

ILCMA / WCMA Summer Conference

Readiness for Newsworthy Events: How to Prepare, Manage and Recover

Friday, June 10th 9:00am – 10:15am

Tragic events in recent years have heightened the discussion of the resources and collaboration needed to prepare, respond, and recover from newsworthy incidents around the country. In this panel discussion, we'll hear from City staff who have navigated through newsworthy events including managing active shooter responses. How much were their communities prepared before the events, what have they learned to do differently the next time, and how did they manage the psychological impacts of these events on their departments & staff will all be discussed this morning.

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Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss the resources and teamwork involved in readiness for a newsworthy incident or active shooter event.
2. Discuss what City Managers and Public Safety Officials learned from incidents and active shooter events in their communities.
3. Discuss how resources such as municipal facilities can best prepare and support the responses during a major event.
4. Discuss the psychological impacts of these events on community leaders and decision makers and how to support mental health.

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Panelists:

- **Cory Poris Plasch**, Senior Vice President, Rapp Consulting Group IL
- **Carina Walters**, City Administrator, Burlington WI
- **Rebecca Pederson**, Assistant to the Mayor & City Administrator, Waukesha WI
- **Brian Meade**, FGM Architects (Moderator)

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Session Agenda:

- **Event Introductions | Day of Summaries**
- **Panelist Discussion to Moderator Questions**
- **Audience Questions**

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Readiness for Newsworthy Events:

Event #1

Northern Illinois University Shooting: February 14, 2008

Lessons Learned on the Front Line



Cory Poris Plasch, Senior Vice President
Rapp Consulting Group



While Donna Tate takes a break, Karisa Fairchild (foreground) and Cory Poris-Warren handle the phones and the paperwork in the dispatch center.

DeKalb and NIU- History

- DeKalb Police Department dispatches police for the city of DeKalb, and fire/ambulance for the city and NIU
- NIU has it's own police force and dispatch center
- Relations between the police departments had historically been strained
- Relations between the city and NIU were also strained

February 14, 2008

- Steven Phillip Kazmierczak entered Cole Hall at Northern Illinois University and opened fire
- Five students were killed
 - Catalina Garcia, 20, sophomore Elementary Education major
 - Daniel Parmenter, 20, sophomore Finance major
 - Gayle Dubowski, 20, sophomore Anthropology major
 - Julianna Gehant, 32, junior Elementary Education major
 - Ryanne Mace, 19, sophomore Psychology major
- 21 were wounded
- Kazmierczak then shot and killed himself



Cole Hall



The Initial Moments

- NIU had one dispatcher and no backup, calls bounced to DeKalb PD
- DeKalb PD alerted officers to calls of shots fired on NIU campus



Initial Challenges:

- 911 calls immediately started bouncing to PSAPs throughout the state
- Non-emergency lines were overwhelmed
- Massive cell phone service shut down service almost immediately
- There was conflicting information about the number of perpetrators
- Everyone in “scanner-land” was listening to the radio traffic
- DeKalb city leadership needed information but were out of the loop
- We became an international news story within minutes

Inside the Dispatch Center

- County took over mutual aid response for EMS
- We quickly triaged incoming calls
- Other dispatch centers started sending priority calls through LEADS



The Challenges Continued....

- The media was not our friend that day
- There was confusion over who should be called (NIU vs City)
- Internal confusion over roles led to inaccurate information
- The public was struggling for reliable information
- No central communication point was established until much later
- Cell service was down, prompting parents, media, and others to call the DeKalb Police Department looking for information

Police Department organizational culture was a HUGE asset

- Training was key to effective response
- Staff knew how they could improvise both on the scene and in the dispatch center
- Staff empowered by leadership that backed them





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Readiness for Newsworthy Events:

Event #2

City of Burlington, WI Flood: July 12-13, 2017

July 12-13, 2017 City of Burlington Flood



Carina Walters, City Administrator

cwalters@burlington-wi.gov



City of Burlington, Wisconsin

- Population of 11,047 with 68 full-time employees and 31 seasonal employees located in southeast Wisconsin.
- 27 miles west of Racine
- A full- Service Community with Police, Fire, Public Works (streets, parks, water, wastewater) Airport, Library a newly opened Aquatic Center.
- The City maintains 54.38 miles of streets, 26 miles of storm sewer pipe, 57 miles of sanitary sewers, 62 miles of water main.
- 2020) U.S. Census 2015-2019 indicated there are approximately 4,730 total housing units (from 2018 housing estimate).

