



## 2015 WEBINAR SERIES

August 5, 2015

# **INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS**

# Upcoming Webinars

**NOVEMBER**

**Autonomous & Connected Vehicles**

**DECEMBER**

**Human Resources Focus**

# Upcoming Meetings

## IBTTA 83rd Annual Meeting & Exhibition

August 30-September 2 | Dublin, Ireland

[www.ibtta.org/dublin](http://www.ibtta.org/dublin)

## IBTTA New Media, Communications & Human Resources Workshop

October 18-20 | Cleveland, OH

[www.ibtta.org/cleveland](http://www.ibtta.org/cleveland)

# Professional Development Hours & Logistics for Today

- Professional Development certificate: email [kdavis@ibtta.org](mailto:kdavis@ibtta.org)
- Submit Questions via the Q&A Pod
- We'll be done by 2pm
- Slides and recorded audio will be on the website by Noon tomorrow. [www.ibtta.org/webinars](http://www.ibtta.org/webinars)



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**National Director of Toll Client Development**  
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# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS 101: TRANSPORTATION INDUSTRY

Gloria Story Dittus

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# OVERVIEW

- **The three phases of crisis communications**
  1. Before: *Preparation & Strategy*
  2. During: *Assessment & Response*
  3. After: *Evaluation, Recovery, Restoration*

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## BEFORE: PREPARATION

- Develop a plan
  - Build your roadmap
- Identify allies
  - Community leaders, local and state elected officials, toll road/highway users, or key constituencies (e.g. parent, commuter, or employer advocacy groups) who can put a local face on the issue
  - Engage your allies; develop an influencer list in the transportation sector to open lines of communication
- Put your team in place
  - Designate a spokesperson (internal or third party) who has media training and can relate to the community
  - Build a crisis team (could include legal, communications, HR, or CFO)
  - Establish a notification and approval process in the event of a crisis



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## BEFORE: STRATEGY

- Know your messaging
  - By their nature, crises are unpredictable and will change your approach or alter your communications, but having core messages established puts you ahead of the game
- Develop materials
  - e.g. talking points, FAQs, myths & facts documents, infographics, testimonials, white papers, video, etc.
  - Focus groups, polling, and one-on-one interviews can give insight
- Know the landscape
  - Journalists who cover transportation, stories, and quotes
  - Allies/competitors who've been in crisis scenarios before
- Scenario planning
  - Define what would constitute a crisis to prevent over- or under-reaction
  - Create a matrix of how to react to different types of crises, based on scale, timing, impact, internal/external, etc.

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## DURING: ASSESSMENT

- Assessment
  - Gather the facts & determine an appropriate, measured response
    - What happened?
    - How do we know?
    - Who is impacted?
    - Should we be low profile (i.e. only respond to direct inquiries)?
    - Or should we be high profile (i.e. stay out front, visible, and proactive in your messaging)?
  - Notify
    - Based on the initial assessment, prioritize *who* needs to know (e.g. employers, consumers, lawmakers, media)
    - Decide *what* information they need

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## DURING: RESPONSE

- Engage allies who can carry your message
  - Capitalize on third-party relationships to call, write, and email media and public officials
  - As appropriate, place op-eds, LTEs, interviews
- Control the message
  - Repeat the facts, correct misinformation immediately, be forthright and open
  - Set your digital footprint, with videos or online collateral that are “sticky” and encourage sharing
  - Deploy tools such geo-targeting to reach your audience with advertising in social media, consumer or trade publications, national news outlets, blogs, etc.
- Establish continuous monitoring
  - Use the right digital tools for digital and print monitoring (e.g. Signal, Google alerts)
  - Based on monitoring, have a rapid response in place

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# AFTER: EVALUATION, RECOVERY, RESTORATION

