

# CARES Resilient Economy Webinar Series

## *Session 3: Crisis Communications for Economic Recovery*

Presenters:

Carla Castillo, Interim Executive Director, HVRC

Lynn Knight, Certified Economic Developer

Cynthia Richmond, former Deputy Director for Economic  
Development, Arlington and Loudoun Counties, Virginia



# Regional Efforts

## Hudson Valley Regional Council

- **Technical Assistance • Advocacy • Coordination • Education • Planning • Collaboration •**
- Economic Development Technical Assistance & Planning
- Water Quality Planning
- Clean Energy Implementation
- Climate Smart Implementation
- Climate Action Planning
- Regional Platforms
  - Materials Management Working Group
  - Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Coalition



# Partners



Hudson Valley Regional Council

# HVRC CARES Project

*HVRC's CARES Project is made possible with funding from the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration*

- CARES Project – Learnings From and Best Practice Responses to the Pandemic
- CARES Resilient Economy Lunch & Learn Webinar Series
  - November 30: Resilience & Economic Development
  - December 7: Retaining Small Businesses After a Crisis
  - December 14: The Role of Economic Developers in Crisis Communications
- Today's webinar





- **Lynn A. Knight** ([lynn.knight07@gmail.com](mailto:lynn.knight07@gmail.com)) – Certified Economic Developer with multi-sector experience in 35 U.S. states and territories. She previously owned a public relations firm for 14 years and frequently dealt with crisis issues. Formerly the VP of Knowledge Management at the International Economic Development Council, she managed a national program economic recovery program that deployed hundreds of subject matter experts to disaster communities in 20 states and territories.

## Presenters



- **Cynthia Richmond** ([crichmond@gmail.com](mailto:crichmond@gmail.com)) – Has more than 30 years' experience in local economic development, including business recruitment and retention, small business assistance, policy development, real estate development and economic sustainability. Until her recent retirement, Cindy served as Deputy Director for Economic Development in both Arlington and Loudoun County, Virginia. In the private sector, she worked as a Regional Economist for Battelle Memorial Institute in Columbus, Ohio. Cindy has a master's degree in City and Regional Planning from The Ohio State University.



# Crisis Communications for Economic Recovery







*Kentucky governor after West Liberty tornado*

Communications are  
an essential element  
of recovering from  
crises

Provide timely  
information &  
dispel rumors



# Lead through crisis

## Take time to communicate

- When severe weather or dangerous situations are imminent, disseminate information widely
- Leaders are often judged on timeliness and accuracy of information
- Best Practice: Today elected officials and community leaders are using a wider variety of channels, including social media, email, website, phone recordings, TV and radio





# Why we're talking about this

- Best crisis communications are planned during “blue skies”
- Need to communicate clearly, consistently, and comprehensively to range of stakeholders
- Communications are particularly important for leveraging the private sector
- Economic development organizations, industry associations and Chambers are vital resources to inform local government about business needs



# Incorporate business communications into core activities

- Local government leaders make emergency decisions that have a direct impact on business:
  - Business re-entry
  - Access to property
  - Approach to power restoration
  - Infrastructure rebuilding
  - Long-term marketing campaign outside the community
- It is important to incorporate business and industry communications early



# Why communicating with businesses is essential to recovery

- Rumors spread quickly and can lead to slower economic recovery
- Businesses may delay opening or move
- They will attempt to contact you for information
- How you communicate – or don't communicate can have a big impact on how quickly they recover



