicize the shooting.

As you enter the **recovery** phase, your messaging may shift from providing facts about the shooting to messages of healing and availability of mental health resources. Consult with victims' assistance agencies for help crafting these messages.

Preparedness

Your primary role after a mass shooting is to share facts with the community, correct misinformation, and communicate messages of safety, unity, and empathy. You will develop these messages in response to the specific circumstances of the shooting. However, you can develop a crisis communications plan, form relationships with mental health experts, and obtain crisis communications training, if needed, in advance.

Crisis Communications Planning

In collaboration with your Police Chief and municipal communications staff, develop a crisis communications plan. It should be informed by the concepts developed by FEMA for responding to a crisis, as described in the National Incident Management System (NIMS). If you already have a crisis communications plan that covers natural disasters or other types of emergencies, review the plan for its applicability to a mass shooting. Elements of a crisis communications plan should include:

- A protocol for press briefings
- The operations and location of a Joint Information Center (JIC)
- A policy for the city's emergency alert system, if the city has one
- A protocol for managing social media accounts



Figure 1: Best practices in risk and crisis communication.¹

Protocol for Press Briefings

Meet with your Police Chief and determine the roles you will each play during press briefings. Often law enforcement officials take the lead communicating details about the investigation. You may opt to speak about public safety, the victims, and offer messages of unity and healing. Also, develop a system for receiving regular briefings from law enforcement officials. One staffer recommended appointing a dedicated law enforcement official in the Emergency Operations Center whose sole responsibility is to keep you informed.



Best Practices Tips for Press Conferences from a Law Enforcement Public Information Officer (PIO)

1. Speak with one voice. Assign one media contact.
2. No “off the record” remarks. Make sure everyone follows this guidance, even people who answer phones.
3. Plan in advance where your press conferences will be held.
4. Have some prepared remarks on hand so that you don’t have to start from scratch.
5. Initial remarks should include answers to “who, what, when, where (but not why), and what you are doing about it.
6. Think about the questions the media will ask and find the answers (*e.g.*, did the shooter have a record?)
7. Include directions to the families of victims (location of the reunification center) and to the public (road closures, lockdowns, etc.)
8. For the speakers: agree in advance on a signal for when you are ready to end your remarks so that your PIO can end the briefing for you. Keep your remarks short. Avoid redundancy.
9. Determine speaker order, length of remarks. Practice.
10. For speakers who like to read remarks: memorize your most important points and look up at the camera when you make them. That’s what the media will cover.



Joint Information Center

The Joint Information Center (JIC) coordinates interagency communication and manages the press during a mass shooting. Your planning should identify where the JIC can be located, as well as locations for the press pool and their vehicles. Brainstorm potential locations ahead of time, based on where a shooting could happen in your community. Ideally, the JIC should be located quite close to the site of the shooting. If a mass shooting happens, you may want to station yourself at the JIC to facilitate the flow of accurate information. Review with your staff the information technology (IT) systems and digital communications resources that are needed for activating the JIC.

The mayors we interviewed strongly recommended locating the JIC separately from the Family Reunification and Assistance Centers so that family members are protected from the press, and so that people working in the JIC are not distracted by the sounds of grief. (For other considerations for planning the Family Reunification and Assistance Centers, see Chapter 3.)

Key Resources: Joint Information Center



National Response Team Joint Information Center Model: this resource explains the JIC model, how to establish a JIC, functional responsibilities for staff, and worksheets/ other sample materials for use by JIC staff.

<https://www.nrt.org/sites/2/files>

FEMA basic guidance for Public Information Officers:

https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_nims-basic-guidance-public-information-officers_12-2020.pdf

Alert Systems and Capacities

If your city lacks an Emergency Notification System (ENS), determine whether to implement one. These systems send mass notifications via phone, text, social media, and email to the public in an emergency. In the case of a mass shooting, they can alert the public of immediate safety concerns, and order the public to shelter in place or to avoid a specific area if a shooter is still at large. For example, in the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombing, shelter in place messages were sent multiple times during the manhunt for suspects that spanned days.²

Your plan should consider how an ENS will be operated, and who will be responsible for maintaining it (e.g., the public safety office, emergency response office, or law enforcement organization). If the city has an ENS, it should be tested periodically. Review with your staff the IT needs (including materials and staff) that are needed for effective management of the ENS.

Similarly, familiarize yourself with hotlines operated by the city, or decide whether to establish a new hotline to provide information to the public in case of emergency. Emergency alert messages and hotline recordings can be recorded ahead of time.

Social Media Protocol

Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer conducted a tabletop exercise prior to the Pulse shooting. During that exercise, his team developed a social media protocol that they used in response to the shooting. The elements of that protocol include:

- Use the social media account of the public safety office or a law enforcement agency to provide regular updates to the public. Direct the press to this account, and retweet/share the content from mayor's office accounts and other agency accounts to amplify the messages. The advantage of this approach is two-fold: (1) messaging is unified, and (2) messages sent through public safety channels may be seen as more legitimate and less politicized.
- Normally scheduled social media messages on other topics may need to be cancelled across city accounts during the crisis.
- Use social media to directly and proactively correct misinformation.
- You can also include "how you can help" guidance to the public through social media channels (e.g., identify the official victim's fund, where to donate blood, how to volunteer, what not to donate.)



- Post updates as quickly as is feasible, balanced with the need to clear posts through your internal review. Using a sole account reduces the number of clearances needed and ensures the messaging is consistent.



Image 1: Example of initial social media messaging used by a mayor following a mass shooting, amplifying a statement from law enforcement (Retrieved from: https://twitter.com/mayor_margo/status/1157730991265345536)

Key Resource: FEMA Social Media in Emergency Management Training

FEMA, Social Media in Emergency Management: This online training course (IS-42) covers the use of social media in emergency response plans. The course is for state, local, tribal, and territorial emergency managers and their staff. <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-42>



Crisis Communications Techniques and Training

Learn the Basics of Crisis Communications

Establish relationships with your local victims' assistance office, mental health experts, and public health officials. Meet with them in advance to discuss how to craft messages for a traumatized community. These mental health experts can also help should you need to establish a Family Assistance Center, direct community members to local mental health services, or organize vigils or other commemorative events.

Review available resources to understand the psychology of trauma. One excellent resource is the CDC's Crisis and Emergency Response Communication (CERC) manual. The chapter on the psychology of crisis is short and informative. According to the CERC manual, to be effective during a crisis your messages should be simple and:

- Be repeated
- Come from multiple credible sources
- Be specific to the emergency being experienced
- Offer a positive course of action that can be executed

Key Resource: CDC Crisis Communications Training and Manual



CDC Crisis and Emergency Response Communication (CERC) program: includes trainings, presentations, and the CERC Manual.
<https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/manual/index.asp>

CDC CERC: Crisis Communications Plan:
guide to integrating a crisis communications plan into the local emergency operations plan.
https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/ppt/CERC_Crisis_Communication_Plans.pdf

Key Resource: ATSDR Communications Toolkit



The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) protects communities from harmful health effects related to exposure to natural and man-made hazardous substances. The ATSDR Communications Toolkit is a simple "Message mapping" tool your PIO can use to develop simple messaging to help the public respond to a crisis.
https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communications-toolkit/documents/12_message-mapping-tool-final-111015_508.pdf

Crisis Communications Media Training

In addition, consider crisis communications training for yourself or your staff if you have limited experience handling the national press. Training can give you confidence in front of the cameras and help you craft appropriate messaging, properly handle information related to the investigation, and understand privacy laws.



