NEWTON’S LAW OF CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Where you fit in the equation
Newton’s Law of Motion

- $f = ma$

- The force required to contain a crisis is determined by how massive the crisis becomes based on the speed and skill with which the crisis is handled.
Keeping Crises Contained
Recent Crises

• Budgets.
• Drought or floods.
• Foodborne illness outbreaks.
• Water quality.
• Faculty accused of misdeeds.
• 4-H’ers injured.
• Plane crash on Fortson.
Client Crises

- Drought.
- Flood.
- Foodborne illness outbreaks.
- Water quality.
Our Crises

- Budgets.
- Faculty accused of misdeeds.
- 4-H’ers injured.
- Plane crash on Fortson.
Crisis Happens

• Counting on crisis
• Three kinds
  – Natural disasters
  – Accidents and deliberate acts
  – Opposition
What being prepared means

• In a crisis you have a solid reputation, strong supporters and media to support you through the immediate problem.

• Focus on proper response.
Anticipate

• Look around you
• Listen to others
• Pay attention to media
Plan

- Have a solid plan.
- Make sure others know the plan.
  - Alert the right authorities.
  - Who is on your team?
  - Who is the spokesperson.
  - Find facts and share them up.
  - Share on the phone!
Agent

Emergency Responder

CEC/DED
Fact finding

• Get your facts straight.
• Know who is involved.
  - Who is likely to care?
  - Who is directly, indirectly affected?
  - What values underlie their positions?
Who do you tell?

• Know CAES guidelines.
  – Rules for real events.
  – Help is available.
Manage up

• Keep your boss informed.
• Nobody likes surprises.
Manage down

• Tell what you can to others in the office.
• Halt the rumor mill.
Manage out

• Whom do you care about?
• Identify information channels.
  – Nonmedia
  – Media
  – Social media
Keep it cool

• Be able to admit possibility of error.
• Wield “power” wisely.
• Keep your perspective.
Keep it conflict-free

• Special interest groups benefit from conflict.
• Focus on the issues, not the advocates.
• Play it positive.
Mistakes can be fixed

• Get misquoted? We can help.
• Don’t avoid media.
• Extension is here to help.
• So are your communicators.
• Failing to respond is the worst.