

COMMUNICATION DURING A BACKFLOW/WQ INCIDENT – CUSTOMERS, THE MEDIA AND THE UTILITY



WELCOME & OVERVIEW



AUDIENCE

- Utility Employee?
- Communications Professional?
- Consultant?
- Media?



WELCOME & OVERVIEW



TODAY'S AGENDA

- What is an incident
- Terminology review
- Planning for an event
- Working with the media
- It happen



WHAT IS AN INCIDENT?

UNPLANNED

UNEXPECTED

LEVEL OF CONCERN

IMPACT TO WATER SYSTEM

IMPACT TO COMMUNITY

AESTHETIC VS HEALTH CONCERN

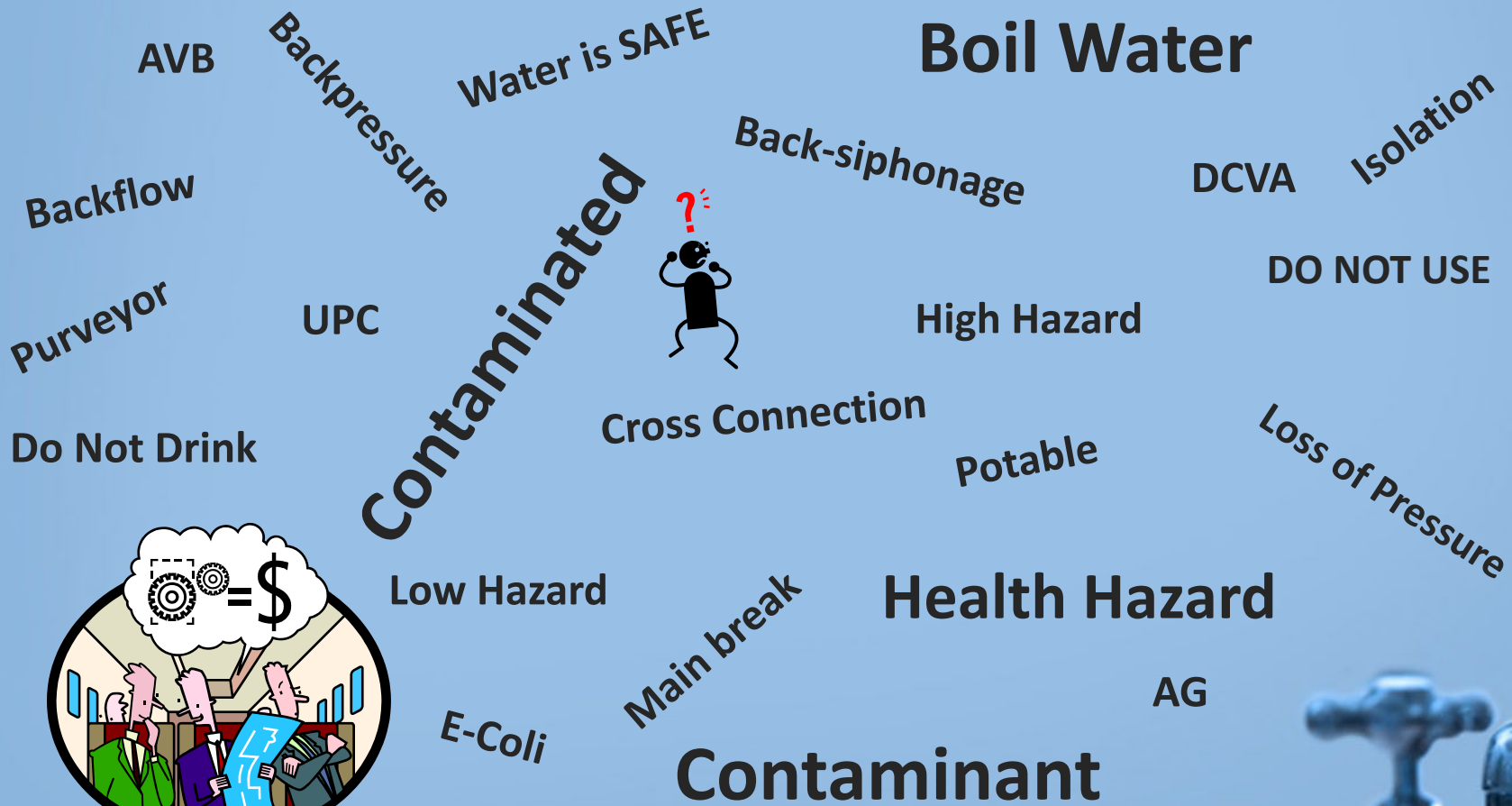
THRESHOLDS

**YOUR DEFINITION WILL DRIVE THE COMMUNICATION
PATH**



TERMINOLOGY

THE LANGUAGE



Speaking the language versus communicating the language



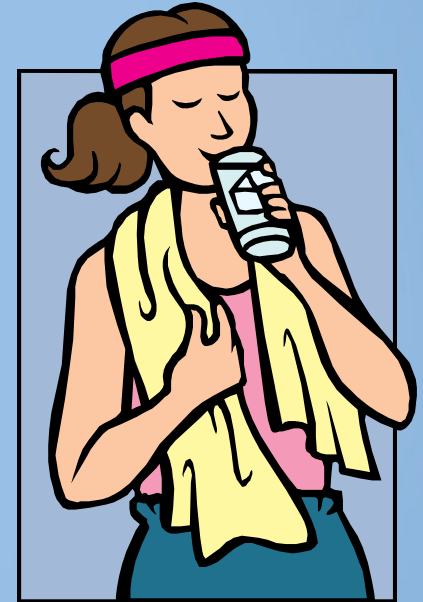
WHY IS COMMUNICATION IMPORTANT?

Facts vs Fiction and Rumors?

Water is pretty important?

Correct decisions need correct information?

If we don't tell the story someone else will?



PUBLIC HEALTH



Who Needs to know?

What do they need to know?