- Evaluation
  - Assess the impact made on the company, its relationships with community and stakeholders, its brand, and reputation
    - Continued media monitoring and what the political/public conversation is
    - Surveying employees, customers, etc.
- Recovery
  - Based on lessons learned, determine a plan for recovery
    - This includes an internal plan (employees) and external plan (media, community, stakeholders, customers)
    - Build a case study that qualifies lessons learned and how to prevent similar scenarios in the future
- Restoration
  - Apply lessons learned toward a new image campaign
    - Continue to engage media on what you did right and what you will do right going forward
    - Adjust advertising and marketing messaging
    - Adjust talking points and collateral based on what worked and what didn't

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## RECAP: 5 CRISIS POINTS

### 1. Get prepared

- “There's no harm in hoping for the best as long as you're prepared for the worst.” – Stephen King

### 2. Find your allies

- It's far harder to build a support system amid chaos; open the lines of communication *now* rather than *later*

### 3. Know your message

- If you don't know who you are and what you're about *now*, it won't get any easier during a crisis

### 4. Tell your story

- Repeat, repeat, repeat

### 5. Move forward

- If you're not a good messenger for all the things you're doing right, it's much harder for others to follow your lead

# Navigating the Waters of a Community Crisis

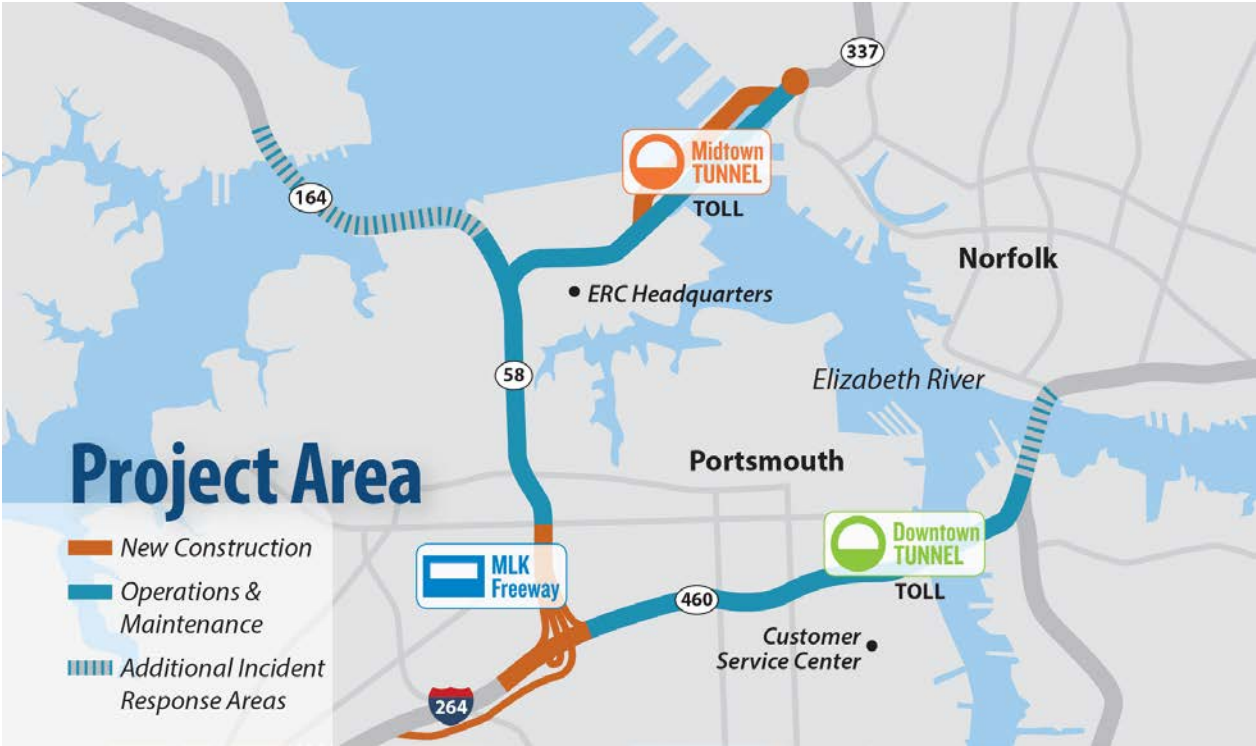


**Cherie Gibson**

**August 5, 2015**



# Elizabeth River Tunnels Project



# All-Electronic Tolling

After one year of tolling, Elizabeth River Crossings (ERC) has determined that it is necessary to develop communication processes surrounding all-electronic tolling (AET) operations issues at the Elizabeth River Tunnels (ERT).



