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Communicating During a Crisis

Working with reporters, elected officials, and the community

A crisis is only a matter of time

25abc
CONNECTING CENTRAL TEXAS

SOLAR ECLIPSE 2024

Killeen Mayor Debbie Nash-King declares state of disaster ahead of Monday's eclipse

By Heidi March
Posted at 5:40 PM, Apr 02, 2024 and last updated at 6:40 PM, Apr 02, 2024

KILLEEN, Texas — Mayor Debbie Nash-King of Killeen issued a disaster declaration — effective immediately — during a press conference at City Hall on Tuesday, in preparation for the total solar eclipse on Monday, April 8.

A statement made by Mayor Nash-King at the press conference reads: "The total solar eclipse is a breathtaking experience, however, it also brings with it certain challenges and risks that we cannot overlook. In light of the potential impact on our city, I am issuing a disaster declaration."

pensacola news journal

FBI takes lead in Pensacola cyberattack investigation; online bill pay could return soon

Jim Little
Pensacola News Journal
Published 9:32 a.m. CT April 2, 2024

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is the lead agency investigating a ransomware cyberattack against the city of Pensacola's.com according to Chris Williams, Florida Department of Law Enforcement agent in charge of Pensacola operations.

Williams, who was speaking at a press conference at City Hall on Tuesday, said the FBI is the lead agency.

"These types of cases are very complicated," Williams said. "They're very complex. And as soon as we can get back to work, we're going to investigate."

Idaho Capital Sun

Almost three-fourths of fires Idaho state officials tracked in 2023 were human caused

As number of human-caused fires increased from last year, state firefighting costs expected to hit \$17.4 million for 2023

By CLARK CORBIN - OCTOBER 17, 2023 1:34 PM

The sharp increase in human-caused fires in Idaho continued throughout the summer and into the fall, with Idaho Department of Lands officials investigating 206 fires caused by people so far this year, state officials said Tuesday.

The 206 human-caused fires reported by the Idaho Department of Lands so far in 2023 compare to 78 fires caused by lightning over the same time period.

In 2022, state officials investigated 127 human-caused fires and 153 fires caused by lightning, Idaho Department of Lands records show.

Idaho Department of Lands Director Dustin Miller briefed Gov. Brad Little and the other members of the State Board of Land Commissioners about the 2023 season during a press conference Tuesday.

Your City Doesn't Have a Migrant Crisis Yet? Just Ask Denver for its New How-To Guide.

May 23, 2024

Officials have just released a 22-page guide that comprehensively covers the, employment, and otherwise subsidize and reward illegal immigrants in your city. As part of Denver's welcoming approach to recognizing that they are new to our city and embracing a model into two sections, offering recommendations and strategies.

Denver's Newcomers Playbook! We are thrilled that you are new migrants in your city. As part of Denver's welcoming approach to recognizing that they are new to our city and embracing a model into two sections, offering recommendations and strategies.

HOUSTON PUBLIC MEDIA
A DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

FEMA urges Houston area residents impacted by storm to apply for disaster assistance

More than 48,000 individuals across the region have already applied for assistance, and more than \$1 million has already been given to people impacted by the storms.

Patricia Ortiz | May 21, 2024, 5:02 PM

Officials hosted a press conference to urge Houston-area residents to apply to FEMA disaster assistance.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is urging Houston-area residents to sign up for disaster assistance after storm damage from last week's derecho.

The wind storm produced two tornadoes that caused power outages, and significant damage to buildings, trees, and infrastructure.

FEMA administrator Deanne Criswell said there are more than 400 workers across the region helping people receive aid.

Working with executives



Practical advice – stay calm, be focused

Provide information you know is critical

- Prioritize and discuss key information first
- Stick to facts, avoid speculation, rely on your experts
- Be transparent, don't fear negative repercussions
- Early information can be inaccurate and will change
 - Convey: Official sources are the most accurate

Keep your messages short and understandable

- What happened?
- What are you doing about it?
- What concerns do you have?
- Are there injuries, fatalities, evacuations, risks, etc.
- What do you need the executive to do?
- What resources do you need to restore order?

