



# **Engagement in Crisis Response:**

## **Best practices for coordinating stakeholders and resources during emergencies**

**2025 ITS Heartland Annual Conference**  
APRIL 29, 2025



# The Value of Strategic Communication



Align agency values



Crisis communication



Building relationships



Makes your jobs easier!



# Representative Public Statistics

32 MEDIAN  
AGE

\$80,610  
Median  
Household  
Income 2023

82 Gallons  
Water Usage 

US Population  
2020

  
331,449,281

2021  88% OF AMERICANS  
16+ HAVE A  
DRIVERS LICENSE

10.9 BILLION  
TRIPS ON PUBLIC TRANSIT NATIONWIDE



2023  
POVERTY  
RATE

11.1%

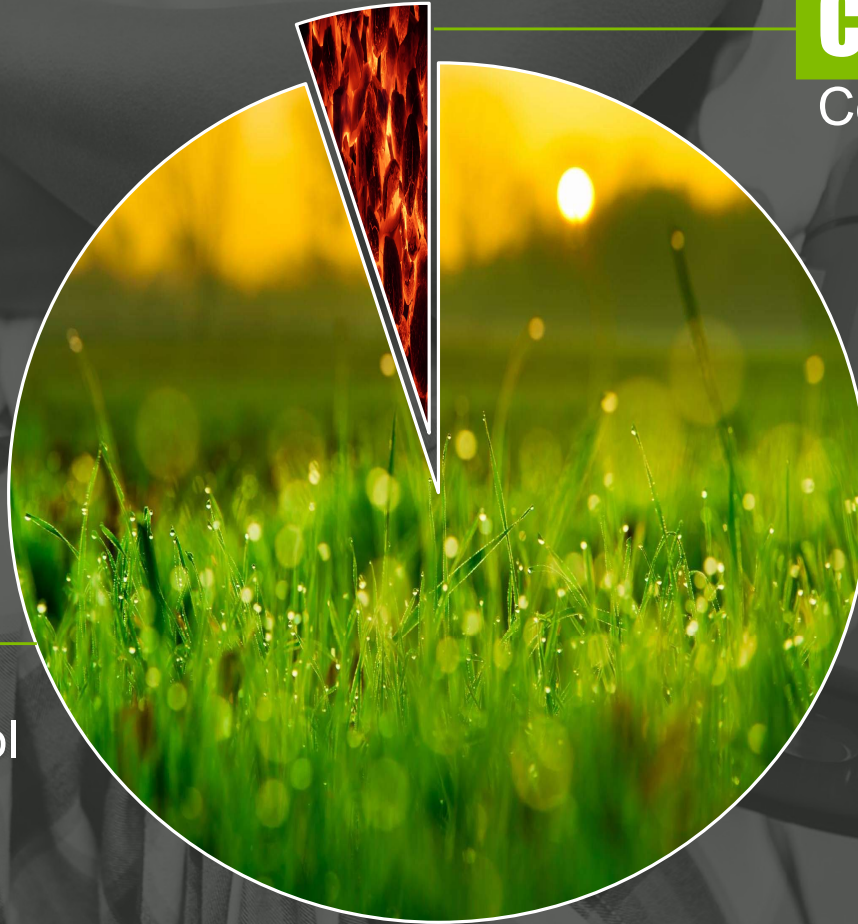
# Types of Engagement

TYPE	Public Involvement	Public Information	Public Relations	Public Outreach	Marketing
GOALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively engaging stakeholders in a decision-making process.</li> <li>To gather public input that directly influences project decisions.</li> <li>Enhances project credibility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharing factual, transparent information to inform</li> <li>Little/no solicitation of input (one-way information sharing)</li> <li>Awareness and often an opportunity to educate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing effort to build and maintain a positive public agency image</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging the community to raise awareness</li> <li>Inspires support for initiatives</li> <li>Invite participation but not necessarily decision-making input</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes services, programs and projects</li> <li>Achieves organizational objectives</li> <li>Data-driven</li> </ul>
TACTICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus Groups</li> <li>Listening Sessions</li> <li>Interactive Forums</li> <li>Surveys/Questionnaires</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Real-time traveler information</li> <li>Social Media</li> <li>Trap Lines</li> <li>Recorded Audio Messages</li> <li>PAWS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Storytelling/Media Engagement</li> <li>Public Meetings/Events</li> <li>Live Social Media Q&amp;A</li> <li>Annual sentiment surveys to gather baseline data over time</li> <li>Legislative/Elected official one-on-ones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted campaigns</li> <li>Storytelling/Media Involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year-over-year qualitative data gathering</li> <li>Sentiment testing</li> <li>Metrics to show success/reach</li> <li>ROI</li> </ul>