Best Practice Tip

Assemble a duplicate supply of essential equipment, such as extra cell phones and chargers for you, your staff and visitors.

— Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto



During the response to the Tree of Life shooting in Pittsburgh, phones were waterlogged due to rain and backup phones were not available, interfering with the ability to provide social media updates to the public.

"Go-Kits" for Yourself and Key Staff

The core emergency response team (e.g., you, your Chief of Staff, City Manager, Chief Administrative Officer, and City Attorney) should carry a cell phone at all times so they can be reached immediately in the event of an emergency. The team should consider assembling a "go-kit," as described by FEMA's guidance for Public Information Officers.³ The go-kit can be left in the car or office. Include extra cell phones and chargers, a jacket if you must unexpectedly appear before the press, snack bars, basic sundries, a sweater, etc.

Response

Initial Communication Decisions

During the first hours and days after the shooting, you will likely spend much of your time in the JIC, gathering information, planning and scheduling press conferences, managing visiting elected officials and dignitaries, and responding to requests from the press. The first decisions you will need to make include:

- Decide locations of the JIC and the Family Reunification Centers, if that hasn't already been determined. It is important to keep them separate (see Chapter 3).
- Schedule your first press briefing with your Police Chief. Deliver the first press conference at the predetermined hour and announce the schedule for the following press conferences at the conclusion of the first.
- Determine your roles through a pre-conference "huddle" that takes place 30-60 minutes before the first press conference. Often law enforcement officials take the lead communicating details about the investigation. You may opt to speak about public safety, the victims, and offer messages of unity and healing.
- Limit the number of speakers to the minimum required. Too many speakers (especially elected officials), can be redundant and runs the risk of creating confusion or politicizing the tragedy.
- Consider whether to send out an emergency notification on the city's ENS and/or declare a state of emergency (see Chapters on the Emergency Operations Plan and Legal Considerations).

- Consider including a “How You Can Help” section in your social media strategy, on the city’s web site, and in every press release or other communications issued during the response. Direct the public to where they can donate money, volunteer, give blood, or provide assistance to the response operations.
- Implement the protocol for receiving regular information from law enforcement officials. Best practice: ask for a dedicated police official whose sole responsibility is to keep you informed. Request regular meetings with your chief.
- Direct your communications team to proactively correct misinformation.
- Initiate your social media strategy. As noted above, a best practice is to release information relating to the shooting via a single social media account (operated by your public health office or the police PIO), which is retweeted by the city and other agencies. Direct all press inquiries to that account.

In some cases, law enforcement or the FBI may take the lead in a press conference (the decision is joint). To avoid bruised egos and hard feelings, focus on the needs of the victims and families. Remind the speakers and their staffers that you are on the same team and should present a unified front in the immediate aftermath of the crisis.

Mayors in Action: Negotiating the Order of Speakers



Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer: “We had a discussion with the FBI about who should take the lead in the first press conference. We felt strongly we should lead the press conference. Our rationale was that our community and the families of victims should hear first from somebody that they know and trust. They did not know the FBI Special Agent in Charge, so we felt he would be unable to convey the message of safety and unity we thought was needed. That message needed to come from the Mayor of Orlando. Eventually the FBI deferred to us.”

Your First Public Statements

Mayors told us their top priority at the first press conferences was to convey that the situation was under control and provide information about the victims. Be mindful that law enforcement considerations may limit what you can say and when you can say it. Work with the coroner’s office and law enforcement officials to identify the victims as quickly as possible so that you can convey that critical information to their families and to the public.

Keep messages simple, credible, and consistent. Your messages should express empathy and show respect and sensitivity for victims and families. Act quickly to correct misinformation. Provide actions the public can take to be helpful.



Messages that will be necessary to convey following the shooting:

- Where families and members of the affected community should gather.
- The status of the coroner's office investigation to identify the victims.
- Reliable sources of information, such as a dedicated social media account, a city web site where public information about the shooting will be posted regularly, and hotlines established for this purpose.
- Include "how you can help" guidance for the public (e.g., identify the official victim's fund, where to donate blood, how to volunteer, what not to donate).

One mayor said he avoided naming the shooter at all press conferences. Research has shown that naming the shooter repeatedly can contribute to a media focus on the perpetrator instead of the victims, contributing to a desire among some individuals to imitate the shooter's actions and/or to glorify the violence.⁴ For this reason, the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training team and the FBI established a "Don't Name Them" campaign.⁵

Mayors in Action: Remarks at the First Press Conference

Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley: "If you are the family or friend of a victim, we invite you to come to the convention center or call [local helpline number]. And if you have any information on the incident, if you were in the Oregon District today and have information, please call [police tip-line]. Red Cross, the Greater Dayton Area Hospital Association, ADAMHS and support for our police and first responders are on the scene to help the situation. Of course we are incredibly grateful for our partners in this very sad incident."⁶



Key Resource: Full Press Conference, Indianapolis Federal Express Shooting

Full press conference from Indianapolis FedEx Ground Facility shooting in April 2021:

<https://www.wsls.com/news/2021/04/16/watch-live-press-conference-on-mass-shooting-at-fedex-facility-in-indianapolis/>.



Best Practice Tip

Coordinate messaging from every agency and office.

"It is important to speak with one voice."

– Former San Bernardino Mayor R. Carey Davis



Managing the Press



Image 2: Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto speaks to the press following the Tree of Life Synagogue shooting (Photo by Alexandra Wimley, Copyright ©, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 2021, all rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.)

Schedule the first press conference as soon as possible, even if you don't have much information to share. Inform the press that you will schedule regular press conferences and deliver them when you say you will. Tips for managing press conferences include:

- Secure the press conference site: many will want to speak but you need to control the messaging. You may need to restrict access to the press area.
- Provide all journalists and types of media equal access to information.
- Find a balance between local media (to provide relevant information to affected residents) and national media (to reach a broader public audience). One mayor suggested reserving time for press meetings with local press only.

Note that journalists from the same network compete with each other for your interview. Feel free to decline multiple interviews requests from the same network and provide access to other networks and local news.

Also, due to the newsworthiness of a mass shooting, press briefings, even with local media, may be aired nationally. Prepare yourself and your remarks accordingly. That said, one mayor chose to deliver messages intended for the local community, leaving messages geared to the national audience to others.