# Key Steps in Planning

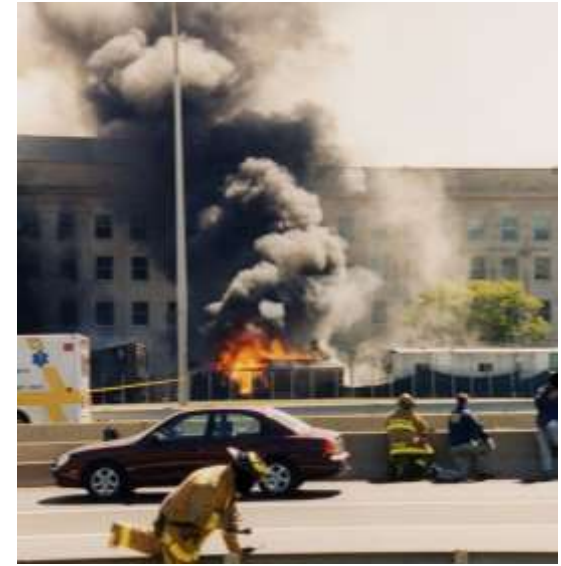
- Designate a spokesperson
- Update contacts
- Establish a base
- Gather all facts
- Draft statements
- Anticipate tough questions
- Maintain contact with businesses



# When it's happening, you need data

- You need a ready, versatile and current database
- Economic developers typically buy data or create their own
- We know the business locations and owners
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems are tied to our data
- Data gives us capacity to reach out and communicate with businesses, individuals and government





# Arlington on 9/11





# Emergency Operations Center

## Establish a location to coordinate communications

- Government depts., state and federal agencies should operate out of one place
- Invite economic development and business organizations to work in the center



# Emergency Business Contacts

## Determine who you must contact and how to reach them

- Relationship building is a continuous process
- Gather home and office contacts for business leaders and media
- Use a good customer relationship management database



# Controlling the Message

- Misinformation is harmful to businesses, the economy, and the community following a major disaster
- Providing timely, accurate information to businesses and the media will help to get the economy moving
- Key is timeliness and control
- Make this a team effort



# Uniform, Credible Response

- Designate your spokespeople
- Consistent, accurate messaging builds confidence among residents and businesses
- Enforce organizational roles and procedures for communicating



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# Prepare



Brainstorm “What-ifs?”

Be creative but prepare for the worst

- Think through topics
- Practice answering toughest questions
- Develop “must air” points



# Central Themes in Messages

- Communities must understand how their economy is being affected
- Publicize milestones: recovery successes, businesses returning, re-opening
- Be ready for media cycle; news outlets will revisit disasters at anniversaries
- Consider hiring a PR firm



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# Social Media

- Internet can be accessed when networks are down
- Businesses should use social media to advertise when they are open again
- Some communities engage citizens on social media to track recovery efforts



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# Consider Needs of Essential Customers

## Communications needs of visitors

- Evacuation plans, safety procedures
- Airport is open and flights are departing
- Alternative accommodations and services
- Which businesses are open
- How you care for visitors affects reputation and economy for the future



2006 Hawaii earthquake



2015  
Puerto  
Vallarta,  
Mexico



# Case Study: Colorado Forest Fires & Floods (2013)

After successive fires, burn scars made it easy for rainfall to create catastrophic floods from mountains onto small towns

18 counties declared disasters, \$2B in damage  
Local officials lamented the publicity that the entire state of Colorado was destroyed

When recovering, EDA brought in an economic development assessment team to help brainstorm long- and short-term recovery



# Colorado

## Recommendations

- A pro-active, positive message of being open for business was needed. This needed to come from the local government, EDOs, tourism promotion agencies.
- Infrastructure should be built back better, with resiliency and greater capacity in mind.
- Take a new look at the community's assets. Some communities were too dependent on tourism, so it was time to diversify. Other business opportunities were identified in strategic planning process.



# 2012 Hurricane Sandy, New Jersey - \$62B damage

Media stories left the impression that the entire New Jersey Shore was out of business

Yet some tourist areas were unaffected

The state waged a campaign to communicate “open for business” and inspire businesses and the community







# Example: Kentucky Emergency Management



Kentucky Emergency Management created a Facebook page to provide disaster updates and helpful advice

 **Kentucky Emergency Management**  
January 9 at 7:01pm · 🌐

KYEM reminds you to #BeWeatherReady visit <http://ow.ly/WOGuo> for winter weather preparedness tips! #KYWX <http://ow.ly/WOGN2>



**NWS Winter Storm Safety Before the Storm**  
Before the storm strikes, make sure your home, office and vehicles are stocked with the supplies you might need. Make sure farm animals and pets...