**The 95%  
and the 5%**

**Normal**

Communication Protocol



**Crisis**

Communication Protocol



# Tasks To Ensure You're Ready

Quarterly

Semi-Annual

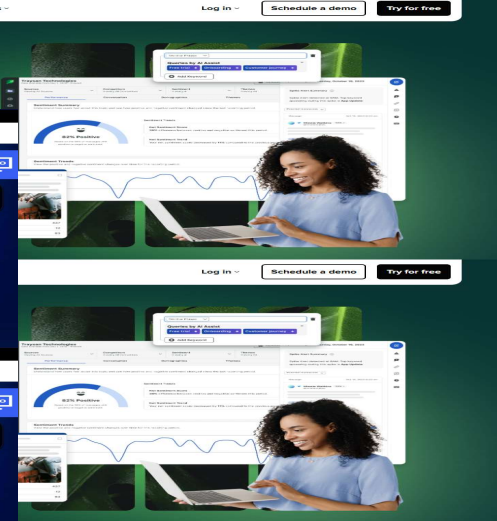
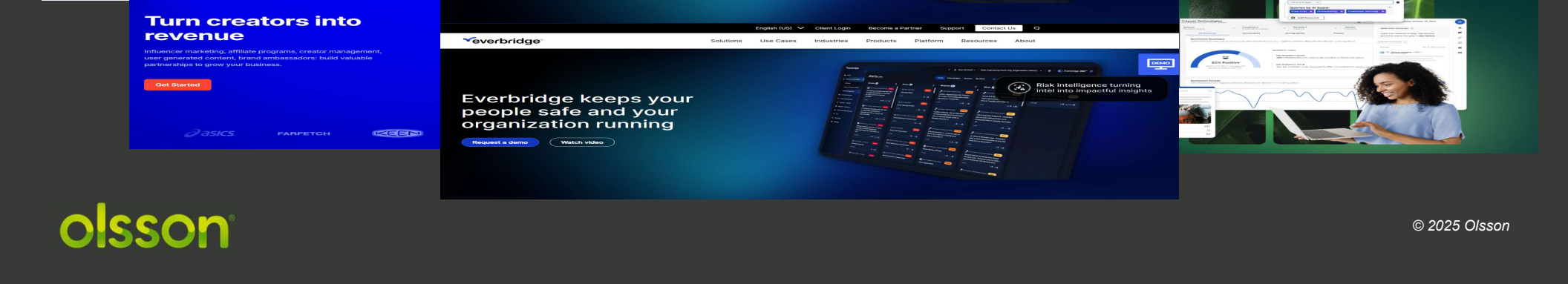
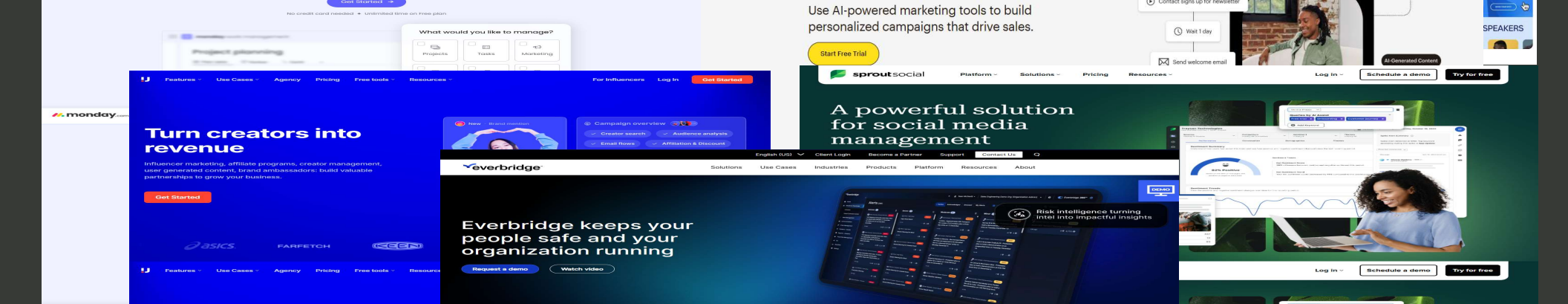
Annual