Practical advice – know your audience

A crisis impacts people differently

- Empathy is critical; recognize the crisis' true impact
- Identify key contacts and be efficient
- Understand the executive's preferences for information

Anticipate questions and develop answers

- Use your communications staff to develop talking points
- Provide vetted solutions or next steps
 - Present the preferred option first
- Avoid over-verifying key information

Practical advice – communicate with confidence

Know how to deliver the information

- Tell the executive they are the first to know
- Meet in person, if possible
- If it's safe, show the scene
 - Consider a tour, flyover, or visual aids
- Be confident and positive, not arrogant

Allow your audience to respond

- The executive's opinion matters
- Expect both silent and vocal responses
- Push back respectfully if the executive oversteps
- Provide frequent updates and a 24/7 contact
- Follow-up on their questions

Working with the media



Practical advice – the value of media interactions

Media interviews are just conversations

- Interviews should be taken seriously, but remember...
 - Reporters are people with a job like you
 - The press is a conduit to the public
 - Be cool, calm, collected, and focused

Address the topics that could be easily misunderstood

- Provide background information in simple terms, phrases
- Identify key information and desired actions
- Communicate at an 8th to 10th grade level
- Avoid jargon, acronyms, or unfamiliar phrases

Practical advice – stay calm, on target

Address the underlying concern of the audience

- Anticipate tough questions and prepare answers
- Ask: What would I want to know

Practice your talking points, if possible

- And rework points to ensure clarity

How you look, act, and behave is important

- volume, clarity
- pace/rhythm/pitch
- facial expressions/eye contact
- posture
- gestures
- dress/grooming
- distractions



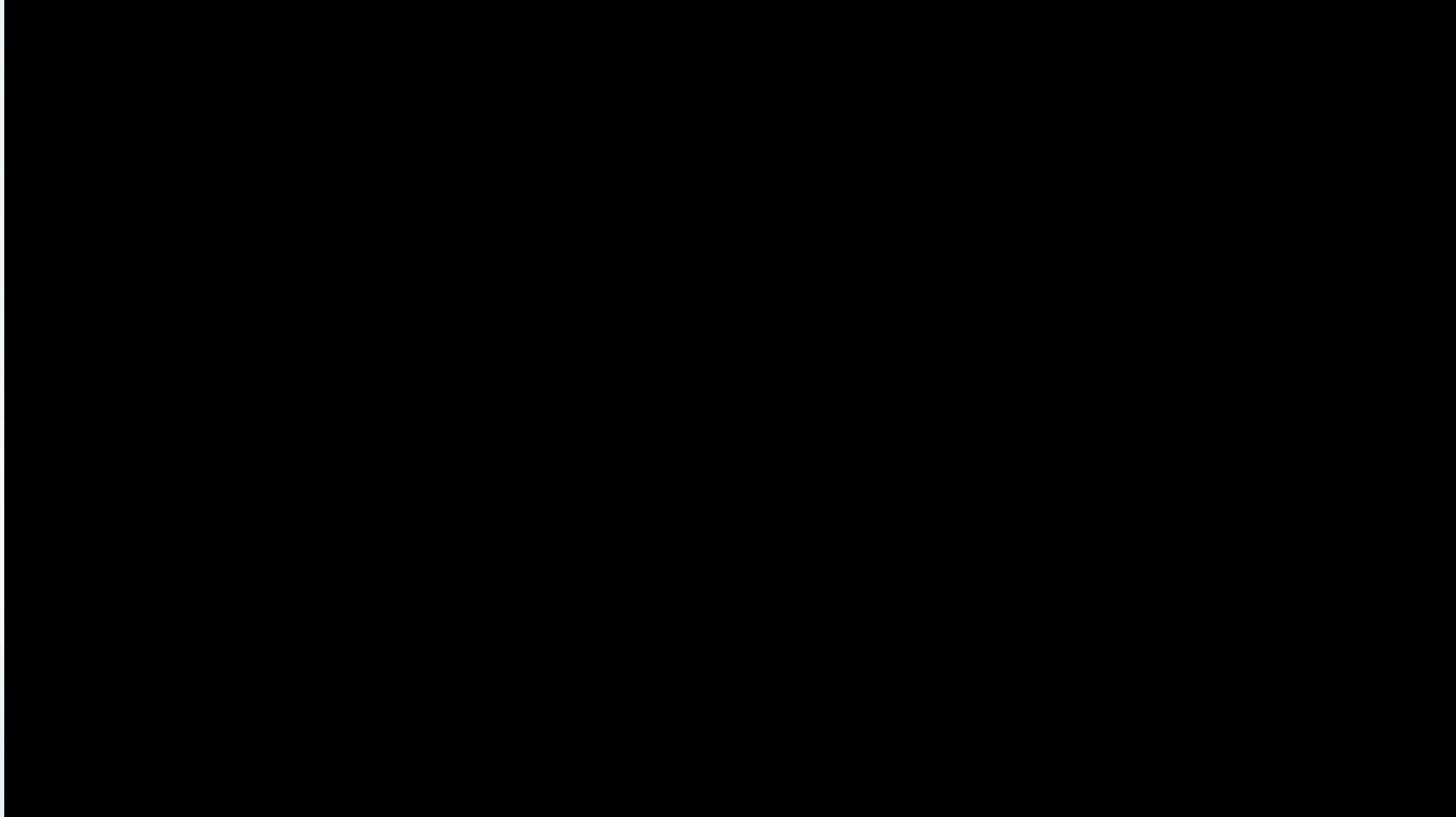
Tips for getting unstuck

- **Dodge – You can say things like:**
 - “That’s not a decision for me to make...”
 - “That’s not my area of expertise...”
 - “I can’t speak to that topic, but let me say this...”
- **Bridge – You can say things like:**
 - “That’s a great question”
 - “Let me start by answering your first question”
- **Rewrite the Question – You can say things like:**
 - “I would tell the community that...”
 - “I don’t believe that’s a fair representation of the situation...”
- **Follow-up**
 - If you don’t know the answer, that’s okay. But get back to the reporter
 - Consider using the time at the end of an interview to reinforce your message

