

PIO 101



MARIBEL LOPEZ - WATAUGA
ROSE HOFFMAN - WILLOW PARK
JILL LIND - TROPHY CLUB

WHO AM I?



ABOUT ME & MY CITY

- MARIBEL LOPEZ
- **PIO FOR CITY, POLICE, AND FIRE**
- CITY OF WATAUGA (WUH·TAA·GUH NOT WAH-TOO-GA)
- **ONE-PERSON SHOP**
- IT/COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT
- POPULATION: ~23,000 RESIDENTS
- BUILT COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS WHILE ACTIVELY DOING THE WORK



WHO AM I?



ABOUT ME AND MY CITY

- CITY OF WILLOW PARK DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING
- PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER FOR THE WILLOW PARK POLICE DEPARTMENT
- WILLOW PARK HAS A POPULATION OF 6,500 AND RAPIDLY GROWING - AND HAD NO COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY OR STAFF PRIOR TO 2018
- I ALSO CONSULT AND SERVE AS A MENTOR WITHIN THE TAMIO AND PIO COMMUNITIES
- BEFORE GOVERNMENT SERVICE, I HAD A CAREER IN PRINT JOURNALISM



WHO AM I?



ABOUT ME & MY CITY

- TROPHY CLUB, TEXAS
- JILL LIND, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING
- COMMS
- "TEXAS TOWN OF PATRIOTISM"
- APPROX 14,000 RESIDENTS
- APPROX 115 TEAM MEMBERS
- TROPHY CLUB = *(APRIL 11, 2018, TO JUNE 3, 2026)*
 - *8 YEARS, 1 MONTH, 23 DAYS*
 - *97 TOTAL MONTHS*
 - *2,975 DAYS*
 - *71,400 HOURS*



STARTING FROM SCRATCH

THE REALITY

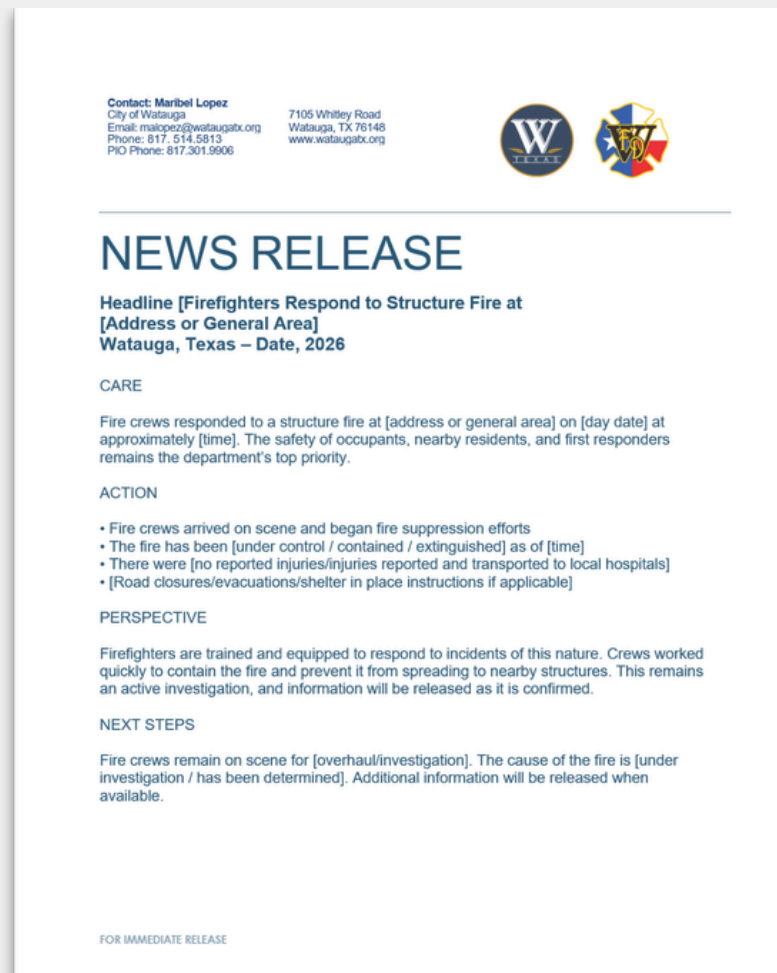
- REACTIVE COMMUNICATION
- LAST MINUTE REQUESTS
- NO CLEAR SYSTEMS
- LEARNING CITY OPERATIONS IN REAL TIME
- BUILDING TRUST AND BUY IN
- MOVING FROM REACTIVE → PROACTIVE