Bi-Annual

Ongoing

**olsson**

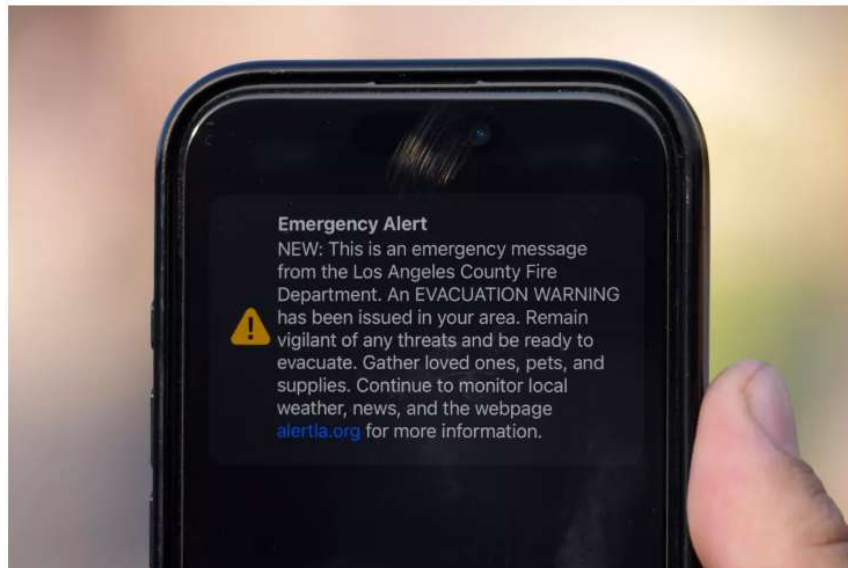




# Case Study 1: LA Wildfires

CALIFORNIA

## L.A. County's evacuation alert system broke down during fires. It's part of a larger problem



This emergency evacuation alert was sent Jan. 9 to a wide area of Los Angeles, including people not close to wildfire zones. (Kirby Lee / Getty Images)

By Jenny Jarvie  
National Correspondent

Jan. 24, 2025 3 AM PT

### Subscribers are Reading >

Technology wasn't responsible for west Altadena alert failures, company says

Prep sports roundup: Santa Margarita dominates in win over Harvard-Westlake

### Voices

Letters to the Editor: I lived under Nazi occupation. Yes, it could happen in America too

### Voices

Commentary: The results are in: During 2024, actively managed mutual funds again stank

USC men finally right the ship against Washington

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# The average American reads and comprehends at what grade level?

The average American reads and comprehends at what grade level?