City of Burlington, Wisconsin

- Flooding along the Fox River was the worst in Racine County had seen in at least 37 years.
- The Fox River and White Rivers converge in the heart of downtown Burlington
- July 12-13, 2017, 7.95” of rain fell - Resulting in both flash and river flooding along the Fox River.
- Record flooding along Fox River (crested July 13th) at its highest historical level of 16.1 feet
- According to NWS, average height of the Fox River is in the range of 4 – 5 ft. Stages in the 3 months prior to the flood, were higher than normal (frequently in the range of 6 ft-7 ft) due to above normal rainfalls.
- 3 Bridges shut down in the heart of Burlington
- 4 Days to restore 14,000 customers with electricity



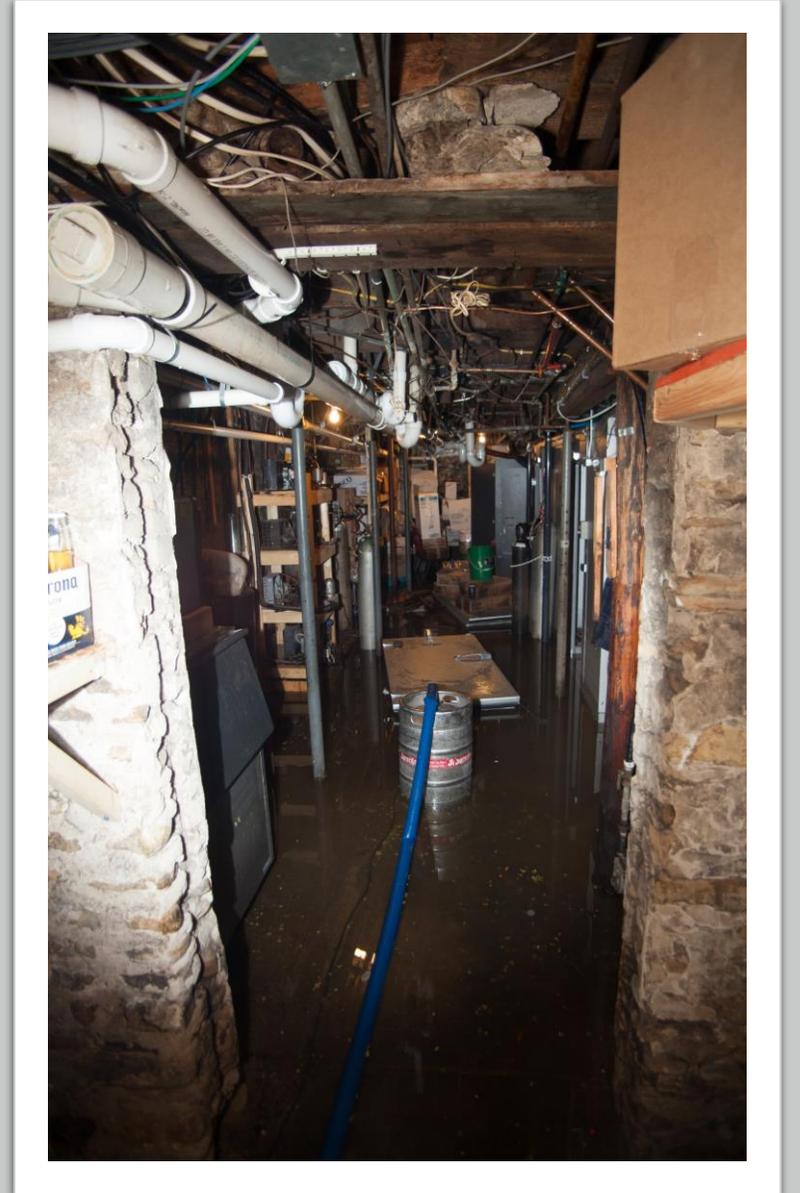


July 12-13, 2017

- Burlington Emergency Operations Center (operational for 8 days).
- Staffed by City Administrator, Fire Chief, Police Chief, Assistant City Administrator, Finance Director, City Engineer, County Staff, Chief of Staff (PIO), Public Works, Sheriff's Office, South Shore Fire Department and Emergency Management.
- No cell. Internet, phones, dispatch equipment and city IT servers were located in the PD basement- underwater.
- Racine County Sheriff's Office Swift Water Dive Team was on standby for four days
- Over 25 fire departments from throughout southeast Wisconsin provided assistance,
- National Guard was activated, and the Southeast Wisconsin Incident Management Team.