BUILDING COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS ACROSS DEPARTMENTS



1 PREWRITTEN TEMPLATES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA, WEBSITE, AND NEWS RELEASE

- Severe Weather
- Shelter in Place
- Boil Water Notices
- Road Closures
- Officer Involved Incidents
- Active Shooter Situations
- City Facility Closures
- Power Outages
- Event Cancellations



BEFORE THE CHAOS

PREPARATION REDUCES PANIC

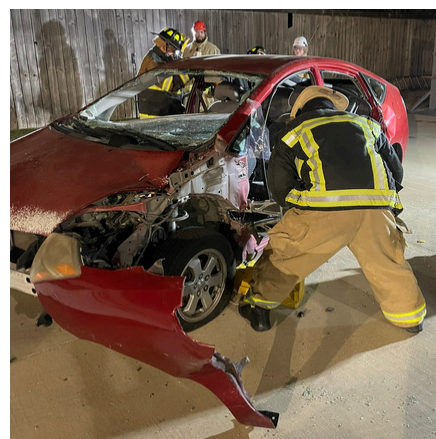
2 KEEP MEDIA CONTACT LIST UPDATE IT REGULARLY

MEDIA CONTACTS	
NAME	EMAIL
Alanna Quillen	alanna.quillen@nbcuni.com
Allie Spillyards	allie.spillyards@nbcuni.com
Amelia Jones	amelia.jones@fox.com
Amelia Mugavero	amelia.mugavero@cbs.com
anahi perez faz	anahi.perezfaz@nbcuni.com
andrea lucia	alucia@cbs.com
aptexas@ap.org	aptexas@ap.org
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juan rodriguez	juan.rodriguez@nbcuni.com

BUILD YOUR TOOLKIT

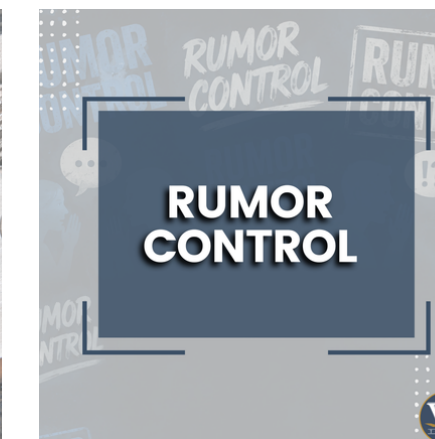
3 PHOTO/VIDEO LIBRARY

- Take photos constantly
- Organize folders by department/event/year
- Save logos, drone footage, city photos, emergency graphics



