AIR & WASTE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION
SOUTHERN SECTION ANNUAL MEETING

CONCEPTS IN CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

September 21, 2016
Issue vs. Crisis?
Issue
Crisis
Optics Change Over Time & By Audience
Communication Concept

• Theory of Mutual Inattention
  – Myths
  – Axioms
  – Realities
Theory of Mutual Inattention

Myths

#1 Can build a reservoir of good will
#2 The truth is the truth is the truth
#3 Facts and data are convincing
#4 Media relations = public education
#5 There are end points
Theory of Mutual Inattention

Axioms

#1 Transparency is not trust

#2 Message velocity varies by audience

#3 Relying on news media is a recipe for failure

#4 Direct and specific communication increases impact

#5 Influencing audiences requires messages and actions they care about
Theory of Mutual Inattention

Realities

#1 Audiences don’t care
#2 Audiences don’t know your business
#3 Audiences will accept messages they are prepared to receive
#4 Audience perceptions vary
Optics Matter
Control The Optics You Can
Activities & Tools

✓ Notification Protocols/Relationship Map
✓ Scenario-Building
✓ Key Messages & Talking Points
✓ Position Statement
✓ Fact Sheet(s)
✓ Internal Communication Strategies & Tactics
✓ External Communication Strategies & Tactics
✓ Media/Community Monitoring & Response
Control The Optics You Can
Identifying A Crisis/Emerging Issue

- Will this go away, or will it escalate, if not addressed?
- Does this have news value or the potential for news value?
- Would the media report this if they knew?
- Does this have possible legal implications?
  - Duty to disclose?
- How would our key audiences react to this?
- Would it make others shy away from us?
- Would this affect our image negatively?
- Will it interfere with business as usual?
TTD In A Crisis

- PUT PEOPLE FIRST
- Assure proper authorities are contacted
  - Coordinate responses
- Do not respond to rumor or speculate, but issue at least an interim statement
- Publicly state cooperation and diligence as appropriate
  - (repeat often)
TTD In A Crisis

- State plans to provide continued updates
- Seek legal and corporate communication counsel
- Do not rely on news media to tell your story – communicate directly with key stakeholders
- Monitor coverage and correct serious inaccuracies