Prioritize the Needs of Victims and Families

One mayor recommended prioritizing the needs of the victims and their families in your communications strategy. Strategies for establishing effective communication with victims and families include:

- Designate a media liaison for victims and families at the JIC to facilitate the exchange of messages and information between the families and your office.
- Do what you can to speed the release of the names of the victims to their families and loved ones (the public's need to know is secondary).
- Tailor messaging to be respectful to the families.
- Visit the families at the Family Reunification Center as soon as possible so that you can communicate face-to-face.
- Prioritize your time. If faced with a choice between an interview and an invitation to meet with family members, for example, feel free to pass on the interview. The press will still be there when you are free.

Mayors in Action: Remarks About FAC Services

Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer: “It’s important to remember that these victims are having normal reactions to a very abnormal event...Services at the family assistance center range from grief counseling to financial assistance to obtaining visas...we can’t thank these organizations enough for their tireless efforts in this difficult situation...If you don’t feel comfortable coming down to the site, we would still encourage you to call us...and we will reach out to you. The Family Assistance Center will remain open throughout the weekend.”⁷ (Video of full remarks available at endnote 7.)



Managing Visits from Elected Officials

In the immediate aftermath of a mass shooting, elected officials may converge on your city, from the U.S. President (“POTUS”), to your governor, to national and state legislators and officials from neighboring districts. Some of these visits could be controversial. They may burden your already overstretched staff and police force. Yet, hosting these visitors provides the opportunity to communicate your city’s needs to policymakers who may be able to help. Mayors who welcomed VIPs following a shooting offered these tips:

- Decide whether to invite them to speak at press conferences.
- Give them something to do that can help victims and survivors.
- Help them develop appropriate messages to avoid politicizing the shooting or traumatizing the affected community.

For best practices for managing VIP visits, see Appendix B.

Recovery

Messaging: Shifting from Response to Recovery

As the public begins to process what has happened, your messaging will gradually shift from the “response” to the “recovery” phase. This process may begin within hours of the shooting and continue for months or even years. Your recovery messaging will focus on fostering long-term community resilience, restoring hope, and healing from trauma. Common themes include solidarity, unity, resilience, and strength (e.g., “Dayton Shines,” “Boston Strong,” and Pittsburgh’s “Stronger Than Hate”).

Use this opportunity to highlight the many caring actions taken by members of the community, from volunteers who bring meals to first responders, to community members who donate blood, to companies that make financial and in-kind donations and provide needed services to victims and families, to groups who contribute art and culture to lift the spirits of victims and their families. These people are “ambassadors of hope.” Their selfless actions and compassion can help make a tragedy bearable.



Image 3: 1500 quilts were handmade and distributed to victims, family members, first responders, and city officials who responded to the Pulse shooting (Photo by Paula Kennedy).

Consult Mental Health and Behavioral Health Experts

Your communications should include messages about available mental health services. Consult with mental health experts to understand the mental health impact on your community and for guidance developing trauma-informed messages. For example, to prepare messaging after the shooting in Dayton, Mayor Whaley consulted a countywide mental health services network with whom she had previously partnered to communicate about the opioid crisis.



COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST

Preparedness

- ☐ Develop a crisis communications plan with your Chief of Police and Public Information Officer. Review and update as needed.
- ☐ Establish relationships with your local victims' assistance office, mental health experts, and public health officials.
- ☐ Assess whether to establish an Emergency Notification System. Develop a policy for its use and request regular testing and operation of the system.
- ☐ Review the CDC's Crisis and Emergency Risk Communications (CERC) Manual. If you have limited experience speaking to the national media, consider crisis communications training.
- ☐ Ask your PIO to assemble messages that you can use in a crisis, and practice delivering them.
- ☐ Prepare a "go-kit." Program contacts into your phone and assemble supplies.

Response

- ☐ Establish a schedule for communicating with the press.
- ☐ Decide who will speak and in what order at press conferences.
- ☐ Seek the guidance of victims' assistance and mental health experts to develop trauma-informed messaging.
- ☐ Keep messages simple, credible, and consistent. Express empathy, show respect for victims and families. Act quickly to correct misinformation.

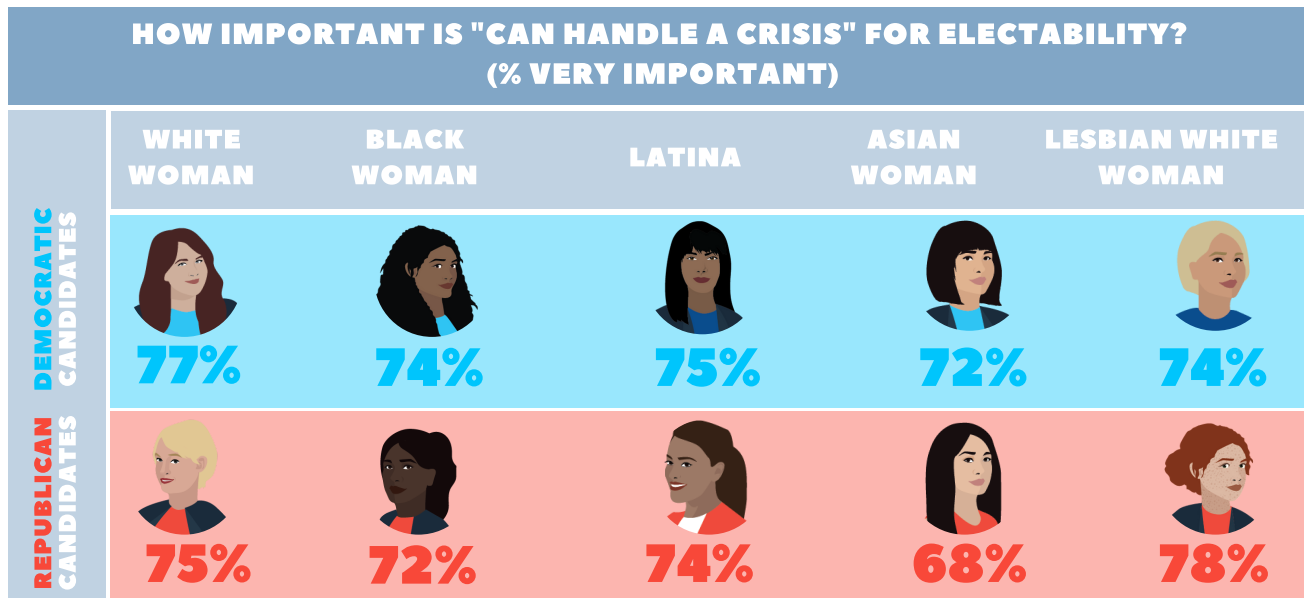
Recovery

- ☐ Focus your messaging on bolstering long-term community resilience, restoring hope, and healing from trauma.

RISE TO THE OCCASION: HOW WOMEN LEADERS PROVE THEY CAN HANDLE A CRISIS



Seeing a candidate as able to handle a crisis is critically important to voters, especially when they're evaluating women candidates. Handling a crisis is a key component of being seen as qualified, a place where our research has consistently shown women are held to a higher standard. Recent Barbara Lee Family Foundation research also shows that a top indicator of electability for women candidates running for executive office is the ability to handle a crisis.