When do they need to know?



HAVE A PLAN

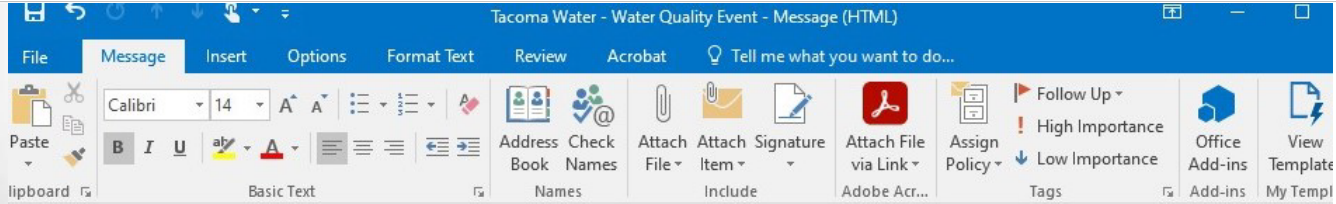


**The time to figure out what to do is not
when the incident occurs**

[Incident Response Communication Plan](#)

[Communication Response Flowchart](#)





i You are not responding to the latest message in this conversation. Click here to open it.

To... **Hallenberg, Scott**; **WQ Event Notification - Communications**; **WQ Event Notification - DOH**; **WQ Event Notification - TPU EM**; **WQ Event Notification - TW**; **WQ Event Notification - TPCHD**;

Send Cc...

Subject Tacoma Water - Water Quality Event

Tacoma Water is currently responding to an event that may affect the drinking water quality of our customers.

Description:

Location/Impact:

Anticipated Duration:

Primary Tacoma Water Contact:

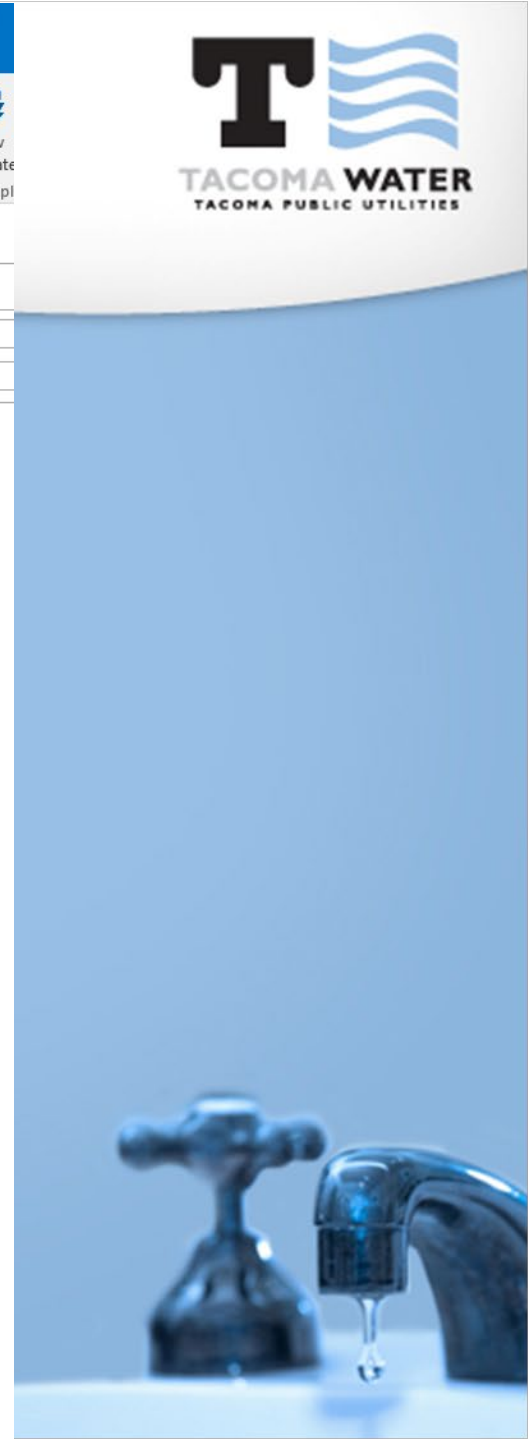
Water Quality: Scott Hallenberg, shallenb@cityoftacoma.org 253-208-5345 (cell)
Operations:
Media/Communications:

Updates will be provided throughout the duration of this event. Please contact me via cell phone or email at any time with any questions.

Thank you,

Scott

Scott D. Hallenberg | Operations Manager
Tacoma Water | Source Water & Treatment Operations
D: 253-502-8215
C: 253-208-5345
F: 253-502-8721
www.mytpu.org/waterquality
www.mytpu.org/backflow



WORKING WITH THE MEDIA



WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Friend or Foe?



CHALLENGES?

What's been your experience in working with the media so far?



CHALLENGES?

Some challenges in working with the media

- Urgency
- New platforms for delivery have increased the reach and speed of spreading the news
- They will talk to anyone



WORKING WITH THE MEDIA



PREPARATION

Getting ready for the call

- Emergency contact info – have it ready!
- Have a designated public information officer who is NOT working the operations side
- Educate your organization about who should speak to the media – and what they should do when the media call
- Who's your person?



WORKING WITH THE MEDIA



PREPARATION

Your tools

- Have your media distribution list ready
- Have a boilerplate news release ready to go
- Know how to access and use your social media accounts before an emergency
- Establish an account on a photo or video sharing site



WORKING WITH THE MEDIA



PREPARATION

Get to know your reporters

- Determine reporters who cover your area and meet with them before an emergency



AN INTERVIEW

What do reporters want to know?

- What happened?
- How does it affect people and how many people?
- How will the organization fix it?
- How will the organization ensure it doesn't happen again?
- Can I talk to a “real” person?



WORKING WITH THE MEDIA



AN INTERVIEW

Tricky questions?

- Don't speculate or predict
 - What happened, how it happened, when it will be fixed. . .
- Don't say "no comment" or go off the record
- Stick with your agency's story
- They'll push for access; give it if you can



AN INTERVIEW

How can you help media present your story fairly?

- Respond as soon as you can
- Anticipate their questions
- Give them answers with appropriate level of detail so they don't look elsewhere.
- Give them access to the scene if they ask, or supply your own visuals



WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

THE MOTHER OF MAIN BREAKS



WORKING WITH THE MEDIA



HOW IT WENT DOWN

- Main break on Portland Avenue in Tacoma
- Instant media on site
- What we did right
- What we need to fix



WORKING WITH THE MEDIA



MAIN BREAK



Tacoma Public Utilities shared a link.

Posted by mytpu@cityoftacoma.org [?] · October 22

Wow – we came unplugged last night, and it was quite a sight. A plug where a pipe could connect to a 16-inch water main failed. The result is in the video. Our crews worked all night and will work all day to fix the pipe and restore service to 12 businesses without water in the Tideflats.



Tacoma Public Utilities Portland Ave. Main Break

www.mytpu.org

Website description

492 people reached

Boost Post

Like · Comment · Share

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WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

THE HIGHWAY IS FALLING



HOW IT WENT DOWN

- An old piece of Highway 16 fell, punching a hole through the street and water main below
- Lots of parties involved:
 - Tacoma Water, DOT, PSE, Health Department
- Instant media on site



CONCLUSION



INCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN

BEING PREPARED IS A MUST

**COORDINATION AND
COOPERATION BETWEEN ALL
PARTIES INVOLVED IS ESSENTIAL**



QUESTIONS?



CONTACT INFORMATION:



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