

Chelan, WA



JULIE PARKER
Communic@tions

FROM **CHAOS** TO **CLARITY**

Crisis Communications
Fundamentals

Oct. 8, 2025

1



JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

2

Christopher **Mannino**



JULIE PARKER *Communications*

3

Christopher **Mannino**

Vice President of Julie Parker Communications

Retired Chief of Police

FBINA Graduate

25-Year Law Enforcement Veteran

Master's Degree in Political Science

FEMA-Trained in Tabletop Exercises



JULIE PARKER *Communications*

4

Let's Discuss

In a crisis, effective communication is crucial. What you say builds trusts, calms panic, and can save lives.

Through a short scenario, you'll practice:



**The Elements of
Crisis Messaging**



**Answering the Media
Under Pressure**



**Messaging Clearly
and Empathetically**

JULIE PARKER *Communications*

5



First Crisis Fundamental:

»»» Knowing what to say with
limited information

JULIE PARKER *Communications*

6

“We don’t know what to say . . .”

Follow this simple strategy:

1

Define

Define the problem and show appropriate concern

2

Describe

Explain what you're doing to address it

3

Direct

Provide clear guidance on what your audience can or should do

JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

7

“We don’t know what to say . . .”

Follow this simple strategy:

Define

Example:

“We have received reports of a downed utility pole with live electrical wires at the intersection of Jefferson Avenue and Main Street.”

Describe

Example:

“City crews and fire personnel are on scene and working with the power company to secure the area.”

Direct

Example:

“Please avoid the area and do not attempt to move or touch any downed wires. Drivers should use alternate routes.”

JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

8

Second Crisis Fundamental:

»»» Answering questions
from **the media**

JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*



9

The only **three**
answers you'll give to the media:

1 | I know, and here is the answer.

2 | I know, but can't share, and here's why.

3 | I don't know, but I'll find out.

JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*



10



Third Crisis Fundamental:

Use less jargon and more
»» **trauma-informed**
language

JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

11



TALK LIKE A HUMAN

DUMP THE JARGON



JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

12

The “4 Rs” of Trauma- Informed Care

Adapted for communicators from SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach.



JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

13



Park Forest Police Department ✓

July 3, 2018 · 🌐

The Park Forest Police Department is investigating the drowning death of a 10-year-old male juvenile who entered the Aqua Center, a swimming facility, after hours overnight.

Shortly before 4 a.m., the Park Forest Police Department was dispatched to a residence reference the report of a missing juvenile. Family members related that the juvenile had been playing in the area of Central Park. As police searched for the missing juvenile, family members checking the area on foot alerted police to the juvenile being in a pool inside the facility after observing the juvenile's clothing outside of one of the pools. A police officer scaled the perimeter fence and entered the pool, recovering the juvenile and immediately performing CPR on the child. Park Forest Paramedics rushed the juvenile to Franciscan Health Olympia Fields, however the juvenile was later pronounced deceased. The Illinois State Police Crime Scene Investigation Unit responded to assist with processing of the scene.

The Aqua Center facility is owned by the Village of Park Forest and is managed by Jeff Ellis Management. The Aqua Center will remain closed for the day, July 3, 2018.

As this remains an active death investigation, no additional details will be released at this time. While any death is reason to grieve, the death of a child is particularly troubling, and the Park Forest Police Department offers its sincerest condolences to the loved ones and friends of the juvenile.

JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

14



Park Forest Police Department

July 3, 2018 · 🌐

The Park Forest Police Department is investigating the drowning death of a 10-year-old male juvenile who entered the Aqua Center, a swimming facility, after hours overnight.

Shortly before 4 a.m., the Park Forest Police Department was dispatched to a residence reference the report of a missing juvenile. Family members related that the juvenile had been playing in the area of Central Park. As police searched for the missing juvenile, family members checking the area on foot alerted police to the juvenile being in a pool inside the facility after observing the juvenile's clothing outside of one of the pools. A police officer scaled the perimeter fence and entered the pool, recovering the juvenile and immediately performing CPR on the child. Park Forest Paramedics rushed the juvenile to Franciscan Health Olympia Fields, however the juvenile was later pronounced deceased. The Illinois State Police Crime Scene Investigation Unit responded to assist with processing of the scene.

The Aqua Center facility is owned by the Village of Park Forest and is managed by Jeff Ellis Management. The Aqua Center will remain closed for the day, July 3, 2018.

As this remains an active death investigation, no additional details will be released at this time. While any death is reason to grieve, the death of a child is particularly troubling, and the Park Forest Police Department offers its sincerest condolences to the loved ones and friends of the juvenile.

JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

15

JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

EXERCISE

Clearwater Gas Explosion | Oct. 14

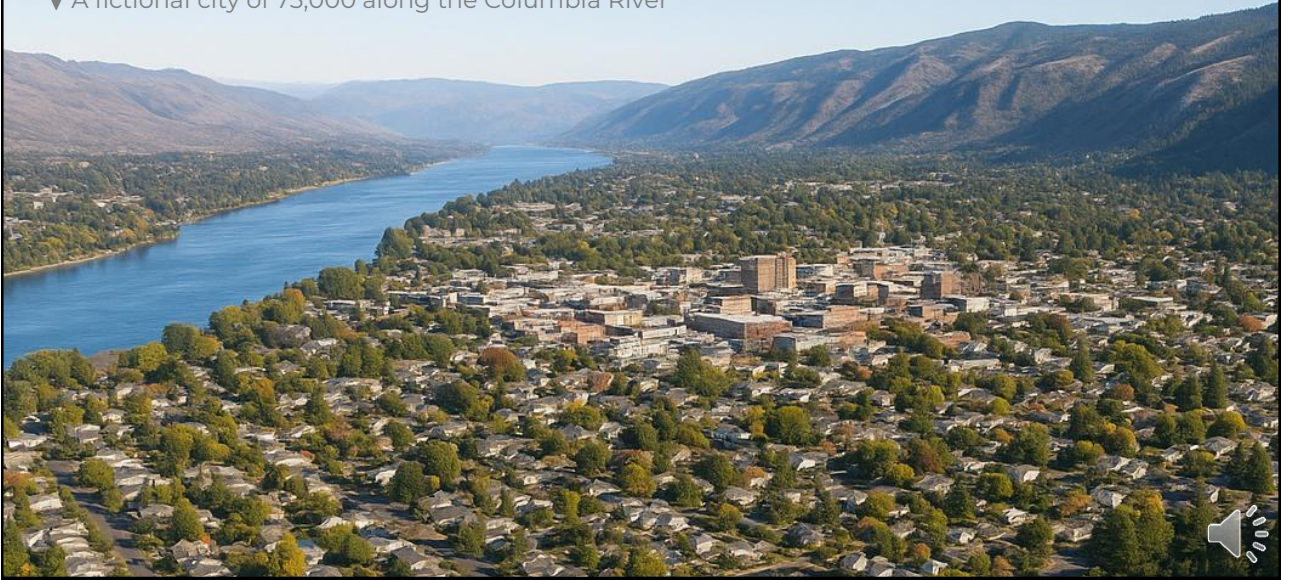
This exercise in its entirety is fictional; all photos of people depicted are AI generated.



16

CLEARWATER, WA

📍 A fictional city of 75,000 along the Columbia River



17

CLEARWATER PUBLIC WORKS OPERATION YARD

Maintains the city's fleet of snowplows, garbage trucks, and utility vehicles. The facility is over 35 years old and scheduled to be replaced in 2027. Forty-two employees work across shifts at the yard.



18

10:14 AM

A massive explosion shakes the Operations Yard. The blast appears to come from inside the main vehicle maintenance garage.



JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

EXERCISE

19

10:16 AM

Within minutes, 911 dispatchers receive frantic calls from nearby residents reporting an explosion, damaged homes, and the rise of a dark plume of smoke.



JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

EXERCISE

20

10:20 AM

Most of the garage has collapsed. A mechanic working on the yard calls 911 and reports multiple injuries and one of his colleagues missing. Fire crews have been dispatched.



JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

EXERCISE

21



**Using the
“Define, Describe,
Direct” strategy,
craft an initial
public statement**

JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

EXERCISE

22

11:05 AM

Six city employees are injured, two critically and four with moderate injuries. One employee is still unaccounted for. Three neighborhood residents are being treated for minor injuries from glass and debris. Investigators have begun looking into the cause of the explosion.



JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

EXERCISE

23

11:20 AM

CNN confirms that a crew is on the way to Clearwater City Hall. They are requesting an on-camera interview with a city spokesperson at noon.

Ashley McCabe



[Reporter]



JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

EXERCISE

24

**A spokesperson
will participate in
a mock interview
using the only 3
responses**



JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

EXERCISE

25

- **By late afternoon, investigators determine that the explosion was caused by a ruptured natural gas line inside the garage.**
- **The ignition occurred while a compressed natural gas dump truck was being serviced.**
- **Officials confirm there is no evidence of foul play or terrorism and that this was an industrial accident.**

JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

EXERCISE

26

The missing employee is found deceased inside the garage and identified as 51-year-old **Angela Lewis**, a city mechanic with 15 years of service. Coworkers are devastated by the loss.

Families in the neighborhood are displaced while inspectors check the safety of their homes. Residents voice anger about why the outdated facility was still operating.



JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

EXERCISE

27



Craft a message that closes the loop with empathy.

- **How do you acknowledge grief and fear?**
- **How do you reassure people you're listening and acting?**
- **How do you sound human, not bureaucratic?**



JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

EXERCISE

28

JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

ENDEX/DEBRIEF

29

Let's Connect



Christopher Mannino

christopher@julieparkerco.com
(219) 334-3672

 Julie Parker Communications
 @ChiefMannino
 Christopher Mannino

JULIE PARKER *Communic@tions*

30