

Thriving in Today's 24/7 Media World

ACWA Fall Conference
December 2025

What's Making News Now?

- Cyberattack - Oakland, Long Beach
- PRA requests - **texts**
- Homelessness and mental health issues
- First Amendment “auditors”
- Those with no easy response - Gaza, flag policy
- Politicizing of previously non-partisan local offices
- Public officials caught on camera/microphone

What's Making News Now?

■ TECHNOLOGY

Silicon Valley crosswalk buttons apparently hacked to imitate Musk, Zuckerberg voices



by Zoe Morgan

April 12, 2025 2:51 pm



Communicate Empathetically



Baltimore Bridge Collapse

Communicate Clearly



Austin Protest

Is This OK?



Madison School Shooting

Thoughts and Prayers?



Minneapolis School Shooting

What's Changed?

- More frequent crises of confidence
- Dramatically shorter attention spans
- Greater distrust of local government
- Media ownership consolidation
- Loss of local decision-making
- Member of the media vs. a journalist

What's Changed?

- Words you now can't use if you access Federal grants or emergency reimbursement...

accessible advocate barrier belong Black
climate crisis disability female hate speech
Indigenous community Latinx men
mental health most risk multicultural
Native American pregnant person socioeconomic
trauma tribal underrepresented underserved
victim vulnerable populations women

From This...



To This...



And Now This



How Do We Adapt?

- Always have your “issue radar” on
- Recognize perils of not being part of the story
- Take a team approach - legal, finance, HR
- Anticipate local media interest in national or regional stories
- Educate new reporters
- Deliver messages diligently

How Do We Adapt?

- Communicate strategically
 - Identify important audiences
 - Craft key messages
 - Develop an internal Q&A document
 - Create a holding statement
 - Train appropriate spokesperson

How Do We Adapt?



Miami Beach Spring Break

How Do We Adapt?



Miami Beach Spring Break

How Do We Adapt?



Miami Aliens

How Do We Adapt?



RivCo Brief

How Do We Adapt?

Recent Episodes



Elk Grove's Digital Defenders: How the City's IT Team is Fending Off Cyber Attackers

Elk Grove Citycast



1x

More Info

Share

Elk Grove Podcast

What's Ahead?

- Artificial intelligence - reporters and public
- More crises of confidence
- I want it all...now!
- Evolving communications platforms

Nextdoor, Substack, Reddit, Bluesky ↑

Facebook, Threads ↓

Twitter/X ?

Crafting Key Messages

Key Messages Overview

- What you want viewers/listeners/readers to think
- 50,000-foot view
- Not just a bunch of numbers
- Agency's point of view
- Express empathy if appropriate
- Keep it simple - 3 or 4 at the most
- **Not optional**

Key Message Platform

- **Key Message A**

Proof point 1

Proof point 2

Proof point 3

- **Key Message B**

Proof point 1

Proof point 2

Proof point 3

- **Key Message C**

Proof point 1

Proof point 2

Proof point 3

Message 1:

People should stay informed about prevention and control actions.

1. Public health officials will share information about prevention and control actions.
2. Information about prevention and control actions will be shared in a variety of ways including through the CDC hotline and www.pandemicflu.gov.
3. Informed public participation and cooperation will be needed for public health efforts.

Message 2:

People should use information about prevention and control actions to care for themselves and their loved ones.

1. Public health officials will provide information on the science and symptoms of the specific disease.
2. People should practice good health habits including eating a balanced diet and getting sufficient rest.
3. People should discuss individual health concerns with their health care provider, health department, or other trusted source.

Message 3:

People should take common sense actions to keep from spreading germs.

1. People should cover their coughs and sneezes and wash their hands frequently.
2. People should stay away from sick people as much as possible.
3. If you are sick, you should stay away from others as much as possible.

