

---

# Media Inquiry: Talking to Today's Reporters

Jonathan Modie  
Communications Officer  
OHA Office of Communications  
Public Health Division

Oregon  
Health  
Authority

(Enter) DEPARTMENT (ALL CAPS)  
(Enter) Division or Office (Mixed Case)



# About your host

- Recovering newspaper reporter
- 20 years as a flack, primarily health/health care
- 5 years at Public Health Division
- News junkie

# Introduction

- Goals of our time together
- Why media training
- Who we are
- What we do
- How info gets to reporters
- What makes a good story
- Overview of media: Today's media

# Goals

- How do media operate?
- Key messages
- Interview better
- Get comfy with reporters (sorta)

# Media training

- Visibility, legitimacy, credibility – all the things we want out of a good OR bad interview
- Get your message out!
- Elevator speech

# Who we are

- Susan Wickstrom
- Jonathan Modie
- ... Of a staff of 15 in OHA Communications
- \* Kathleen Vidoloff, risk communications
- All of you – our trusty spokespeople!

\* Primarily infectious disease-related risk comms

# What we do

- 120 programs
- Support LHDs and tribes
- Emergency comms

# How info gets to reporters

- News release
- Pitches
- National story
- Beats
- Social media
- PRRs

# What makes a good story

- Timeliness
- Broad
- Local
- Personal
- Injustice
- Breakthrough
- Seasonal/anniversary
- Controversy

# What makes a good story – DWS version

- Portland boil-water notice – May 2014
- Golf Mobile City injunction – May 2014
- Milton-Freewater well water investigation – Feb/March 2014
- Baker City cryptosporidium – July/Aug 2013
- Covering reservoirs
- Other local boil water notices
- Lead in drinking water
- Harmful algae blooms
- Positive E. coli water samples of any kind, level, source, day or time at all whatsoever
- Reservoir or other DW source pee/poop/carcass incidents

# Overview of media

- 100% web and social media presence
- 24-hour news cycle – “Post or perish” (views/retweets/comments)
- Intense competition
- Recent cuts
- Lean staffs, dogged reporters
- Investigative teams
- PRRs as standard tool (including requesting raw, unweighted data)
- Increasing reliance on other media as “sources”
- More opining/editorializing in news stories

# Overview of media

- Print
- Wire service
- Magazine
- TV
- Radio
- Talk radio
- Social media

# Key messages

- What is the problem?
- Why does it matter?
- What is at stake?
- Who is responsible?
- What should be done?
- What are you doing NOW to protect me?

# Developing key messages

- What do you want people to know or do?
- KISS
- Plain language
  - Maintain a jargon- and acronym-free zone
  - Go easy with numbers. Or, paint a picture: “If one considers the quantity of radioactive water released by Fukushima reactors so far to a drop of ink, then placing that droplet into a large public swimming pool, and then trying to analyze the pool water for the quantity of ink is what we are trying to do.”
- Know your audience
- Use positive language

# Key messages

- Put them on your wall
- Use them every time
- Think of ways to reword them
- Repeat them
- Repeat them
- Repeat them
- Repeat them

# Values

- We care
- We listen
- We work together
- We don't like surprises

# Practice

- Create your own key messages
- 3-5 points
- Think about the goals, values, objectives of your agency, and/or as a drinking water professional
- Make them broad, but adaptable to any situation
- REMEMBER:
  - We care
  - We listen
  - We work together
  - We don't like surprises

# Example

- Access to safe drinking water is essential to human health.
- Oregon Drinking Water Services (DWS) administers and enforces drinking water quality standards for public water systems in Oregon.
- Drinking Water Services is requiring the City of Portland to issue a boil-water notice to residents after a water sample tested positive for the presence of E. coli bacteria.
- E. coli bacteria in drinking water can make people sick, and are of particular concern for people with weakened immune systems.
- DWS and the city are working closely to ensure residents are advised to boil their water, which kills the E. coli bacterium.