VIDEO: Tim Cook – dodging example



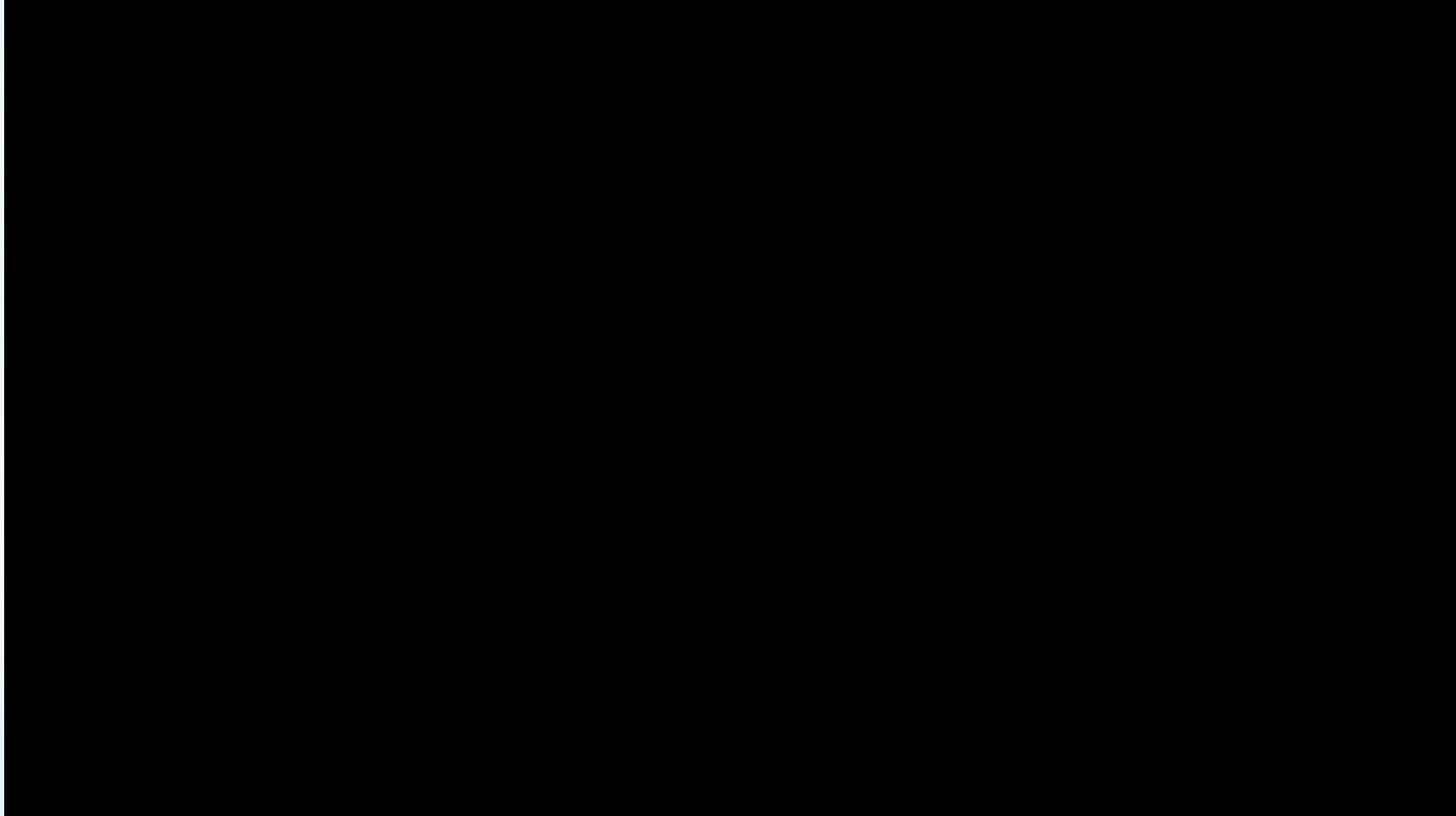
VIDEO: Gina Raimondo– bridging example



VIDEO: Angela Davis – rewriting the question



VIDEO: Bob Jordan – CEO, Southwest Airlines



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