

**Kelli Narde  
Director of  
Communications  
City of Littleton**

**Chair  
Public Information Officers Section  
Colorado Municipal League (CML)**


**Certified Public Communicator  
Bob Schieffer College of Journalism  
Texas Christian University**

**All Hazards Public Information Officer  
Department of Homeland Security, FEMA**



REPORT  
POLITICS

GROW IN SOUTH CAROLINA  
Gov. warns of further flooding



00:00 / 00:21




# How it became normal for public officials to attack journalists

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

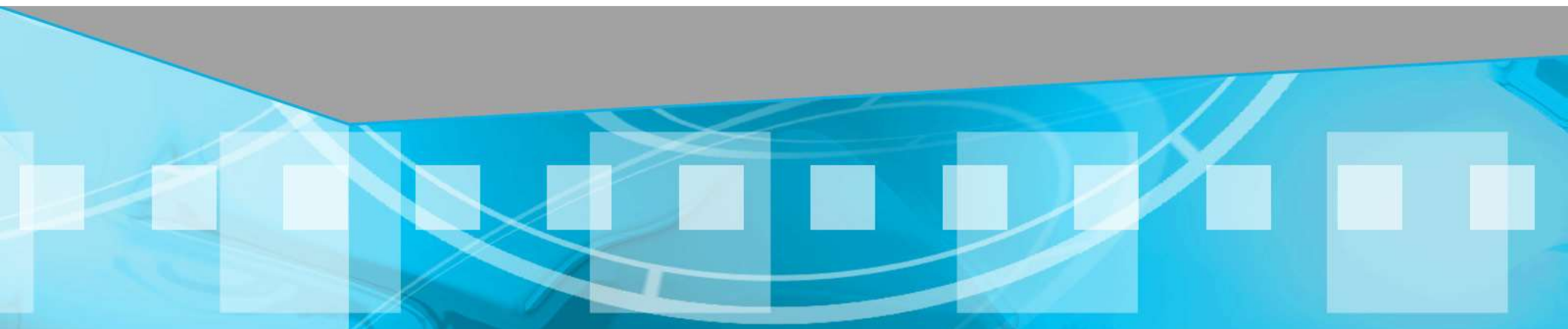
## Police arrest Vegas-area elected official in reporter death

By KEN RITTER September 7, 2022



### STATE WATCH

## Alaska state senator slaps reporter over story





*While we all make mistakes...*

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

# Five Takeaways From Today



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

# **Littleton Media Relations Policy**


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

# Littleton Media Relations Policy

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

# **When to be cautious...**

## *Refer to the Director of Communications:*

- *Matters in litigation*
  - *Personnel investigations/Disciplinary actions/Terminations*
  - *Council policy decisions, speak for yourself only*
  - *Crisis events*
  - *Anything you're not sure about*
- 



# Council Notification

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

# Responding to Media

- *Reporters are aggressive when covering breaking news; competition is fierce.*
- *Say only what you know for sure, circumstances can change quickly as an incident evolves.*
- *Don't be defensive.*



# Responding to Media

- *Find out what questions reporters have and get back to them, even if you still don't have the answer. Email is a great option.*
- *It's okay to say, "I don't know."*



# Responding to Media

- *Don't play the blame game.*
- *Set a time limit on in-person, Zoom, or phone interviews.*
- *Don't pass judgment.*
- *Don't violate privacy laws.*



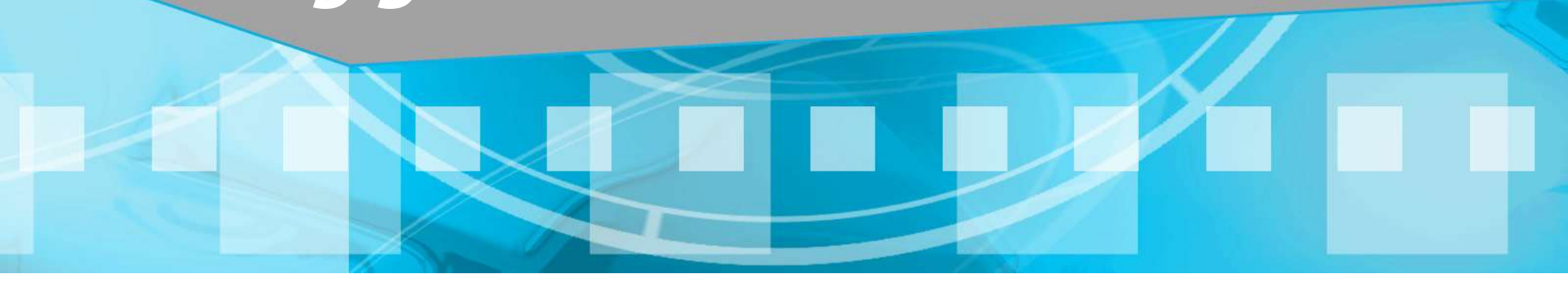
# Responding to Media

- *As a city employee or elected official, your position as a "public official" will be highly sought. Assume that nothing you say is "off the record."*
- *Have a trusted colleague present.*