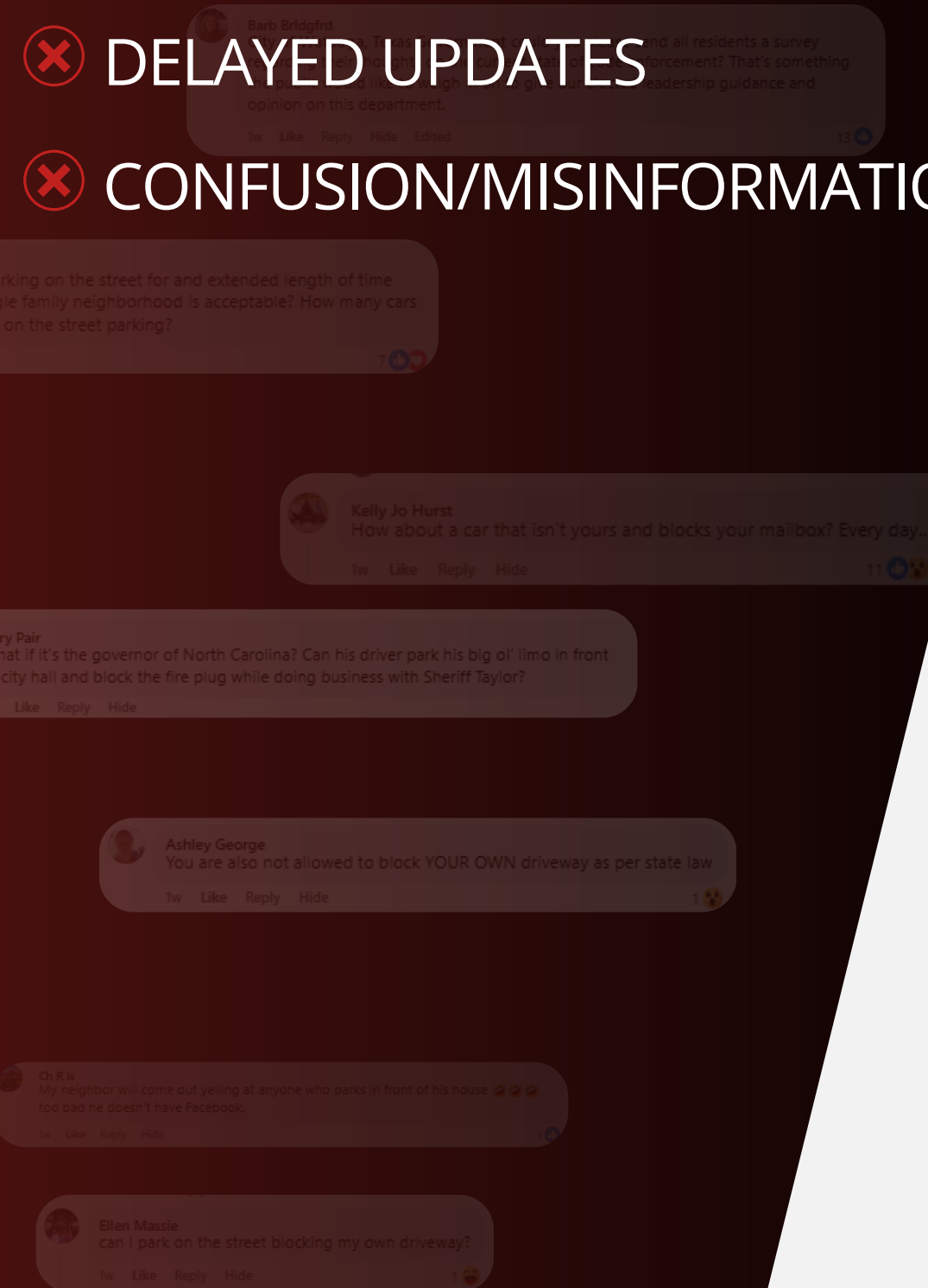
4 EMERGENCY GRAPHICS

- Weather Alerts
- Road Closures
- Emergency Notices
- Water Outages
- City Closing
- Rumor Control



REACTIVE

- ❌ SILENCE
- ❌ RUMORS
- ❌ DELAYED UPDATES
- ❌ CONFUSION/MISINFORMATION



TRANSPARENCY CHANGES PERCEPTION

PROACTIVE

- ✅ UPDATES
- ✅ TRANSPARENCY
- ✅ CONSISTENCY
- ✅ ACCESSIBILITY

Newsflash

Road Closure Notice – Starnes Road
Beginning April 30th, Starnes Road will be closed to all traffic for about two weeks (May 15th). Starnes Road will be closed just east of Echo Hill Drive to allow the Echo Hill Court Subdivision...
Posted on April 23, 2026

Have You Taken the Watauga Safety Survey Yet?
How do you move around Watauga? Driving, walking, biking, or something else?
The City of Watauga is working on a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan, and your input helps decide where safety improvements go, which streets get prioritized, and how funding is used...
Posted on April 15, 2026

Short-Term Rental Registration Required in Watauga
The City of Watauga requires all short-term rentals to be registered with the City. This includes...
Posted on December 19, 2025

Construction Notice: Whitley Rd. 5 – From Starnes Rd. to Bursey Rd. Start Date: Early October 2025
The City of Watauga is finalizing traffic control plans and coordinating with Keller ISD to begin the...
Posted on August 22, 2025

WORDS MATTER

WHAT CONCERNS WOULD YOU HAVE BEFORE POSTING THIS?



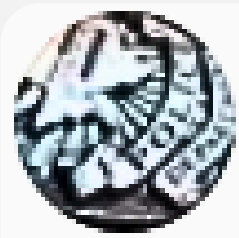
Watauga Police Department



Published by [redacted] · June 8, 2022 · 🌐

The Watauga Police Department has received multiple complaints from citizens regarding a recent sermon from Stedfast Baptist Church. First, the Watauga Police Department would like to affirm our commitment to making Watauga a Great Place to Live for all people. The Watauga Police Department values diversity and will continue to protect people's right to express their identities. Any message that promotes hatred toward any class or group of people is absolutely counter to the culture of the Watauga Police Department. The language used by the Pastor of the Stedfast Baptist Church is likely to be offensive to many people. However, at this time, the reported language of the sermon appears to be Constitutionally protected free speech. We will continue to monitor this evolving situation. **See less**





Watauga Police Department

Published by [redacted] · June 8, 2022 ·



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[See insights and ads](#)

[Boost post](#)



678



2.3K



433



MARIBEL LOPEZ
PIO 101



**THERE WILL COME A DAY WHEN
YOU HAVE TO STAND ON BUSINESS.**

HOW WILL YOU HANDLE IT?