But what does “handling a crisis” mean to voters, and how do women show they’re up to the task? Our research explores these questions through the lens of asking about hypothetical women governors, providing advice and recommendations for women on how to talk to voters and show they are prepared to lead.

2020 CONTEXT

This research was performed during March and April 2020, as COVID-19 was impacting the lives of Americans and people around the world. The President’s response to the crisis has an impact on voter opinions, as do the responses of women governors and mayors who were suddenly in the national spotlight. While the influence of COVID-19 can certainly be seen throughout this research, proving they can handle a crisis has consistently been important for women candidates and will continue to be so in the years to come.

METHODOLOGY

Lake Research Partners and Bellwether Research & Consulting conducted six focus groups and a national phone survey of 1,000 likely 2020 voters nationwide along with oversamples of 300 African American, 300 Latinx, 400 AAPI, 150 Millennial women, and 200 Millennial men likely voters. The findings from the survey presented in this memo are controlled for party identification. The full methodology is available at the end of the memo.

KEY FINDINGS

01

Voters know the type of leader they want in a crisis: someone with a 360-degree view who is in touch. The findings are consistent across different focus groups and subgroups of voters surveyed: voters want leaders who can develop and execute a plan that will deal with a crisis as it is happening, as well as prepare for any future crises. Rather than being laser focused on one component of a crisis, voters want a leader who is thinking about what needs to happen before, during, and after a crisis, and believe women are better at taking that 360-degree view.

02

Communication is essential, and voters see it as a two-way street. It's not just about sharing information; voters want to know their leader is listening to and working with experts and other officials, and listening to people who are impacted by the crisis – all things voters believe women are better at doing.

03

Women have to do more to prove they can handle a crisis. Women still face a higher bar to demonstrate their qualifications and leadership. Voters worry that women won't be confident, strong, and decisive— important dimensions in times of crisis. While the majority of voters volunteer that they see no difference between men and women, when surveyed about their friends' and neighbors' attitudes, voters guessed people in their life think men would do a better job.

04

Gender and party stereotypes influence voters' attitudes, and there is an interaction between the two. A governor's party affiliation is a driving factor and impacts voters' views, and the governor's gender does as well: a woman and a man of the same party aren't perceived equally. Republican voters have key differences in their evaluations of Republican men and Republican women, and the same thing happens on the Democratic side.



WHAT DOES “HANDLE A CRISIS” MEAN?

There are so many types of crises — outbreaks or natural disasters, such as pandemics, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, or blizzards; and man-made disasters, such as mass shootings, industrial accidents and spills, infrastructure negligence, or the opioid epidemic — and the impact on each voter varies depending on their age, race, gender, geography, ability, and socioeconomic status. Still, voters have a clear idea of what it means to handle a crisis: developing, communicating, and decisively implementing a plan, both to deal with immediate needs and to prepare for future crises.

“Evaluate all sources of information, critically think through it, and make a decision that is best for all.”

*40 and Over
White Man,
Canton*



“Come up with an action or a plan to resolve a crisis within a reasonable timeframe.”

*Man of Color,
Charleston*



“You say okay, well what’s going on, what needs to be addressed first, what needs to be addressed next, and who needs to be contacted.”

*Under 40 Woman,
Charleston*



“Call the people and give them hope and outline a plan and action.”

*Under 40
Man, Phoenix*



“Being able to communicate with everyone, analyzing the ENTIRE situation and the impacts the crisis could have, and being able to form a productive plan that will help everyone affected.”

*Woman of
Color, Canton*



“Admit that there’s a problem, engage the experts, formulate a plan, execute, and communicate.”

*40 and Over
White Woman,
Phoenix*



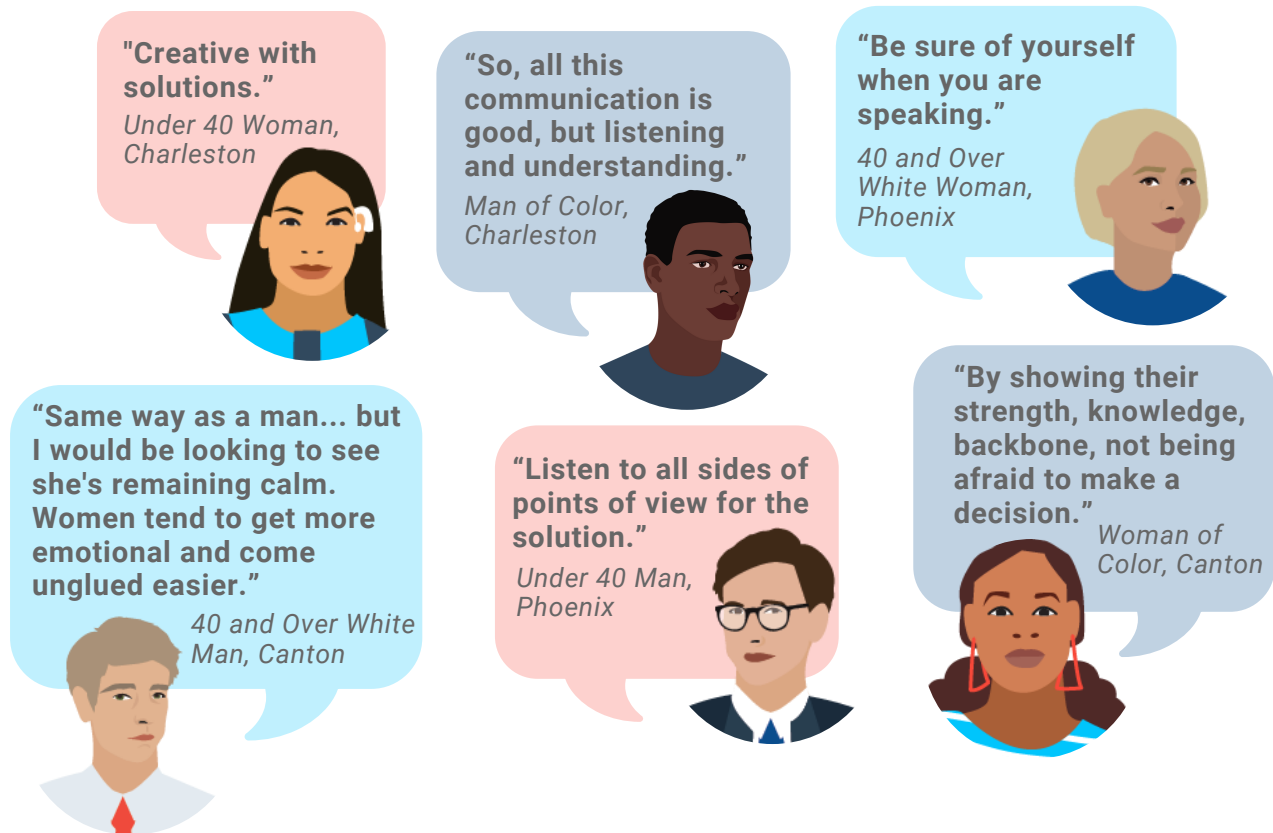
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When considering who would be better at handling a crisis, over two-thirds of voters surveyed volunteer there would be no difference between a woman and a man. The remaining voters split between thinking a woman or man would be better.