# Crises Communications AET Workshop

- Begin to develop a clear set of messages to address toll system failures, invoicing and mailing discrepancies, customer service delays and other toll-related issues that could become crises.
- Define and establish our Communications Plan in the event of an AET crisis.
- Create and refine AET communications messaging for stakeholders using potential scenarios:
  - ERC Board
  - ERC Financial Investors
  - Media
  - VDOT/Commonwealth
  - ERC Employees
  - Customer Service Center Staff
  - Public/Customers

# Preparing for an AET Crisis

Crises can range from minor events to major catastrophes that could last for the course of a day or over several weeks.

- What are the attributes of a **Major (M)** and **minor (m)** crisis?
  - Level of customer impact
  - Public perception of event
  - Level of public impact
  - Level of financial impact
  - Impact on relationships with Commonwealth officials
  - Reputation impact to partners/ERC

# AET Risk Assessment

- **Full or Partial System Failure:** The roadway all-electronic tolling system fails to register use of a certain type of vehicle; the AET sensors fail in a lane; the AET sensors fail to collect data.
- **Inaccurate Toll Collections:** The AET roadway system is calculating inaccurate charges for motorist use; the front office is not communicating effectively with the back office for proper Pay by Plate invoice processing.
- **System Breach of Privacy:** The Pay by Plate customer data is breached, lost or stolen.
- **Loss of AET Contractor Support:** ERT's AET tolling contractor is removed from Project; ERT Customer Service Center Support voids contract and refuses services.

# AET Risk Assessment

- **Customer Service Center Delays/Issue:** The CSC experiences higher than normal call/walk in volume; emails are not answered within specified time; invoice/violation disputes are not resolved within specified time.
- **Mailing House Issues:** The mail house contracted to send Pay by Plate invoices or notices experiences a Quality Control issue impacting ERT customers.
- **Invoicing Discrepancies:** Customer uses the facility and is invoiced for a different amount; customer is billed for facility use one way with their E-ZPass and the return trip with Pay by Plate; customer was never billed for trip.

# AET Risk Assessment

- **Physical Threat to CSC:** A USPS threat is mailed or brought into the CSC; there is an area-wide threat in the vicinity of the CSC location in Portsmouth.
- **Pay by Plate Website Functionality Issues:** Customers are not able to pay their invoices/notices online; errors in processing payments; website crash.
- **O&M Events Impacting Toll Operations:** Large scale operations or maintenance issue requires ERT to reroute traffic through toll gantry area without using the tunnel, resulting in potential charge discrepancies.

# AET Risk Assessment

- **State Suspends Tolls:** VDOT orders ERT to lift tolls for specified duration, in accordance with Section 5.05 of the Comprehensive Agreement between VDOT and ERC, executed December 5, 2011.
- **VDOT Administration Issues “Letter of Warning”:** VDOT issues ERC a public “letter of warning” outlining areas of needed improvement in ERT’s toll collection processes.
- **Class Action Lawsuit:** Initiated as a response to administrative fee issues; customers believe ERT is incorrectly charging for use of the tunnels.

# Questions for Each Crisis

- What is the problem/issue?
- What is the level of impact (As defined by M/m)?
  - On finances
  - On customers
  - On ERC partners
- What is the current action plan?
- What is the short-term resolution (containment)?
- What is the key messaging for stakeholders?
- What are the root causes?
- What is the long-term solution or corrective action?
- What will prevent this in the future (reoccurrence)?