TRAINING + POLICY = THE BEST DEFENSE AGAINST:

- PUBLIC CRITICISM (FOUNDED AND UNFOUNDED)
- DIFFICULT QUESTIONS FROM THE MEDIA
- REQUESTS THAT ARE NOT ALIGNED WITH YOUR
VALUES, VISION, AND MISSION
- YOUR OWN INNER VOICE TELLING YOU "YOU DON'T KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE DOING, MAYBE THE HATERS HAVE A POINT"

**NOT IF,
WHEN**

LEARN YOUR CRAFT, KNOW YOUR LINES





ALWAYS.

BE.

LEARNING.

CERTIFIED PUBLIC COMMUNICATOR
ICS/TEEX CLASSES
REGIONAL TRAININGS
TAMIO WEBINARS
LOCAL NETWORKING



HOW DO YOU EAT AN ELEPHANT? ONE BITE AT A TIME.

SOCIAL
MEDIA
POLICY

STYLE/
BRAND
GUIDE

CRISIS
COMMS
POLICY



MEDIA
RELATIONS
POLICY

- FINANCIAL POLICY
- AI USE/DISCLOSURE POLICY
- ???



INSTEAD OF SAYING...



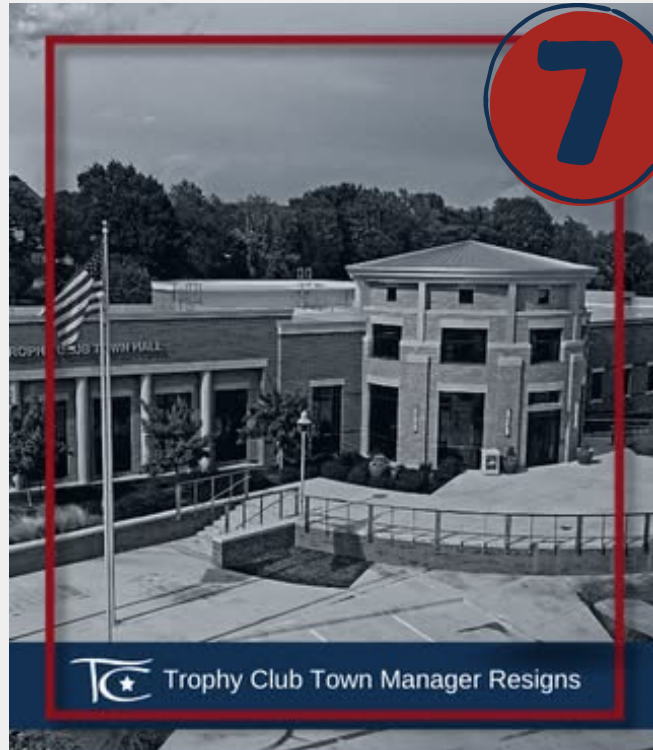
I KNOW MORE THAN YOU

- *THIS PARTICULAR IDEA DOESN'T FIT WITH MY DEPARTMENT'S STRATEGY, BUT I'D LOVE TO SUGGEST THIS ALTERNATIVE*
- *I REALLY APPRECIATE YOUR FEEDBACK, BUT OUR POLICY SAYS (INSERT POINT HERE), SO I'M GOING TO DECLINE THIS REQUEST*
- *I UNDERSTAND YOU FEEL STRONGLY IT SHOULD BE DONE YOUR WAY, BUT WE MAKE DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS ON THESE MATTERS. I'M HAPPY TO SHOW YOU THE NUMBERS.*
- *I KNOW YOU LOVE YOUR CUSTOM LOGO THAT YOU MADE IN CHATGPT, BUT OUR BRAND GUIDE IS WHAT WE ALL FOLLOW, EVEN ME.*

NORMALIZE SAYING NO...NICELY

MY LIVED CRISIS(ES)

IN MY 8 YEARS IN TROPHY CLUB.....



- 7 TOWN MANAGERS:
 - 1 FILED CHARGES WITH FBI
 - 1 FILED CHARGES AGAINST TOWN COUNCIL
 - 1 WAS "STOLEN" AWAY
- 3 FIRE CHIEFS
- 3 TOWN COUNCIL RESIGNATIONS
- 1 COUNCIL MEMBER INDICTMENT (NOT TOWN-RELATED)
- OTHER "CRISISES"
 - VOLUNTEER SEX SCANDAL, STAFF SEXUAL HARASSMENT, COUNCIL ELECTION COUP, PROMINENT COMMUNITY MEMBER SUICIDE





WHAT



CAN



HELP

TRUST IS BUILT BEFORE A CRISIS AND TESTED DURING ONE.