LEADING UNDER MICROSCOPE | 33

WHAT TRAITS DO VOTERS THINK WOMAN LEADERS NEED TO HANDLE A CRISIS?

When considering traits, voters react to both what they think a woman will do and what they want in a leader. Across all focus groups, voters were consistent: in a crisis, they want a problem solver who is creative, realistic, strong, and decisive - someone who listens to others and projects calmness and confidence.



Voters surveyed identified "being a good communicator" as the most important trait. For voters, communicating isn't just about conveying information; it's also about listening to and learning from experts, stakeholders, and those impacted. There are two sides of gathering information — from the people impacted and from the experts — and people think that women will be better at both.



HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO YOU THAT A WOMAN GOVERNOR HAS THIS TRAIT BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER A CRISIS?

% VERY IMPORTANT	ALL	GENDER		MILLENNIALS		RACE				PARTY ID		
		M	W	M	W	W	AA	L	AAPI	D	I	R
Good communicator	88	84	91	86	86	88	91	93	91	92	83	86
Listens to experts	83	81	85	87	79	84	80	85	89	89	79	81
Decisive	82	83	82	77	77	81	88	89	83	80	85	86
Confident	80	77	83	79	74	79	89	85	82	80	81	83
Calm	78	73	81	70	74	77	85	84	84	75	73	85
Brings people together	74	70	77	67	71	71	82	81	85	81	73	70
Transparent	73	76	71	74	66	72	77	85	78	79	63	72
Strong	73	71	76	66	67	70	78	85	76	76	69	73
Empathetic	63	57	69	60	66	66	76	79	79	73	70	53

Notably, empathy is the least important trait for a woman to exhibit, perhaps because of a built-in gender assumption that women are naturally empathetic, and is more important for a man to exhibit.

It is more important for a woman than a man to portray confidence. Confidence is essential to being seen as a leader but can be a difficult trait for women to project while still being seen as likeable, which past Barbara Lee Family Foundation [research](#) shows is a nonnegotiable for women candidates. Strength and decisiveness are also important, with decisiveness especially resonating with African Americans, Latinx voters, Independents, and Republicans. For more in-depth data on traits, please see Appendix C.

WHAT ACTIONS ARE IMPORTANT TO VOTERS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER A CRISIS?

When communicating around a crisis, accountability is an important value to convey. In focus groups, voters were very attuned to messages where the woman governor is taking ownership of a crisis, while at the same time voters placed a high value on teamwork and listening to expert advice.

"She is on the ground and she went back a couple of times to make sure they were doing it."

Man of Color, Charleston

"I like the all hands on deck approach."

Woman of Color, Canton

"I like how she explains that it is a crisis and how she will seize the opportunity to initiate that full-scale mobilization. It is that she knows this is a crisis and will do something about it."

Under 40 Man, Phoenix

"She has a team and so she has experts in this matter."

Under 40 Woman, Charleston



Based on testing several messages, voters want leaders who:

- Indicate they are communicating with stakeholders, listening to those impacted as well as the experts.
- Prove they have a 360-degree view of the crisis by giving specific examples of the resources being provided.
- Show empathy, sorrow, and an understanding of the impact of the crisis.

TOP MESSAGES

Keeping up her trend of calm, confident daily briefings as her state has been facing a crisis, Governor Rebecca Page said, "I'm taking action today to ensure a culture of openness and trust. My administration and I have been working closely with mayors and cities to focus on issues affecting residents, and address challenges." In an effort to listen to people and keep them informed, Governor Rebecca Page has been going directly to impacted communities. She has created a widely shared crisis action plan with citizen and expert input.

With her state in day 3 of an ongoing crisis, Governor Lisa Anderson said, "The situation continues to change, and under my leadership our state's response to this crisis is evolving. I want people to know that our state government is doing everything possible to confront and contain this crisis. We know this is a stressful time for you and your family. We are getting things done, getting the information out, deploying immediate resources to the people who need them, and thinking ahead to plan out access to essentials like safety, food, shelter, and infrastructure."

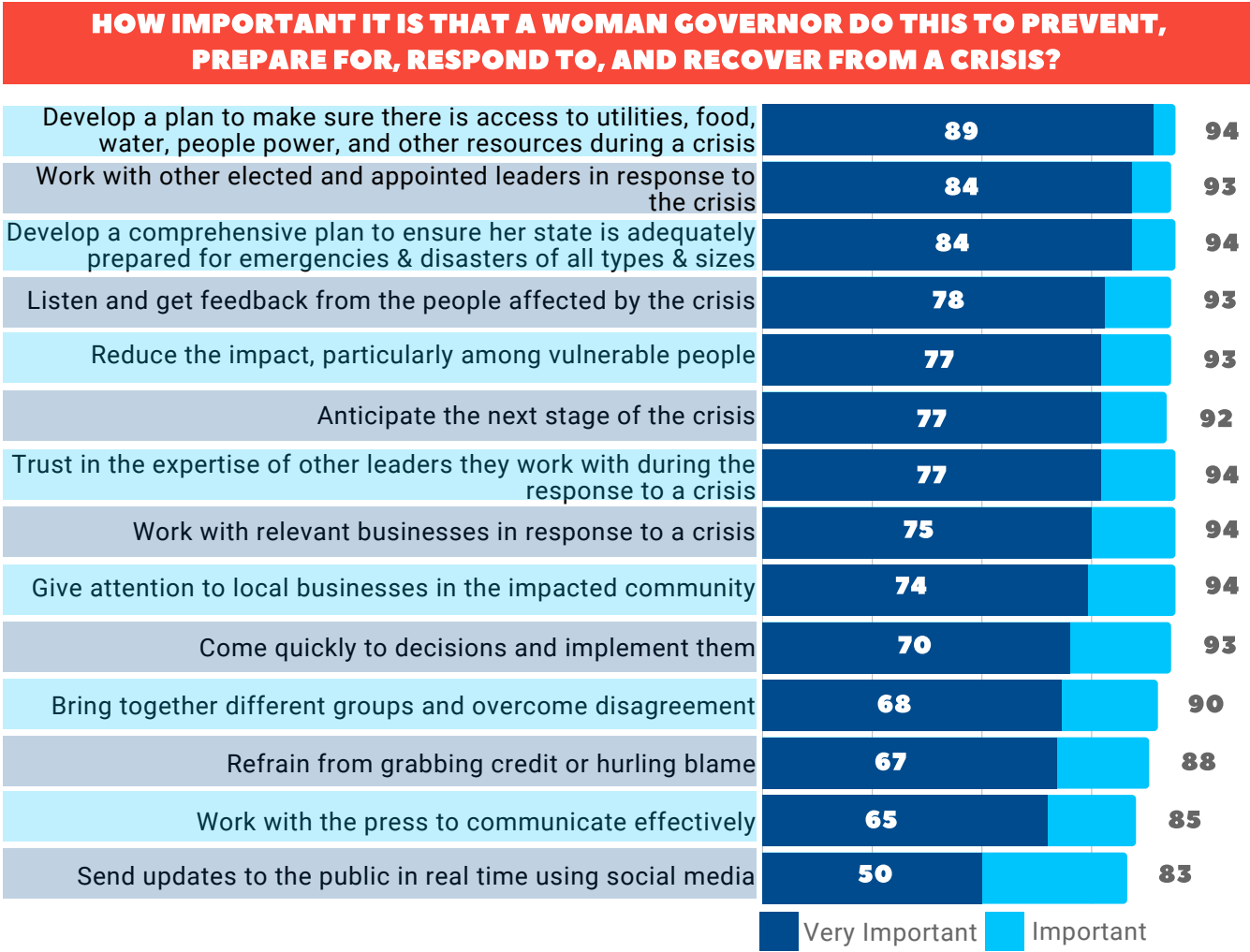
After a crisis struck her state, Governor Tina Wolf said to reporters, "First, I want to thank the first responders and volunteers involved in the recovery effort. Words can't express the sadness I feel today. My heart breaks for our neighbors who are impacted, their families and the community." Pausing to compose herself after choking up momentarily, Governor Tina Wolf continued, "Since the state has been facing this crisis, it has been my priority to immediately get services out to the impacted areas and dispense aid and advice."