Clean up and Recovery

- Red Cross and Salvation Army provided 850 Clean Up Kits, served 638 Meals to response personnel and flood victims and assisted 6 families (16 individuals) with vouchers totaling \$ 1800 for lodging and rent.
- Red Cross opened a shelter at Burlington High School, as well as a Multi-Agency Reception Center. Three individuals were sheltered at the high school for eight overnight stays. 210 meals were served, and 801 clean-up kits were distributed.
- Estimated - over 100 families were displaced from the Burlington area. They assisted over 1000 families with needed food, water, hygiene items and clean up kits.
- Nearly \$5 million in damage and \$4.6M in economic loss.





City of Burlington, Wisconsin

- City Damage Assessment Teams were sent out to affected areas of the city and town of Burlington. The City of Burlington reported the following: 1 destroyed, 41 major, 79 minor, 634 affected.
- FEMA Conducted Disaster Assessments in August 2017 along with Small Business Administration, Wisconsin Emergency Management



2017 and Beyond

- Updated Emergency Operations Plan
- Updating Racine County Operations Plan
- National Incident Management System (NIMS) Training
- Relocated records and IT equipment to First floors
- Generators at major facilities
- Will utilize Racine County (Ives Grove) EOC in future
- Implemented remote work connectivity and policies

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Readiness for Newsworthy Events:

Event #3

Waukesha, WI Christmas Parade Tragedy: November 21, 2021

Community Pain – Waukesha Parade Tragedy

Rebecca Pederson, Assistant to the Mayor and City Administrator

rpederson@waukesha-wi.gov



City of Waukesha, WI

- Population of 72,000
- 15 miles west of Milwaukee
- Over 500 employees
- Active Downtown



November 21, 2021

- Annual Waukesha Christmas Parade
- Tragedy Occurred.
 - 6 people were killed
 - Over 70 physically injured
 - Hundreds of others with emotional/psychological injuries
 - Community wound

