

The Horizon Watch

Anticipating and Pivoting
Through Local Government
Crises

TAMIO Annual Conference

June 2026

What We're Going to Cover

- The Crisis Spectrum in Local Government
- Case studies:
 - Pivoting in Springfield
 - The Unimaginable in the Texas Hill Country
- Is it possible to prepare for the unexpected?
- Interactive group work for practical application
- Q&A
- Singalong





The Crisis Spectrum in Local Government

1. Operational Crises: Constant and cumulative

- Employee incidents
- Resident conflicts
- Viral social media complaints
- Service delivery failures

2. Political Crises: Test of credibility & governance

- Controversial Council decisions
- Ethics accusations
- Highly polarized public issues

3. Emergencies: Need immediate and coordinated action

- Floods & fires
- Infrastructure failures
- Public safety emergencies



Who Has Dealt with a Crisis Recently?

1. Operational Crises: Constant and cumulative
2. Political Crises: Test of credibility & governance
3. Emergencies: Need immediate and coordinated action



Horizon Watch: Reactive to Proactive

- Identifying “Weak Signals”
How do you monitor community sentiment, rumor and digital chatter before they hit the mainstream?
- Texas-Specific Hyper-Local Trends
What are your current local or regional issues that you might have to address? Transportation? Water rights? Short-term rentals?
- Public Safety
Is there an issue coming in the near future that could highlight, embarrass or otherwise create headlines for your police and/or fire departments?



The Pivot Framework

- **From Issue to Action**
Determine if the headline is a “hiccup” or a “hardship”
Same thing goes for corrections – what is to be gained?
- **Alignment**
Ensure the PIO, City Manager and Elected Officials are all speaking the same message – “One Voice”
- **Resource Allocation**
Be sure you have the best people where they need to be



CASE STUDY: Springfield, Ohio



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- It was suggested by a candidate for national office that immigrants were using household pets as food
- What started as a news item based in unsubstantiated conjecture led to dozens of bomb threats, school evacuations, government office closures and personal threats to elected officials and City staff
- Comms Director Karen Graves explained the situation in a 2024 episode of 3CMA CommCast



CASE STUDY: Springfield, Ohio



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- Karen advises that this still isn't over
- February 2026 – New wave of bomb threats
 - Difference was preparedness
 - Supported community stability
- Longer term repercussions as local attitudes towards immigrant communities remain a flashpoint



CASE STUDY: Springfield, Ohio

“We continue to navigate increased public distrust and a perception that local government is not fully transparent ... while this incident intensified those sentiments, it did not create them ... addressing this remains complex and ongoing ... Overall, the experience has been a real-world exercise in crisis management and organizational perseverance.”





CASE STUDY: Hill Country Flooding

Is it possible to
prepare for the
unexpected?



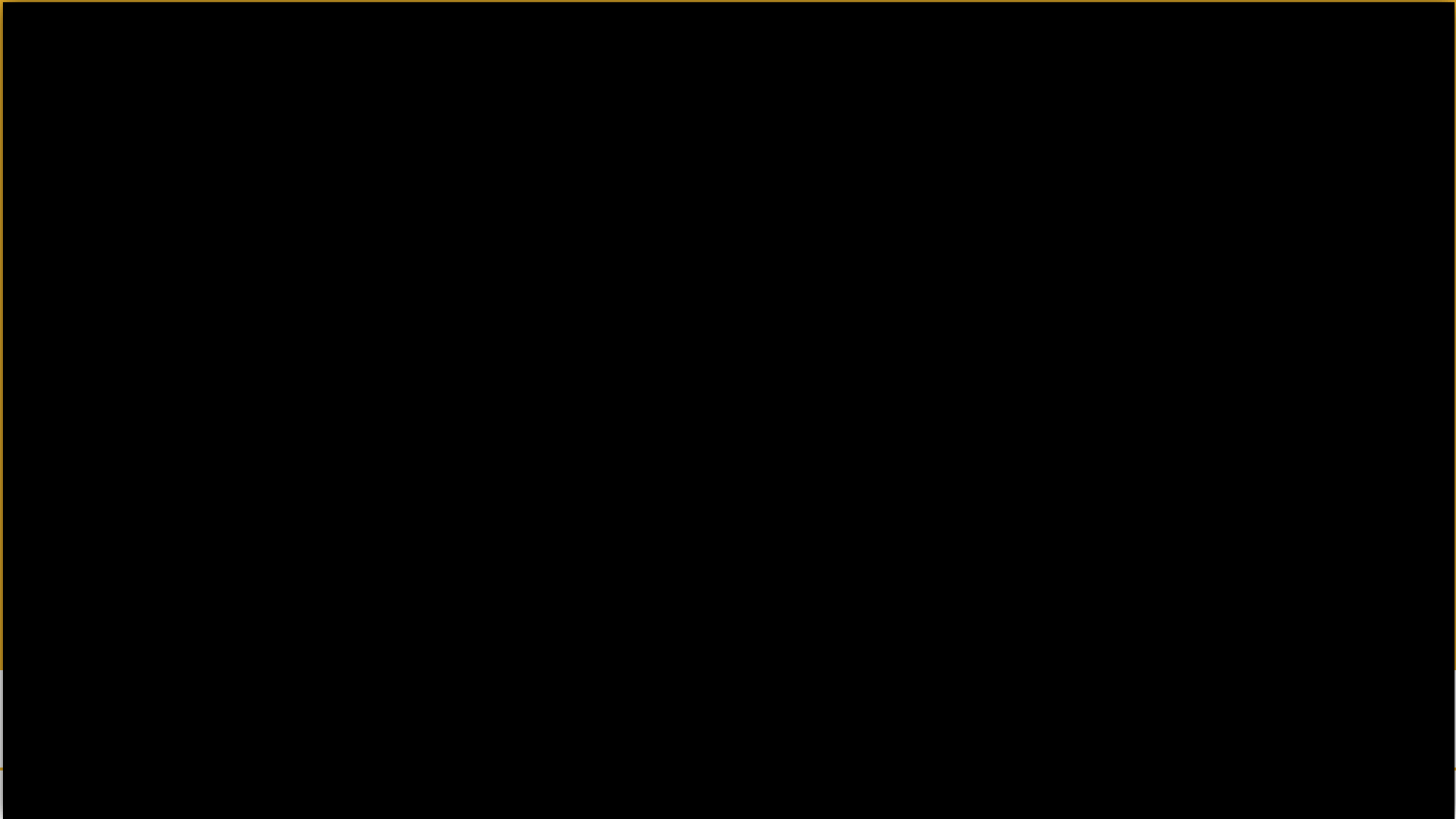
CASE STUDY: Hill Country Flooding

- July 4, 2025: Unimaginable and catastrophic floods swept through the Guadalupe River basin in the early morning hours, claiming property and people
- Kerrville CM Dalton Rice took the microphone early and became the face of the rescue and recovery efforts
- TAMIO members were called in to assist the PIO function in the Joint Information Center
- Several of them told their story on 3CMA CommCast





CASE STUDY: Hill Country Flooding



What About You?

- What crises have your jurisdictions had to deal with?
 - COVID or Snowmageddon counts – different agencies had differing levels of success in communicating with constituents
- How effective was your effort?
- What lessons were learned?
 - What did you learn about your agency? Yourself?

Interactive Group Work

Questions?

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