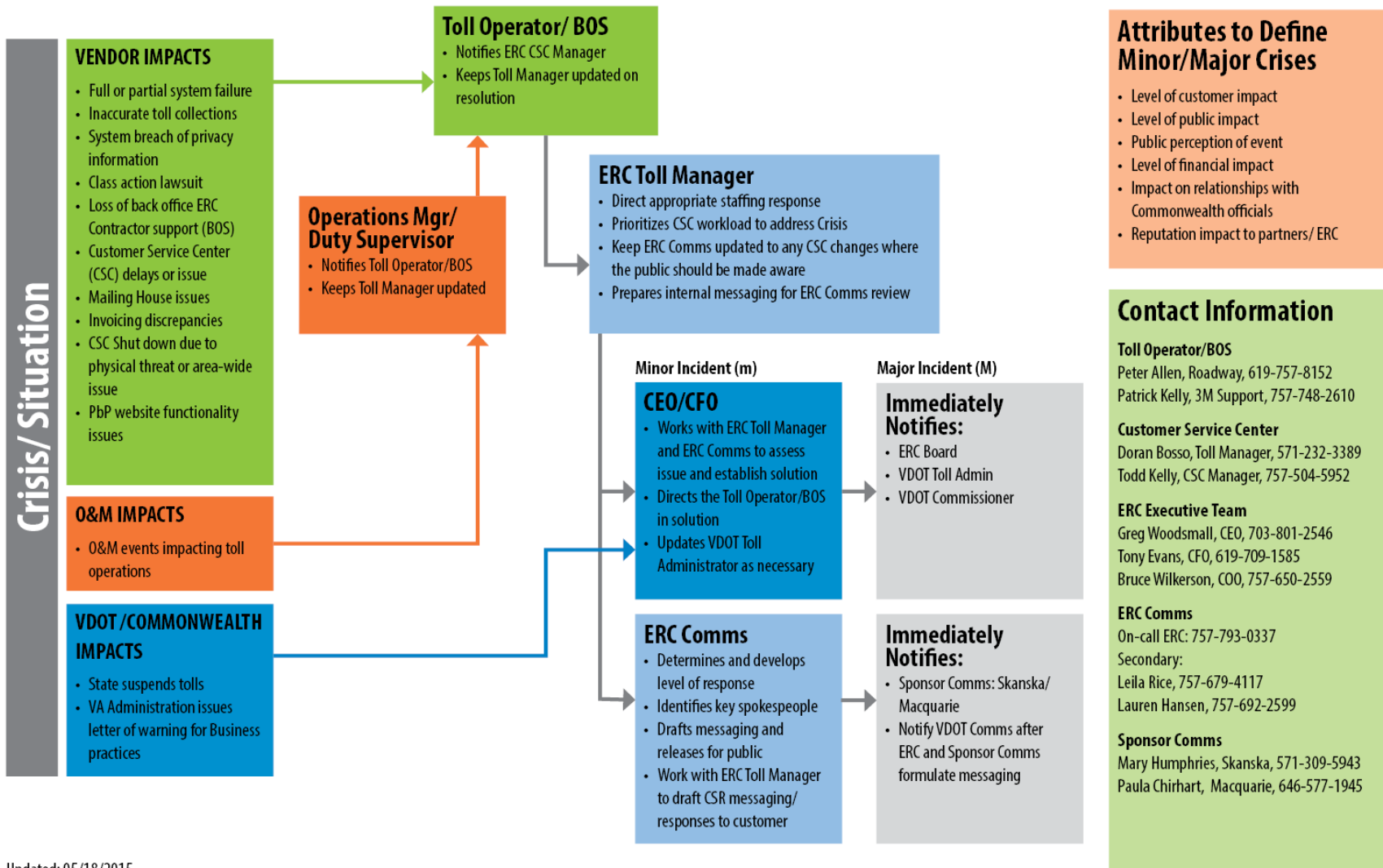
# Identifying Key Stakeholders

With all crises, it is important to develop messaging that addresses the needs of ERC's key stakeholders:

- ERC Board
- ERC Financial Investors
- Media
- VDOT/Commonwealth
- Customer Service Center Staff
- ERC Employees
- Public/Customers



# Tolling Emergency Protocol



**Questions?**