

Thriving in Today's  
24/7 Media World

---

ACWA Fall Conference  
December 2025



1

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

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



2

---

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

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



3

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Communicate Empathetically



*Baltimore Bridge Collapse*

SAE

4

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Communicate Clearly



*Austin Protest*

SAE

5

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Is This OK?



*Madison School Shooting*

SAE

6

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Thoughts and Prayers?



Minneapolis School Shooting

SAE

7

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 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

SAE

8

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 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

SAE

9

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## From This...



SAE

10

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## To This...



SAE

11

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## And Now This



SAE

12

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 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

SAE

13

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 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

SAE

14

---

---

---

---

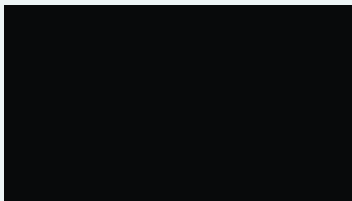
---

---

---

---

## How Do We Adapt?



*Miami Beach Spring Break*

SAE

15

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## How Do We Adapt?



Miami Beach Spring Break

SAE

16

---

---

---

---

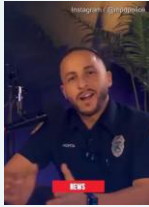
---

---

---

---

## How Do We Adapt?



Miami Aliens

SAE

17

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## How Do We Adapt?



RivCo Brief

SAE

18

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 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

Elk Grove Podcast

SAE

19

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 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 ?

SAE

20

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Crafting Key Messages

SAE  
COMMUNICATIONS Strategic and Crisis Communications

21

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 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**

SAE

22

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 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

SAE

23

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**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](http://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.

24

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

**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](https://hurricanes.gov)

25

---

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

**Concise Message Delivery**



SAE

26

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**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.

09:34 - Source: CNN

SAE

27

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Stay on Message, Avoid Traps



Palisades Fire

SAE

28

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Stay on Message, Avoid Traps



Getty Fire

SAE

29

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Delivering Your Key Messages in an Interview

SAE  
COMMUNICATIONS Strategic and Crisis Communications

30

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 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

SAE

31

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 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

SAE

32

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 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

SAE

33

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Remote Interviews

- Lighting/audio/background
  - Dual lights
  - Lav microphone
  - No blurred or virtual backgrounds
- Situational awareness
  - Avoid pods in both ears, check your image

SAE

34

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 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

SAE

35

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Compromised Credibility



SAE

36

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 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..."

SAE

37

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Thriving in Today's  
24/7 Media World



SAE  
Strategic  
and Crisis  
COMMUNICATIONS  
Communications

38

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---