NWS.NOAA.GOV



Kentucky Emergency Management  
Government Organization

7,791 people like this  
200 people have been here  
Open Sleeps  
Wake Yourself to Use This Page  
4.5 of 5 stars · 41 reviews  
Like · Comment · Share

**National Weather Service**  
A storm system moving across the western U.S. and being heavy snow on Friday to parts of the central and southern Rockies and the Niagara River...

They also used their page to explain prevention tactics and rebuilding strategies.





# Best Practice: Joplin, Missouri Recovery

## Example: Joplin, MO's Strategy after a Disaster

- May 22, 2011, an EF-5 tornado struck
- 2.8B damage, 161 fatalities
- Chamber of Commerce used social media, posting on Facebook within 1 hour of the tornado to relay initial information and resources to businesses



# Best Practice: Joplin, Missouri

- The Joplin Chamber set up and staffed an information hotline to combat misinformation
- Chamber staff answered calls from businesses:
  - Utility restoration
  - Cleanup, business services
  - Rebuilding efforts
  - Financing options
  - Other practical matters important for businesses



# Best Practice: Joplin, Missouri Recovery

Joplin chamber rebuilt their website to focus on resources and provide an update on the status of businesses.

- Created an employer tracking system from emergency grant funds
- 3 weeks after the tornado, 1100 chamber members and 200+ non-members had been reached



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# Case Study: Polk County, Florida

## Example: Post-Disaster Communication in Polk County, Florida

- Polk County was struck by a series of three hurricanes in 2004/05.
- The Polk County EM office released a daily news flier in English and Spanish on general community recovery



# Case Study: Polk County, Florida

## Economic Development Organization's Role in Post-Disaster Communication

- The Central Florida Development Council, in partnership with the county's 13 chambers of commerce, provided information for businesses
- CFDC updated its website daily to provide updates on recovery information for local businesses



# Case Study: Polk County, Florida



Updates included:

- list of vacant space for temporary needs
- list of licensed contractors
- business recovery resources such as capital and technical assistance programs



List of licensed contractors was valuable in avoiding scams



Utilized hard copy flyers and local media to communicate locations of economic recovery meetings and services available to businesses.





# Be a conduit for 2-way communications

- After a disaster you will provide valuable information to businesses
- If you survey and interview businesses, they can also provide important information to you about their needs and realities
- Be their advocate. Ensure their comments, issues and recommendations are shared with local, state and federal officials



# In summary: What businesses need to hear from you

- Empathy: How you're advocating for biz needs
- Business re-entry procedures
- Reputable service providers:
  - Cleanup
  - Financing
  - Business counsel
  - Rebuilding efforts
- Confident leadership: your plans for mitigation & future economic resilience



**Comments?  
Questions?**

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*Thank you!*



# CARES Resilient Economy Webinar Series

<https://hudsonvalleyregionalcouncil.org/regional-initiatives/economic-development/#special-cares-project>

**Where to  
find the  
webinar  
recordings**

- **Resilience & Economic Development**  
Lynn Knight and Stephen Jordan presented the first webinar about what economic resilience is, how to measure it, and how to build capacity for economic recovery after a disaster.
- **Retaining Small Businesses After a Crisis**  
Lynn Knight and Calandra Cruickshank presented the second webinar about what tools and best practices should be used to help businesses weather economic disasters.
- **Crisis Communications for Economic Recovery**  
Lynn Knight and Cynthia Richmond presented the third webinar about using communications to get businesses back up and running, people employed, and local revenues flowing after a crisis.

**Crisis Communications for Economic Recovery**



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