olsson®

0

6th Grade

0

8th Grade

0

12th Grade

Poll

olsson®

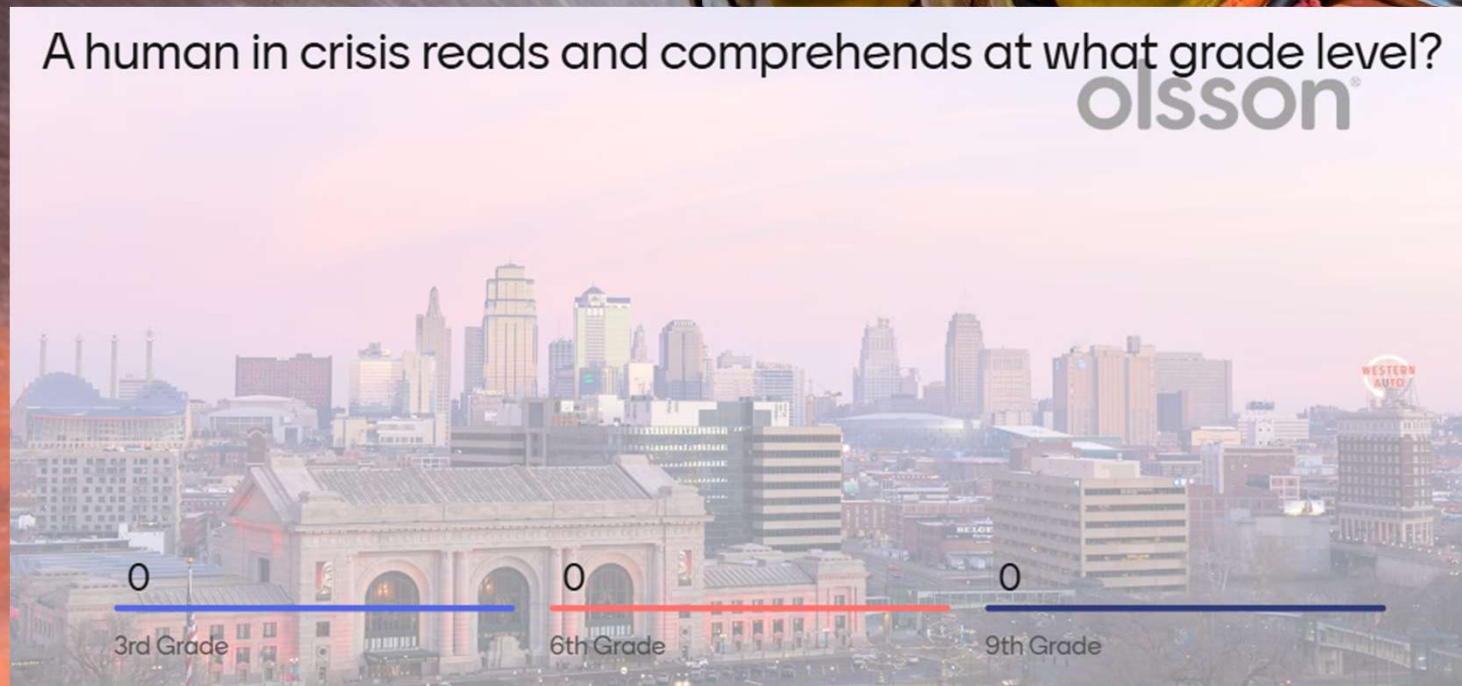
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# A human in crisis reads and comprehends at what grade level?

## Poll

A human in crisis reads and comprehends at what grade level?

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## Poll

**What percentage of Americans get their news from news influencers?**

What percentage of Americans get their news from news influencers?