# Responding to Media

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



# Responding to Crisis

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



# Responding to Crisis

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

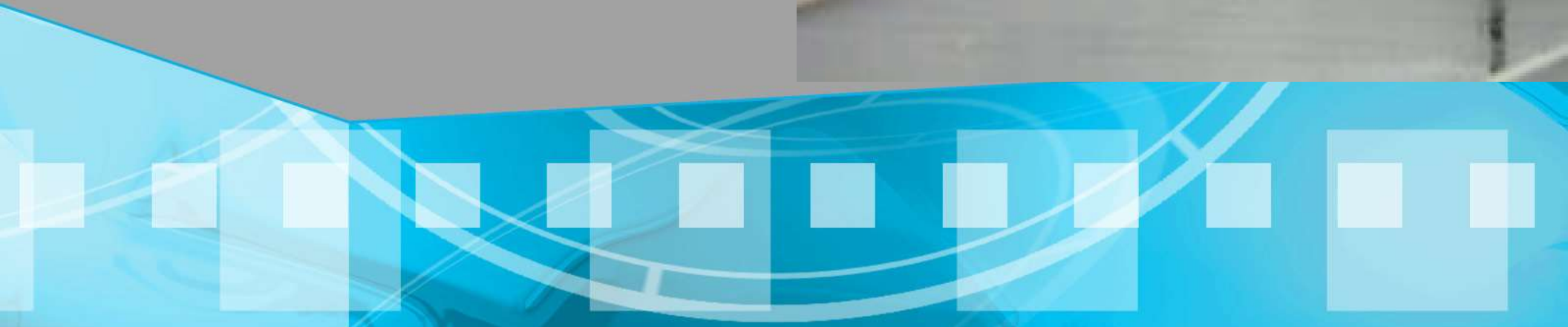
- *The number rises to 60% when attorneys are visibly involved.*





# Responding to Crisis

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



# Keep Coming Home to Key Messages

- *Prepare three key messages and keep coming back to them.*
- *Limit your response to 30 seconds or less. Anything more will get left on the floor. Be succinct.*

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

# **If you are 'ambushed...'**

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

# Public Meetings

- *Almost all city council meetings and study sessions are recorded, live streamed on FB, the website, and cablecast on Xfinity Channel 8.*
- *Also, PC, Licensing, BBoFA, BOA, HPB*
- *The mics are VERY sensitive to sneezes, coughs, mutters, and whispers.*
- *Whether you are speaking or not, assume the cameras are on you. You will be quoted!*

# Social Media Metrics

- Know your audience!
- Facebook: Versatile, trends older, big engagement driver
- Instagram: Shifting toward video content, good for showing relief efforts
- Twitter/X: Originally a cornerstone of communications, but there are trust issues
- Nextdoor: Good for talking to community, but can be a rumor mill
- Littleton's follower counts:
  - Twitter: 11,400
  - Facebook: 10,000 (main account)
  - Instagram: 3,933
  - Nextdoor: visible to 23,850

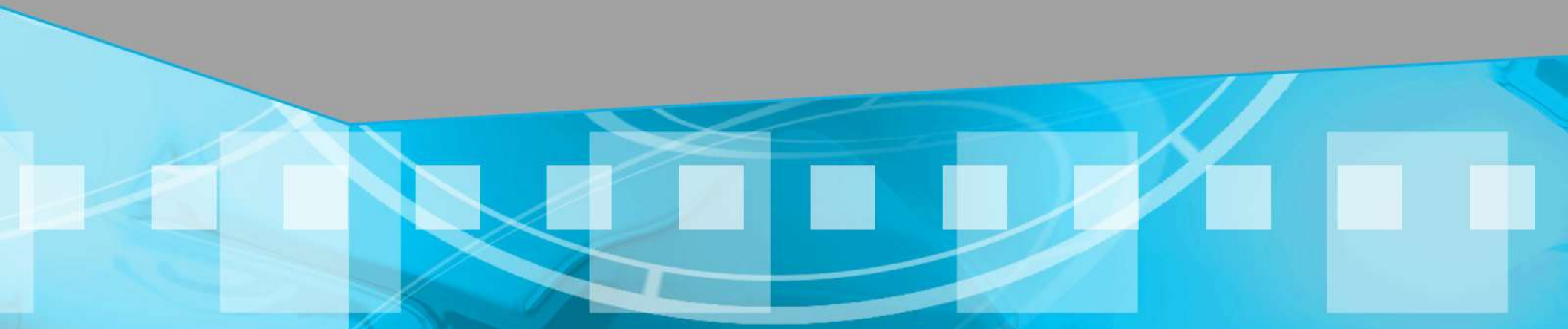
# Social Media Do's and Don'ts

## DO:

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

## DON'T:

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



# Help is Here

*There is help out there:*

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



# Words of Wisdom

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

*(Newsweek)*

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

*(Cecil King)*





# Famous Last Words

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

*Geraldo Rivera*



**TODAY AT NOON**

**NEWS  
BE  
FUNNY**