For complete data and the full text of all messages tested, please see Appendix D.

Voters want women leaders who are prepared and who work with others to get things done. During a crisis, voters are most concerned about having immediate needs met, and want to make sure there is a coordinated effort. At the same time, they want to make sure there is a plan in place for future crises. Of all the actions a woman governor may take before, during, and after a crisis, the three most important to voters are:

- Develop a plan to make sure there is access to utilities, food, water, people power, and other resources during a crisis (89% very important).
- Work with other elected and appointed leaders in the response to a crisis (84% very important).
- Develop a comprehensive plan in order to ensure her state is adequately prepared for emergencies and disasters of all types and sizes (84% very important).

Across subgroups, voters rate the same top actions as most important. For voters of color, having a woman leader listen to and get feedback from those affected by the crisis is also a top tier concern.



The next most important actions a woman governor can take include a range of activities that center on the needs of impacted people and businesses, mobilizing and coordinating with other leaders and businesses to address the crisis, and envisioning the subsequent phases of the crisis.

- Listen and get feedback from the people affected by the crisis (78% very important).
- Reduce the impact, particularly among vulnerable people (77% very important).
- Anticipate the next stage of the crisis (77% very important).
- Trust in the expertise of other leaders they work with during the response to a crisis (77% very important).
- Work with relevant businesses in response to a crisis (75% very important).
- Give attention to local businesses in the impacted community (74% very important).

For more in-depth data, please see Appendix E.

KEY TIPS FOR WOMEN CANDIDATES

01

Confidence is key. Confidence signals both qualifications and likeability, and is essential when it comes to showing you can handle a crisis. Voters have no patience for perceived on-the-job learning – the expectation is to show being prepared for leadership from day one. In past Barbara Lee Family Foundation [research](#), voters assessed a woman officeholder’s confidence in less than 30 seconds.

02

Showcase your ability to build – and execute – a plan that prepares for the future, taking a 360-degree view. Voters want to know you have the experience to not only develop a plan to ensure their communities have what they need during and after a time of crisis, but to prepare for different types of future crises. They want someone who is thinking about what needs to happen before, during, and after a crisis, and appreciate visual cues – such as maps and data visualizations – that demonstrate preparedness, knowledge of the facts, and action as a crisis evolves.

03

Highlight your track record as a problem-solver. For voters, problem solving is about mobilizing stakeholders, working on multiple fronts, listening to experts to find solutions, and showing that you can change the plan if need be. Voters want leaders who are nimble, flexible, and responsive during a crisis. Every crisis brings its own set of challenges, and it’s important to demonstrate that you know how to manage them – and how to be calm, confident, strong, and decisive while doing so.

04

Be a team captain. While voters expect you to be a leader, they also overwhelmingly want you to be part of a team. Show you can delegate, take the advice of issue experts seriously, and work with other elected officials.

05

Focus on community. Voters respond to leaders who take an authentic, proactive, and “in the trenches” approach when their community is experiencing a crisis; they are critical of any actions that seem staged or insincere.

06

Emphasize your communication and listening skills. Voters want to be able to count on you for timely, accurate, transparent information, while at the same time know you’re listening to stakeholders, including experts, other leaders, businesses, and people who are impacted.

07

Know that empathy is needed, but is not enough on its own. Traditionally, women have been penalized for showing emotion – that’s not the case here. It’s important to acknowledge the pain and sorrow that accompany crises, but what voters really want is for you to have a plan to address the fallout and move forward.

US holds thousands of Haitian migrants under bridge in South Texas after mass border crossing

By Arelis Hernández and Nick Miroff The Washington Post Sep 16, 2021



Migrants cross the Acandí River on their journey north, near Acandí, Colombia, on Wednesday. The migrants, mostly Haitians, are on their way to crossing the Darien Gap from Colombia into Panama, dreaming of reaching the U.S. More than 29,000 Haitians have arrived at the U.S. border over the past 11 months.

Migrants cross between the United States and Mexico at the Rio Grande in Ciudad Acuña, Mexico, on Thursday. They're part of an influx of migrants who have been heading to the U.S., mostly from Haiti, since early 2021.

Fernando Vergara/AP, Sergio Flores/For The Washington Post

DEL RIO — Thousands of Haitian migrants who have crossed the Rio Grande since Tuesday are sleeping outdoors under a border bridge in South Texas, creating a humanitarian emergency and a logistical challenge U.S. agents describe as unprecedented.

Authorities in Del Rio say more than 8,000 migrants have arrived at the impromptu camp, and they are expecting more in the coming days. The sudden influx has presented the Biden administration with a new border emergency at a time when illegal crossings have reached a 20-year high and Department of Homeland Security officials are straining to accommodate and resettle more than 60,000 Afghan evacuees.

The migrants arriving to Del Rio appear to be part of a larger wave of Haitians heading northward, many of whom arrived in Brazil and other South American nations after the 2010 earthquake. They are on the move again, embarking on a grueling, dangerous journey to the United States with smuggling organizations managing the trip, according to border authorities and refugee groups.

More than 29,000 Haitians have arrived over the past 11 months, the latest Customs and Border Protection figures show, including some in mixed-nationality families with children born in Brazil, Chile or other South American nations.

They have trekked through the jungles of Panama's Darien Gap, navigated migrant camps and criminal gangs in Central America, and dodged border guards and troops along the highways of southern Mexico. Many say the economic toll of the pandemic pushed them to leave, while others say a more welcoming U.S. administration has offered them a fleeting opportunity to reach the United States.

"I see brave people who instead of being trapped by conformity chose to find a better life," said Wendy Guillaumetre, 31, who spent four years in Chile before setting out with his wife and 3-year-old daughter for the United States. "They are courageous," he said. "Conditions are too hard in Haiti."