olsson®

0

5%

0

20%

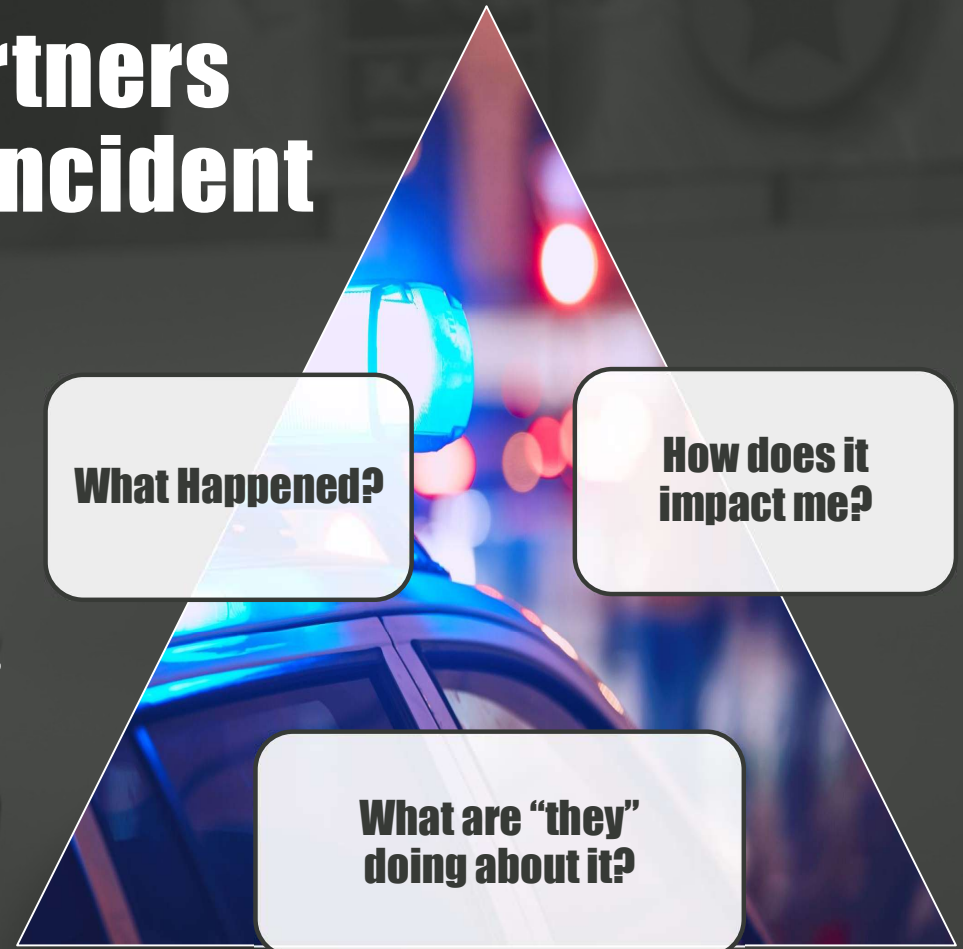
0

60%

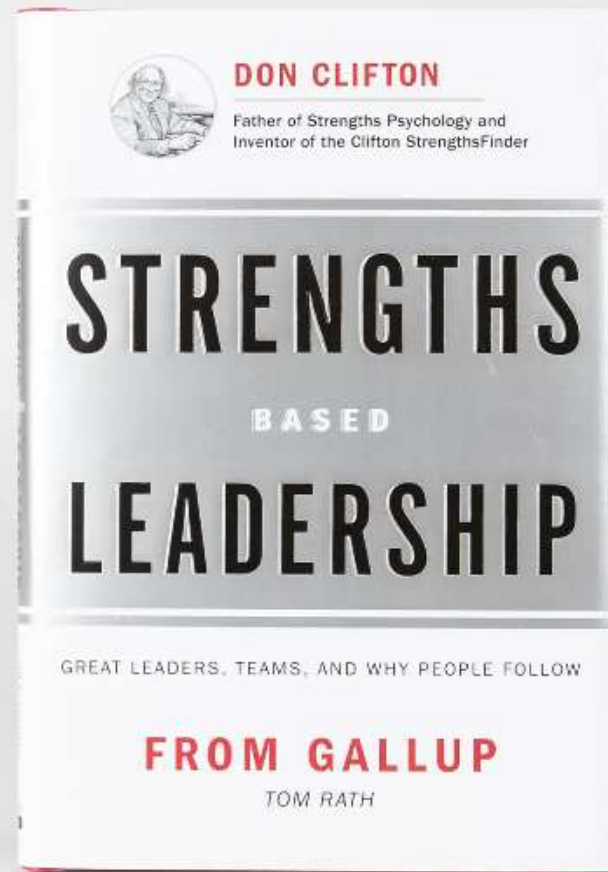


# What the Public and Partners Need During A Routine Incident

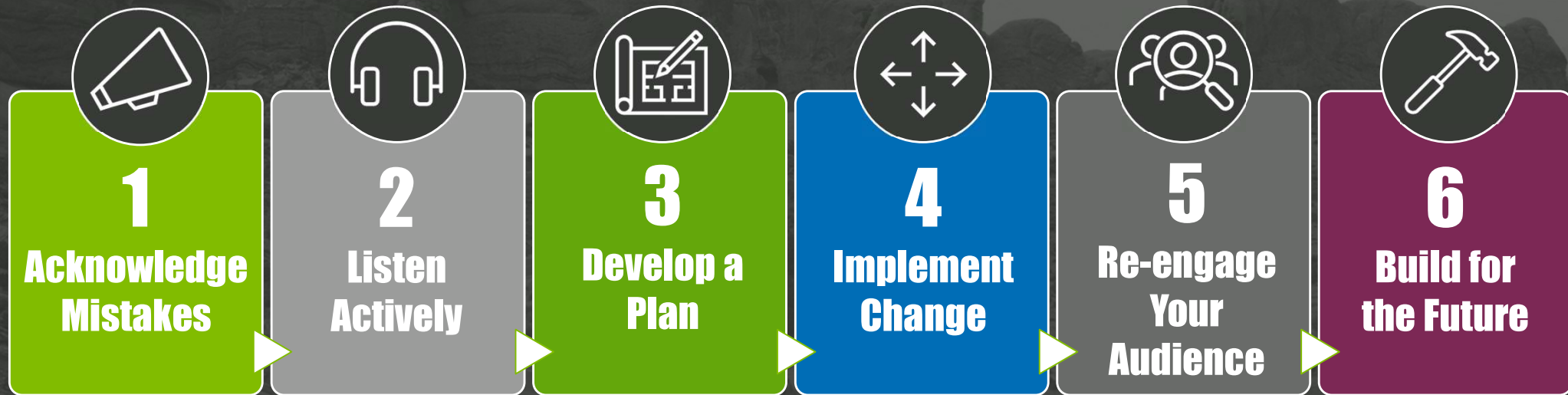
- Immediate acknowledgement
- Clear and concise messaging
- Internal communication
- Ongoing updates at regular intervals
- Monitor/respond to inquiries
- Post-incident communication