# What makes a good story – DWS version

- Portland boil-water notice – May 2014
- Golf Mobile City injunction – May 2014
- Milton-Freewater well water investigation – Feb/March 2014
- Baker City cryptosporidium – July/Aug 2013
- Covering reservoirs
- Other local boil water notices
- Lead in drinking water
- Harmful algae blooms
- Positive E. coli water samples of any kind, level, source, day or time at all whatsoever
- Reservoir or other DW source pee/poop/carcass incidents

# Scenarios

- A hunter shoots an elk but loses track of it, and the animal's rotting carcass is later found in a stream next to an intake pipe that provides drinking water for a town of 8,000.
- Members of a fraternity at the local college decided, as an initiation, to break into a reservoir and do a group defecation; the act is later tipped to the media.

# Staying on message

- Bridging
- Avoid trap questions and methods
  1. Negative/unfair/loaded questions
  2. Hypotheticals
  3. “Filling the gap”
  4. Third party questions
  5. Multiple choice questions
  6. Personnel/HR, legal, political, financial, HIPAA, personal
  7. Speculation

# Interview techniques

- Before an interview
- During an interview
- After an interview

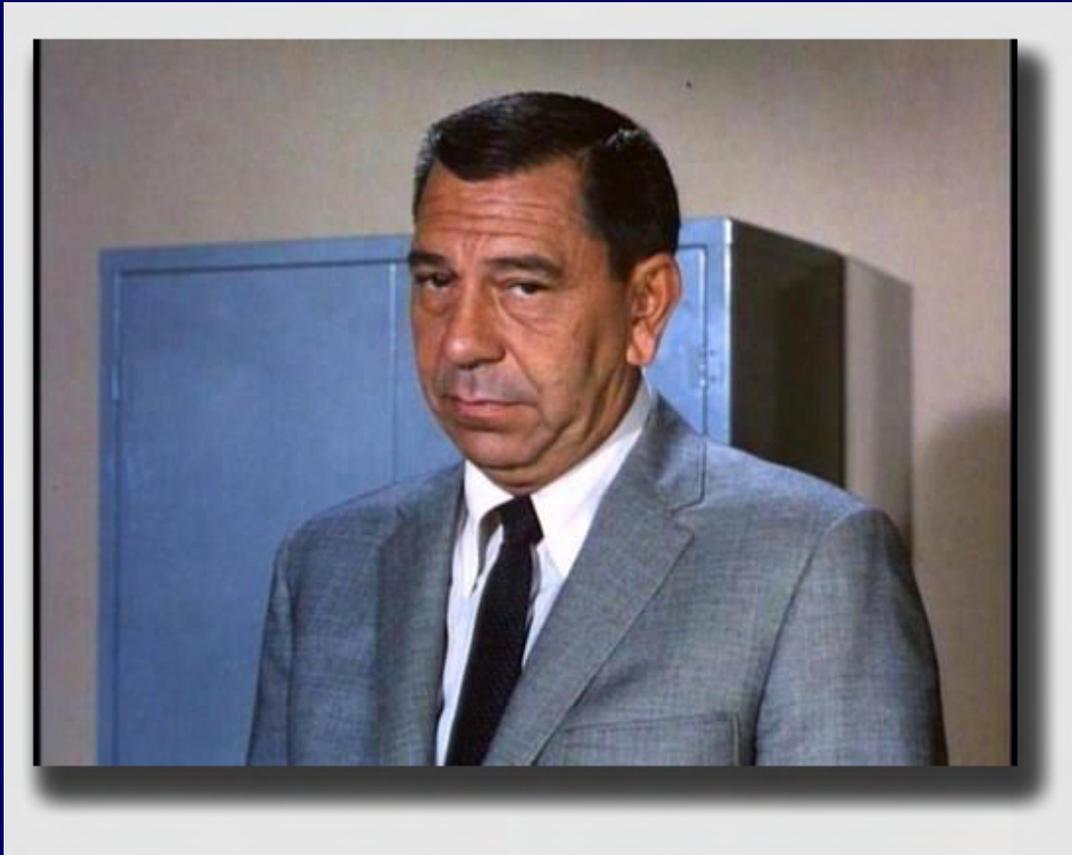
# Other tips

- Never “no comment”
- No such thing as “off the record”
- Always on
- “Facts” from reporters
- Don’t accept that document!
- Own the interview!

# Your rights and responsibilities

- Be responsive
- Be professional
- Ask your own questions

# Bottom line ...



# Questions?