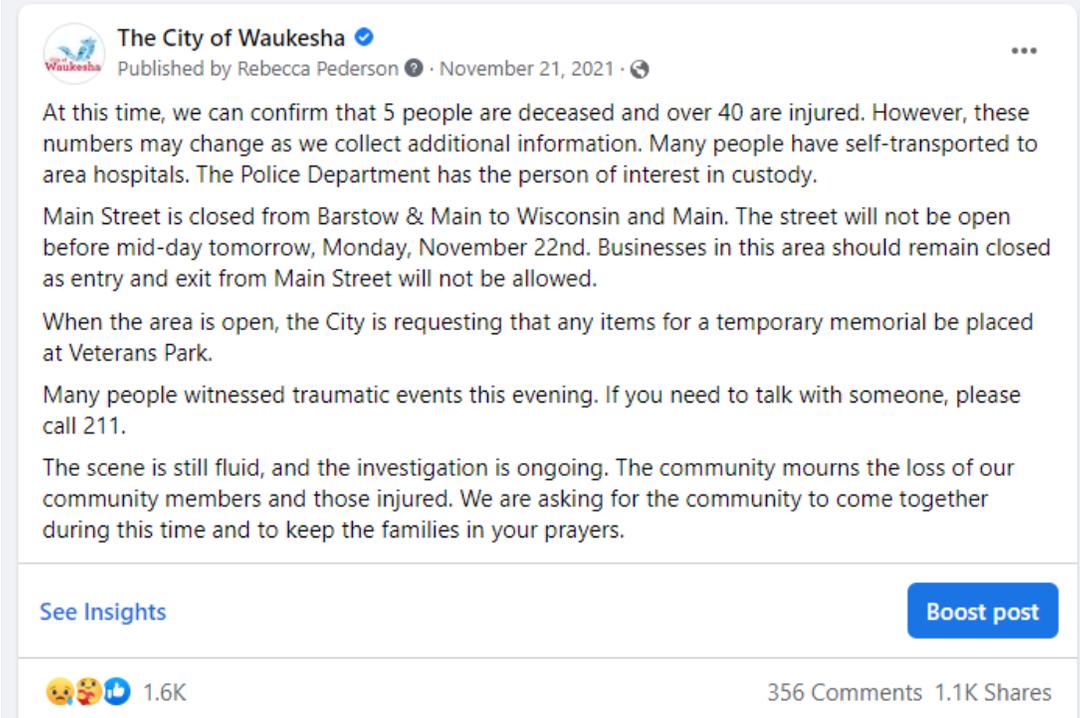


From the sidelines to CNN



Night of the Tragedy

- Tried to get information out quickly
- Press conferences to reassure the public
- Communicating resources
 - Waukesha County Victim Witness Assistance Program
 - Disaster Distress Helpline
- Communicating a Temporary Memorial Location



The City of Waukesha ✓
Published by Rebecca Pederson · November 21, 2021 ·

At this time, we can confirm that 5 people are deceased and over 40 are injured. However, these numbers may change as we collect additional information. Many people have self-transported to area hospitals. The Police Department has the person of interest in custody.

Main Street is closed from Barstow & Main to Wisconsin and Main. The street will not be open before mid-day tomorrow, Monday, November 22nd. Businesses in this area should remain closed as entry and exit from Main Street will not be allowed.

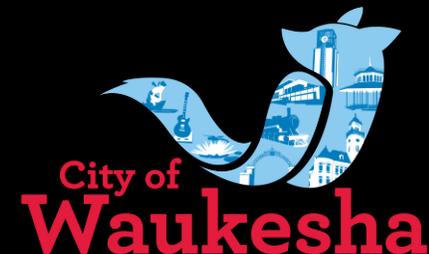
When the area is open, the City is requesting that any items for a temporary memorial be placed at Veterans Park.

Many people witnessed traumatic events this evening. If you need to talk with someone, please call 211.

The scene is still fluid, and the investigation is ongoing. The community mourns the loss of our community members and those injured. We are asking for the community to come together during this time and to keep the families in your prayers.

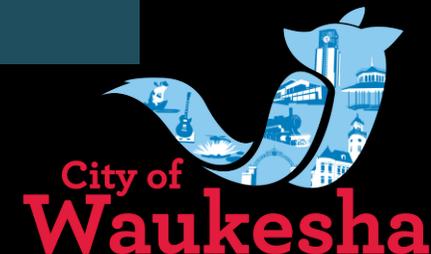
[See Insights](#) [Boost post](#)

👍👎👤 1.6K 356 Comments 1.1K Shares



Some things will just happen....

- United for Waukesha Community Fund
- Logos
- Hashtags
- Vigils



Next Day...

- Cleaning the streets and reopening roads
- Belongings left at the scene
- Media Strategy
 - Addressed media and public at the same time
 - Tried to answer all questions without being asked
 - Delegated person to organize all media requests (PD, Fire, Mayor, etc.)
 - No interviews with National Media



Days that follow...

- Friends and Family Resource Center
- Care of Temporary Memorial and items
- Community Support – greatest strength and hardest to manage





**Waukesha
Strong**

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Question #1:

Can each of you briefly describe what went well and what could have gone better?

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Question #2:

Since communication is so instrumental during and after these types of events, what lessons learned or changes have been implemented in each of your communities since the events to improve communication?

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Question #3:

How did these events in your communities affect each of you personally?

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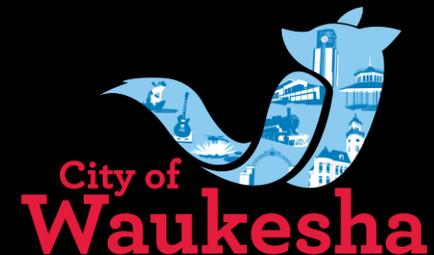
Question #4:

After events like these, how do communities provide a sense of closure and move forward at different phases? (immediate, temporary, permanent)



One week Anniversary

- Live streamed Event
- Moment of Silence
- Unite with a Blue Light Kick-Off
 - 14,000 Blue light blubs distributed
 - Everyone had a role to play
 - Council
 - Downtown Businesses
 - Public



Looking Ahead...

- New barricades and safety measures in place
- New, set Parade Route
- Community Healing Sessions
- Stars of Hope
- Focus on Employees and the Community



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Thank you | Audience Questions