

This one-page handout is for personal use **only for individuals who participated** in the *Communicating During a Crisis* webinar hosted by Stephanie Marquis Enterprises on Friday, March 13, 2020. Participants were invited by the League of Wisconsin Municipalities and Wisconsin Association of School Boards. **Any further distribution, photocopying or dissemination is strictly forbidden.**

Communication Objectives

1. Build knowledge and understanding
2. Establish trust and credibility
3. Motivate and influence behavior
4. Set stage for future messaging

Social Media

- 2/3 of people check social media for their news, so use it to your advantage
- Use it to your advantage to share information, dispel rumors

Comprehension During a Crisis

During a crisis, emergency or other high-stress event, peoples' thoughts turn from facts to perceptions regardless of education level. Therefore, speak and write at a 6-8th grade reading level, write and talk in short sentences, and avoid acronyms and jargon. Keep it simple and easy to understand by using plain language. **Start with empathy first – always.**

Developing Your Message

1. Identify stakeholders and their questions
2. Develop talking points for three key messages
3. Test your message for understanding
4. Deliver message through spokesperson or other appropriate communication channels

Delivering the Message

- Consistent person / spokesperson to share information throughout event – someone who can genuinely express empathy
- Practice, practice, practice
- Identify common concerns from your variety of audiences, and you will be able to anticipate at least 95% of the questions you will get
- **Do not speculate. If you're wrong, it can take years to build back trust.** At some point, you'll be pressed to answer a speculative or hypothetical question. This type of inquiry is often followed by, "Can you just tell me yes or no." Take it back to what you do know.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources

- [StephanieMarquis.com](https://www.stephaniemarquis.com)
- [League of Wisconsin Municipalities](https://www.wisconsinmunicipalities.org)
- [Wisconsin Association of School Boards](https://www.wisconsinassn.org)
- [Wisconsin Department of Health Services](https://www.wisconsin.gov/health-services)
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov)
- [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int)

Stephanie Marquis, President of SME LLC, is a high-impact public relations executive with 25+ years' strategic and crisis communications experience including media relations, organization retention issues, brand management, and marketing. These are excerpts from her crisis and strategic communications training, as well as her experience in developing emergency response plans. Contact Stephanie at hello@stephaniemarquis.com or at 608.577.5203.