The Biden administration has curtailed deportation flights to Haiti after the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July and a 7.2-magnitude earthquake Aug. 14 that killed more than 2,000. And DHS has extended temporary protected status, or TPS, eligibility for Haitians, a measure that allows Haitians living in the United States without legal status to qualify for provisional residency and avoid deportation.

How many more may arrive in the next few days is unclear. CBP is scrambling to send additional agents to Del Rio to help process the migrants, issuing them numbers as they queue up to be formally apprehended, the first step in applying for asylum or another form of U.S. protection. Most of the migrants are likely to be released into the United States with a notice to appear in court at a future date.

"The Border Patrol is increasing its manpower in the Del Rio Sector and coordinating efforts within DHS and other relevant federal, state and local partners to immediately address the current level of migrant encounters and to facilitate a safe, humane and orderly process," CBP said in a statement. "To prevent injuries from heat-related illness, the shaded area underneath Del Rio International Bridge is serving as a temporary staging site while migrants wait to be taken into USBP custody."

Along the banks of the Rio Grande on Thursday, hundreds of migrants waded through knee-high water along a concrete spillway, moving back and forth between the camp and shops on the Mexican side. They carried ice, plates of food and other supplies; one man forded the river with a rolled-up mattress on his shoulders.

Others bathed in the river, cleaned clothes and cooled off from the muggy heat. Mexican vendors wandered through the crowd selling snacks, water and ice cream. Several migrants said there was nothing to eat on the U.S. side. A few in the camp had strung up clotheslines and fashioned shelters out of sticks and carrizo cane.

Ramses Colon, a 41-year-old Afro-Cuban asylum-seeker among the mostly Haitian crowd who worked in Peru to save money for the trip, said the Del Rio camp was "chaos."

“You stand there among thousands with your little ticket waiting for your turn,” he said.

Colon and his partner, Estephany Cabrera, 30, joined the crowds of Haitians in Colombia, crossing the Darien jungle and using the group’s numbers to protect themselves. “I joined them because I look like them,” Colon said. He was walking back into Mexico to pick up cash wired by his family in the United States. “Without money, you are nothing here,” he said.

CBP said it is providing drinking water, towels and other provisions to the site, but one agent in the Del Rio Sector said sanitary conditions are poor. There are 20 portable toilets at the site, according to Jon Anfinssen, the top Border Patrol union official in the Del Rio Sector.

“We’re scrambling to bring every resource we can, but it’s a logistical nightmare,” he said. “We’re pulling agents from across the country to help, but they’re not going to be there today, and we’re just trying to keep heads above water.”

Families with small children are given priority, Anfinssen said, in order to move them out of the bridge area as soon as possible.

“Many agents are mothers and fathers, and seeing kids in this situation is sad for everyone,” he said. “Morale is terrible.”

Biden administration officials say they will continue to use emergency authorities under Title 42 of the U.S. public health code to rapidly return or “expel” migrants. But Mexican authorities have declined to take back Haitians in recent months.

The administration is also contending with new court orders related to its border policies. On Thursday, U.S. District Judge Emmet Sullivan in the District of Columbia blocked the Biden administration from using Title 42 to expel migrant families, though he stayed the order for 14 days. The percentage of families returned under Title 42 has been declining in recent months; in August authorities used it on just 19% of the more than 86,000 family members taken into custody.

The Supreme Court also said last month that the Biden administration must restart a Trump administration program that requires asylum-seekers to wait in Mexico while their claims are adjudicated in U.S. courts.

The Del Rio border sector has been among the busiest for illegal crossings in recent months as thousands of Haitians, Cubans, Venezuelans and Hondurans climb down from the limestone bluffs on the Mexican side to wade across the Rio Grande.

Del Rio Mayor Bruno “Ralphy” Lozano, D, said the size of the group has increased steadily to more 8,200 people. “I thought the worst-case scenario was having a couple people, maybe 150 people roaming the streets,” said Lozano, who warned the Biden administration in a February video that his community needed more federal support to cope with a surge in crossings.

“Although I foreshadowed a worst-case scenario, this is probably a worse case of worst-case scenarios,” he said. “I need the administration to recognize that there is a border crisis happening in real time right now and it has dire consequences on security, health and safety.”

In recent months, the city has been a testing ground for Gov. Greg Abbott’s most aggressive border security plans, including charging migrants with state crimes such as trespassing.

Val Verde County, which includes Del Rio, went for President Donald Trump in 2020, voting for a Republican at the top of the ticket for the first time in decades.

Lozano said while he initially welcomed the Republican governor’s effort, the local judicial system is now overwhelmed.

Haitian, Venezuelan and Cuban migrants often say they prefer to cross in the Del Rio area because of its reputation as comparatively safer than the Rio Grande Valley downriver.

Many of the migrants arrived to the border on buses that appear to be part of a large smuggling operation, Lozano said. “It just sounds like there’s an off-grid bus system that’s not registered with the Mexican government that are driving these individuals north,” he said.

Some Del Rio residents, particularly those living along the river and on ranches, have raised alarms in recent months about the large groups of migrants appearing on their properties.

The mayor said his city and the migrants are both victims, suffering the consequences of federal policy decisions that fail to address the realities on the ground in border communities.

“You have a favela that has been established overnight with individuals who are destitute,” Lozano said. “Border Patrol is doing their best to process these people, but the Del Rio Sector is 240 miles wide. If the attention is given here to these 8,000 people, that opens up a big question: Who’s watching the rest of the sector?”

Miroff reported from Washington. Maria Sacchetti in Washington contributed to this report.

AMERICA

Flint Mayor: 'Politics And Profit' Perpetuated Lead-Tainted-Water Crisis

January 21, 2016 · 5:33 PM ET

MERRIT KENNEDY



Karen Weaver was elected mayor of Flint, Mich., after promising to address the city's water-contamination issues.

Ariel Zambelich/NPR

High lead levels in Flint, Mich.'s water has led President Obama to declare a state of emergency, as criticism mounts that the problem has not been handled promptly.

"The people weren't put first, the health of the people was not put before profit and money," Flint Mayor Karen Weaver says in an interview with Ari Shapiro on All Things Considered.

The problem started when Flint switched its water source to the Flint River in April 2014. The new supply was harder water, which corroded the city's pipes and leached lead into the tap water.

Residents quickly started complaining about the water. General Motors stopped using it in October 2014 because it was corroding machinery.

Even though the city switched back to its original supply in October 2015, the damaged pipes continue to contaminate the water. Weaver says Flint residents don't know when the city's water will be safe to drink again — even though they're still paying for it.

The lead levels and complaints about how the problem is being handled have led to the resignation Thursday of Susan Hedman, the regional director of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Also Thursday, the head of the EPA issued an emergency order directing state and city officials to take actions to protect public health.

President Obama's declaration of a state of emergency last week freed up \$5 million in federal aid for the city.

Weaver was not in office when this started. She was elected in November after vowing to address the city's water problems, and as Michigan Radio's Lindsey Smith reports, "one of the first things she did was to declare an emergency in the city."