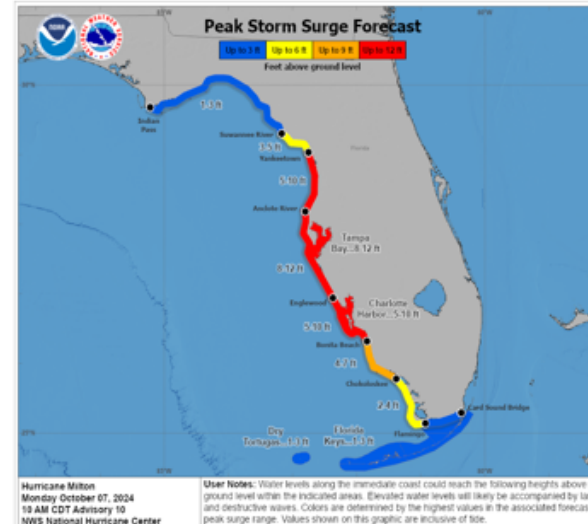
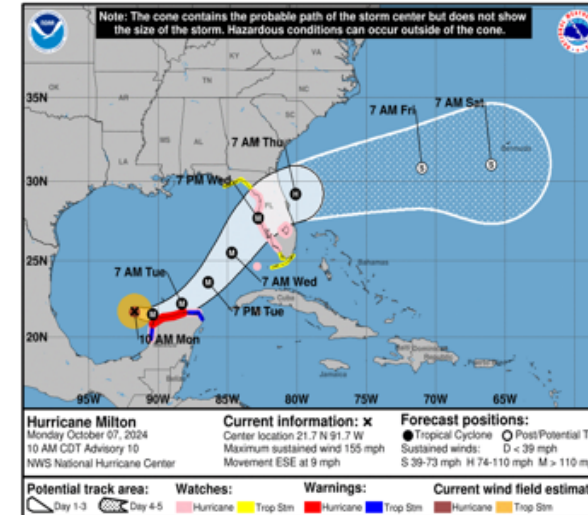


Key Messages for Hurricane Milton

Advisory 10: 10:00 AM CDT Mon Oct 07, 2024



1. Damaging hurricane-force winds are expected across portions of the northern coast of the Yucatan Peninsula. A life-threatening storm surge with damaging waves is also likely along portions of the northern coast of the Yucatan Peninsula.
2. There is an increasing risk of life-threatening storm surge and damaging winds for portions of the west coast of the Florida Peninsula beginning Tuesday night or early Wednesday. Storm Surge and Hurricane Watches are now in effect for portions of the west coast of the Florida Peninsula and residents in that area should follow any advice given by local officials and evacuate if told to do so.
3. Areas of heavy rainfall will impact portions of Florida today well ahead of Milton, with heavy rainfall more directly related to the system expected later on Tuesday through Wednesday night. This rainfall will bring the risk of considerable flash, urban, and areal flooding, along with the potential for moderate to major river flooding.



For more information go to hurricanes.gov

Concise Message Delivery



Concise Message Delivery

'F around and find out': Philadelphia DA issues stark warning for Election Day



Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner issued a warning to those in the battleground state who may plan to interfere with the 2024 presidential election.

00:34 - Source: CNN

Stay on Message, Avoid Traps



Palisades Fire

Stay on Message, Avoid Traps



Getty Fire

Delivering Your Key Messages in an Interview

Interview Tips

- Use your notes

Only a few words or phrases

- Pause before you answer
- If answer isn't ideal, ask reporter to repeat the question

Repeat again if necessary

Interview Tips

- Use repetition strategically

Repeat messages frequently

Start answer with agency name

- Small things matter

Expression, eye contact, speed/pacing,
volume, attire, jewelry, personal comfort

Interview Tips

- Natural hand gestures
- Comfortable stance
- Give contact info before interview
 - URL, phone number, Twitter handle
- Have final answer ready
 - Repeat most important message

Remote Interviews

- Lighting/audio/background

 - Dual lights

 - Lav microphone

 - No blurred or virtual backgrounds

- Situational awareness

 - Avoid pods in both ears, check your image

Remote Interviews

- Avoid distractions

Ceiling fans, ambient noise

- Maximize eye contact

Camera at eye level

Avoid using dual monitors

Interview window at top, notes below

Compromised Credibility



Hotel Room Interview

Transitions and Flags

- Transition to your message
 - “I agree with you, and it illustrates an important point...”
 - “What we do know is...”
 - “The real question here is...”
- Flag your messages by calling attention
 - “The most important thing is...”
 - “What you really need to know is...”
 - “There are three points to remember...”

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