- HAVE A CRISIS PLAN (BEFORE YOU NEED ONE)
- SPEED MATTERS (BUT ACCURACY MATTERS MORE)
- NEVER SPECULATE (EVEN IF YOU KNOW MORE)
- ESTABLISH ONE SOURCE (BE THE SOURCE)
 - WEBSITE
 - SOCIAL
 - MEDIA STATEMENTS
 - LEADERSHIP MESSAGES
- BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS
- KEEP LEADERS INFORMED (EARLY AND OFTEN)
- SILENCE CREATES A VACUUM (IF YOU AREN'T COMMUNICATING, SOMEONE ELSE WILL)
- DRAFT HOLDING STATEMENTS (USE PLAIN LANGUAGE)
- SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS ARE NOT THE CRISIS (THE ACTUAL EMERGENCY IS)
- KEEP IT SHORT, FACTUAL, AND CONSISTENT
- ASSUME EVERYTHING WRITTEN COULD BECOME PUBLIC (BECAUSE IT WILL BE)
- YOU DO NOT HAVE TO SOUND PERFECT (YOU NEED TO SOUND CREDIBLE)



WHO CAN HELP...

Never try to carry every crisis alone just because you are “the communications person.”
Strong crisis communication is usually highly collaborative.

(1)

TAMIO PEERS AND TAMIO RESOURCES

Other municipal communicators nearby are often the fastest and most practical source of advice because they have handled similar issues locally.

(2)

OUTSIDE CRISIS COMMUNICATION EXPERTS

Experienced former municipal communicators, retired PIOs, and communications directors are often incredibly helpful mentors.

(3)

ORGANIZATION EXPERTS

Your own internal department heads. Public Works, HR, Parks, IT, and Utilities staff often know operational details that communicators need quickly.

(4)

PARTNER ENTITIES

partner communication professionals (i.e. Schools, County, etc.). They can help with unified messaging, emergency alerts, and operational coordination.



WHO CAN'T HELP...

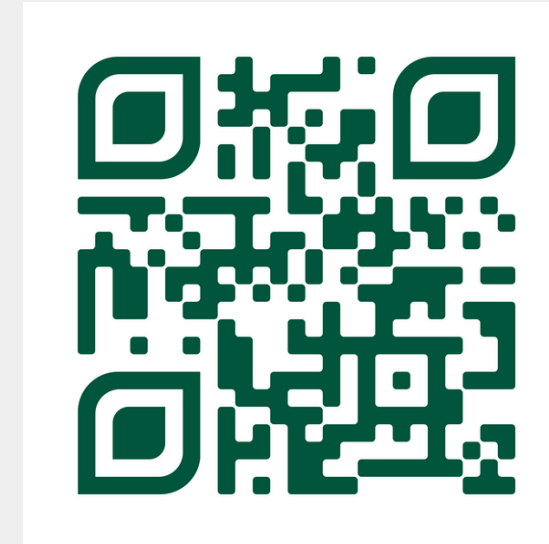


- PEOPLE WHO **THRIVE ON DRAMA** INSTEAD OF SOLUTIONS
- **ANYONE WHO LEAKS** INFORMATION - INTERNAL CONVERSATIONS OR DRAFTS
- **STAFF SPREADING RUMORS** INSTEAD OF VERIFIED FACTS
- **SOCIAL MEDIA** COMMENTERS AND GOSSIP PAGES
- **PEOPLE PUSHING YOU** TO RESPOND BEFORE FACTS ARE CONFIRMED
- **ANYONE ENCOURAGING "SPIN"** OVER TRANSPARENCY
- **INDIVIDUALS BYPASSING THE CHAIN** OF COMMUNICATION DURING CRISES
- POLITICAL OR EMOTIONAL **VOICES THAT ESCALATE SITUATIONS** UNNECESSARILY
- CONSULTANTS OR ADVISORS **UNFAMILIAR WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT** OPERATIONS
- PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE CRISIS ABOUT **BLAME INSTEAD OF PUBLIC SERVICE**
- ANYONE WHO **MAKES YOU AFRAID** TO ASK QUESTIONS OR SEEK HELP
- THE **LOUDEST PERSON IN THE ROOM** IF THEY ARE NOT THE MOST INFORMED PERSON



YOU GOT THIS.

LET'S CONNECT!





**HOW DID WE DO?
LET US KNOW!**