



## **SAE Communications – Public Agency Crisis Communications Experts**

SAE Communications has provided communications counsel, on-site crisis intergovernmental relations services, and Joint Information Center management for many of California's most challenging recent crises, including the 2016 Sherpa fire, 2015 Refugio Beach oil spill, 2014 Isla Vista shootings, and 2011 Seal Beach massacre, among others. The firm's two principals bring hands-on experience as public agency public information staff as well as on-scene response counselors to their public agency clients.

Founded in 1991, the firm specializes in writing NIMS-compliant emergency public information plans; preparing public agency strategic communications plans; responding on scene to incidents and providing counsel through "crisis of confidence" issue-related situations; training/coaching public sector managers in the areas of key message development and delivery; and conducting assessment centers to help hire public agency communications staff.

SAE's two principals, Scott Summerfield and Sheri Benninghoven, APR, have counseled numerous clients that range from counties (San Diego County, Santa Barbara County, Ventura County) to cities (Palm Springs, San Jose, Long Beach, Carlsbad, San Luis Obispo), special districts/city departments (Port of Long Beach, Rancho California Water District), government associations (California State Association of Counties, League of California Cities, American Association of Port Authorities), and beyond.

The firm serves as a primary emergency training partner for the California Specialized Training Institute (CSTI), where Summerfield helps manage their crisis communications courses and trains hundreds of public agency officials each year. The two principals serve on the faculty of the California State Association of Counties, teaching County executive from throughout California about best practices in crisis response. The firm is also called on regularly to teach emergency response to executives of the nation's ports through their work for the AAPA.

SAE's principals have authored numerous articles which have appeared in statewide and national publications targeted to public agency managers and crisis response officials.

### **CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING & TRAINING REFERENCES**

#### **County of Santa Barbara**

*Experience:* Managed general and mental health-related media and community relations response to the mass homicides in Isla Vista in May 2014; helped establish intergovernmental relations response to the Refugio Beach oil spill incident in May 2015 and set up initial Joint Information Center. Currently serve of counsel regarding ongoing media relations and crisis communications.

*Contact:* Terri Maus-Nisich, Assistant County Executive Officer, 805-568-3404

**City of Seal Beach**

*Experience:* Responded to request for assistance to manage response to the mass shooting in Seal Beach in October, 2011 (worst mass shooting incident in Orange County history).

Guided city's media relations, community engagement, and overall incident response.

Currently provide ongoing media relations, crisis communications counseling.

*Contact:* Jill Ingram, City Manager, 562-431-2527, x1300

**California State Association of Counties**

*Experience:* Currently serve as crisis communications and media training faculty for the CSAC Institute for Excellence in County Government. Regularly conduct a full-day workshop entitled, "When Bad Things Happen," to train managers on issues-related crisis response.

*Contact:* Bill Chiat, Dean, CSAC Institute, 916-327-7500 x510

**Port of Long Beach**

*Experience:* Developed first-ever comprehensive Port Emergency Public Information Plan; regularly conduct key message training for commissioners/senior staff; provide ongoing communications counsel.

*Contact:* Michael Gold, Director of Communications or Art Wong, Assistant Director of Communications, 562-283-7711

**MiraCosta College**

*Experience:* Provided crisis communications and strategic counsel for a lawsuit issue involving Trustees and former staff. Currently provide ongoing crisis communications counseling.

*Contact:* Cheryl Broom, Director of Public and Governmental Relations, Marketing and Communications, 760-795-6612

**California Specialized Training Institute**

*Experience:* Both SAE Principals have served as crisis communications and media training instructors for CSTI; Summerfield is presently on adjunct staff and assists in overall course management. CSTI's Crisis Communications Course is based on an emergency services training program designed and conducted by Benninghoven while with Anaheim.

*Contact:* Richard Robles, Crisis Communications Course Manager, 805-440-1600