Flint residents have consistently voiced frustration over the time it has taken for officials to acknowledge this crisis and respond to it. Flint is a majority-black city, and 40 percent of people live below the poverty line. Weaver tells Ari that she thinks race and poverty "had a lot to do with the response."

On meeting President Obama

Weaver met the president and some of his senior advisers earlier this week to discuss Flint's crisis.

"[H]e has pledged to do everything that he can at the federal level and has, in fact, sent people to Flint to get started on this, past the FEMA [assistance] that has already been in place. One of the things he stressed is that he was going to be meeting with the governor the very next day, because the state has such a big role to play in this and we know the state has money. They have a rainy-day fund, a surplus between \$500 and \$600 million, and Flint needs to be the priority for receiving those funds."

On 274 pages of emails about Flint released by Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder

Snyder made the emails public on Wednesday following widespread criticism. He said he was releasing them "so that you have answers to your questions about what we've done and what we're doing to make this right for the families of Flint."

Here's what Weaver had to say:

"I haven't seen what's in those emails but I will tell you this — it's something that he needed to do because one of the issues we've been dealing with is broken trust. And we've been kept in the dark regarding some information regarding our water. We've been given misinformation about the water, and the only way the governor can — if he can — rebuild trust, is to start doing that. So it's a start for him, I suppose."

On calls for Snyder to resign

"You know what, I'm glad those high-profile figures are out there, and they're putting the pressure on the governor and holding him accountable for some things. What I've said is, we have an investigation going on and I can't wait to hear the results of that investigation because everybody that should be held accountable needs to be held accountable. We want to know who knew what and when they knew it. And that's from the governor, all the way down to if it includes local officials. We want everyone to be held accountable and if it means they have to be removed, so be it."

On long-term solutions

Weaver says the city is receiving badly needed bottled water and filters — but these are only temporary answers for the larger problem.

"The other thing we need to do is start looking at infrastructure. Because even though we've switched back to Lake Huron water through Detroit, those lead service lines are the issue. And how long are we supposed to wait for biofilm to build back up? Nobody can tell us how long that can take. And we need to be able to drink our water."

On her hopes for Flint's future

"You know, it's a terrible thing, no community should ever have to go through what Flint has gone through, but I'm also looking at the possibility of what can come out of this. And I've always believed in Flint, I'm excited about the potential, and you know, we've got to get this fixed. But there is a lot to look forward to in the city of Flint. And you're going to have me back, because I'm going to be telling the second part of this story."

Correction

Jan. 21, 2016

A previous version of this story quoted the mayor as saying the rainy-day fund contained between \$5 and \$6 million. She actually said it is between \$500 and \$600 million.

The killing of Daunte Wright

Police shooting puts Brooklyn Center mayor in the spotlight

Riham Feshir April 20, 2021 4:00 AM



Mayor Mike Elliott speaks during a press conference about the death of 20-year-old Daunte Wright last week in Brooklyn Center, Minn.

Stephen Maturen | Getty Images file

Updated: 10:53 a.m.

Mike Elliott was in the middle of it all, as he usually is these days. It was April 12, the night after a police officer in his city [killed a 20-year-old unarmed Black man](#) during a traffic stop, and Elliott — the 37-year-old mayor of Brooklyn Center, Minn., — stood among protesters outside the Police Department. Wearing a suit and helmet as he spoke to the crowd, Elliott sympathized with demonstrators and assured them he'd work hard to avoid another tragedy.

"The reason I'm here tonight with y'all is to tell y'all that we are going to get to the bottom of this," he said. "We are going to make sure that there is justice, that this officer is held accountable."

Elected mayor of the first-ring suburb of Brooklyn Center in 2018, Elliott now finds himself [thrust into the national debate on police brutality and racism](#) after the shooting of Daunte Wright.



Demonstrators block an intersection during a protest outside the Police Department last week in Brooklyn Center. They were protesting the fatal police shooting of Daunte Wright during a traffic stop.

John Minchillo | AP file

Before the shooting, Elliott had the public presence you'd expect from a part-time mayor of a small suburb. Then suddenly, he was everywhere, taking steps that weren't universally popular, but ones that he says will move his city toward the justice and accountability he promised the crowd at the police station.

He condemned the shooting immediately and recommended that the city manager and police chief be fired. He then continued to criticize heavy policing of protests in the days following the killing.

His actions were celebrated by some and lambasted by others, and he's become the face of his city's reckoning.

Elliott is the first Black mayor of Brooklyn Center, [the most diverse city in Minnesota](#). He's a Liberian immigrant who came to the United States when he was 11. When he was elected, Elliott said he wanted to be a mayor to work on issues his community cares about.

[In an interview with MPR News host Angela Davis at the time](#), Elliott talked about his plans for the city. His focus was hyperlocal — from water quality to economic development.

“We gotta bring in some nice sit-down restaurants for our residents,” he said. “We also have to make sure that we're improving and updating and diversifying our housing stock.”

But after Wright's killing, Elliott was pulled into the center of a national story. He publicly called for the firing of the police officer who pulled the trigger. His critics said the officer, Kim Potter, deserved due process.

Through a spokesperson for the city, Elliott declined an interview request for this story.

Some who know Elliott say he's a leader who's listening to the concerns of his constituents at a time when many in the community don't want to hear platitudes about waiting out an investigation into the police shooting.

“From a community standpoint, wanting justice for your loved ones, for your community member, the leadership that supported or influenced those activities, it's favorable,” said Denise Butler, an organizer with African Career, Education and Resources, Inc. who works with communities in Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park.

Though she's generally supported Elliott's response to the shooting, Butler found the firing of City Manager Curt Boganey confounding. She said it wasn't a transparent process, and Boganey's removal could hurt progress moving forward.

“Curt was in a strong position of leadership as a city manager,” she said, “according to how their city charter was up until that decision was passed by council to give the mayor control over the police.”

The five-member City Council on which Elliott has one vote decided to remove Boganey. To get rid of the police chief, they had to fire the city manager.

At a City Council meeting, council member Marquita Butler said police Chief Tim Gannon had not been receptive to community concerns in the past.

“The chief, in my opinion, has not conducted himself in a way that as a leader I approve of,” she said. “Throughout the whole time, he has been defensive, and he, in my opinion, has been anti-community.”



Brooklyn Center police Chief Tim Gannon looks on as the video of the killing of Daunte Wright is played during a press conference at the Brooklyn Center police headquarters on April 12. Stephen Maturen | Getty Images file

Brooklyn Center is a Minnesota city of about 30,000 people, and city officials work part time. And yet Elliott is on the hot seat.

“Unfortunately, that's the job of a mayor in America, isn't it? said Alex Hindin, an old college friend of Elliott's from their days at Hamline University. “[You have] to deal with it when your police shoots someone.

“I'm sorry that a friend of mine — and that somebody who wants to do the right thing and somebody who is doing the right thing — is in such a terrible position to be responsible for this mess.”

Correction (April 20, 2021): A previous version of this story misspelled the name of council member Marquita Butler. It has been updated.

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