# What the Public Needs In A Crisis



# Case Study 2: The Utah AV Project Injury





# UDOT AV Crisis Communication Workflow

NEWS > LOCAL NEWS

## Federal agency brings driverless car pilot program in Utah to stop following passenger injury



An autonomous vehicle pilot program in Utah came to an unexpected stop Tuesday after a passenger injury prompted a federal agency to slam the breaks on operations nationwide.

By: Elle Thomas, Spencer Burt

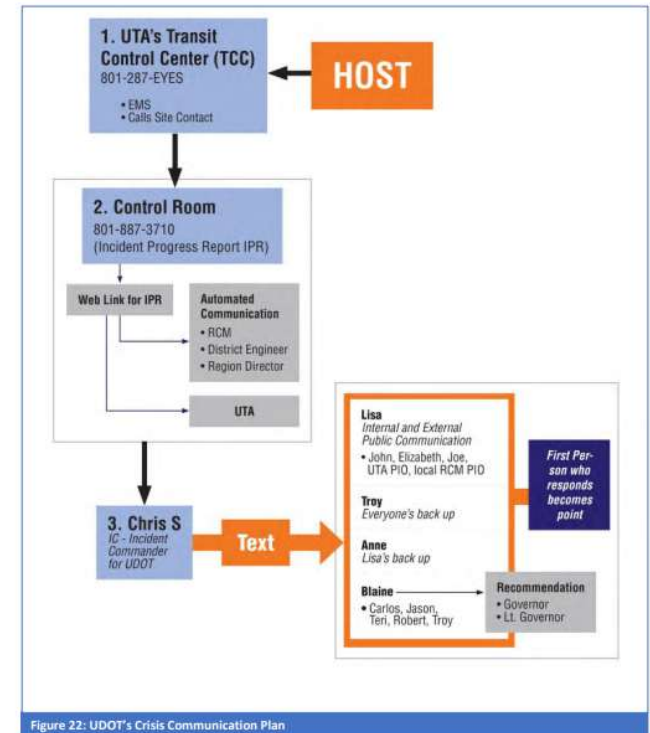
Posted 4:48 PM, Feb 25, 2020 and last updated 9:56 PM, Feb 25, 2020

SALT LAKE CITY – An autonomous vehicle pilot program in Utah came to an unexpected stop Tuesday after a passenger injury prompted a federal agency to slam the breaks on operations nationwide.

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# Case Study 3: A Howitzer Hits Your Shed

That One Time a Utah Department of Transportation  
Avalanche Cannon Misfired and Blew Up a Family's  
House 3 Miles Away

Martin Kuprianowicz | July 8, 2022

Share this article



*Artillery has been a widely used tool for avalanche control in Utah for decades. | Photo courtesy of Utah Adventure Journal*



# Other Types of “Routine Incidents”





# Resources

ITE “ignITE” training series  
Utah Emergency Management

# Key Takeaways:

- 1** Engage your strategic communications folks early in the process
- 2** A Strategic Communications Plan can be very short and not labor intensive
- 3** Always have a crisis communication workflow – you never know when you will need it
- 4** Ensure that your outreach isn't too technically complex
- 5** There is value (manage risk, build relationships)
- 6** **It makes your job easier!**



# THANK YOU!!

**You are ALL Strategic  
Communicators with the right tools!**



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