

# **Trouble & Trust: How to Communicate with the Public in Emergency Situations**

**PNWS-AWWA Conference  
Boise, ID  
May 5, 2016**

**Mark Snider  
Public Affairs Manager  
SUEZ Idaho Operations**



# Why do we Communicate with Customers?

- Service Issues
- Rates
- Conveniences
- Conservation
- Public Health issues
- Education



## The Most Important Message

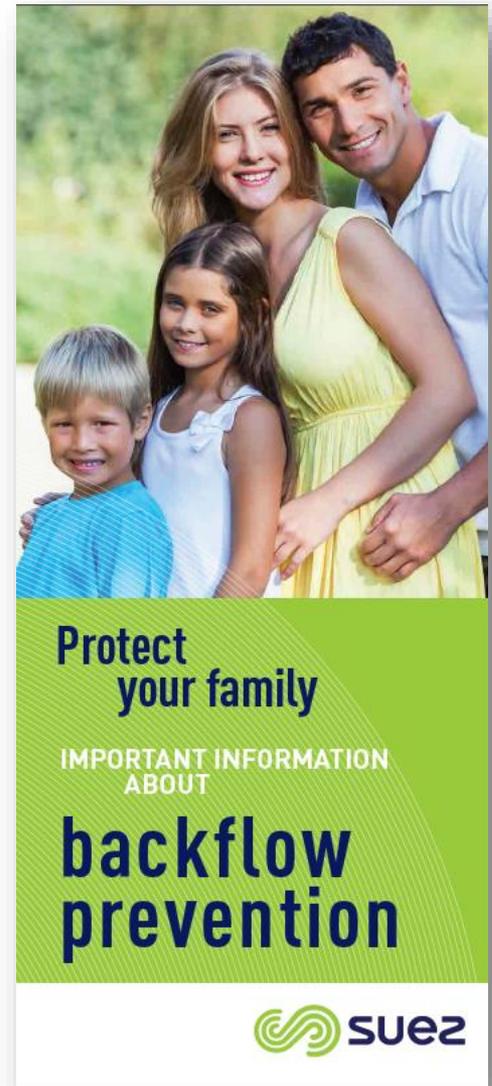
# Trust (truhst):

*noun* 1. Reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, surety, etc., of a person or thing; confidence.

# How Do You Communicate With Your Customers?

In non-emergency situations, you probably use these common communication tools:

- Bill inserts/messages



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**suez** **SUEZ WATER DROPS**

February 2016  
Issue #26

**The Greener Gardener's Guide to Growing**

Boise is a great place to live. By incorporating water wise conservation practices into your landscaping plans, you can save money and ensure Boise remains green.

SUEZ Idaho Operations, in collaboration with the Idaho Department of Water Resources and the City of Boise want to help you learn the principles of water wise landscaping with **FREE CLASSES** at the Cole & Ustick Library.

**FREE Landscaping Classes**  
Library at Cole & Ustick  
6100th St & Ustick  
7337 W. USTICK RD.

**Tuesday, March 16**  
Water Saving Tips for Landscapes  
Suzanne Bell - University of Idaho Extension Office

**Tuesday, March 22**  
Native Plants for Treasure Valley Landscapes  
Ann Gidycz - Idaho Botanical Garden

**Tuesday, March 29**  
Designing a Water Conserving Landscape  
Suzanne Bell - University of Idaho Extension

**Tuesday, April 5**  
Lean, Mean, and Green: Successful Low Water Landscape Maintenance  
Catherine Cherkov - City of Boise

**Register Now**  
landscape@suez-na.com  
362-7726

**WATER Conservation**

**Free Water Efficient Landscaping Classes**

Learn how to conserve water in the landscape. Join SUEZ, University of Idaho Extension Office, and the City of Boise for the always popular water efficient landscaping series. The location for this year's classes is the Library branch at Ustick and Cole.

**March 15**

- Water Saving Tips for Landscapes

**March 22**

- Native Plants for Treasure Valley Landscapes

**March 29**

- Designing a Water Conserving Landscape

**April 5**

- Lean, Mean and Green: Successful Low Water Landscape Maintenance

Space is limited! Register at [landscape@suez-na.com](mailto:landscape@suez-na.com) to ensure a seat.

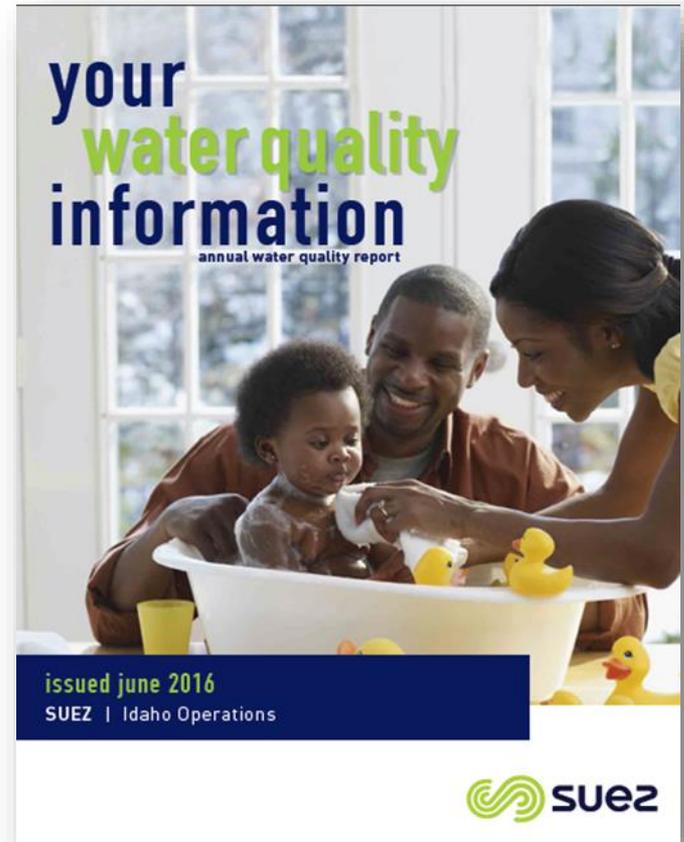
**Reasons Why Water Mains Break**

Each day, 850 water main breaks occur in North America. Why do mains break? Common reasons

# How Do You Communicate With Your Customers?

In non-emergency situations, you probably use these common communication tools:

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- Newsletters
- CCR



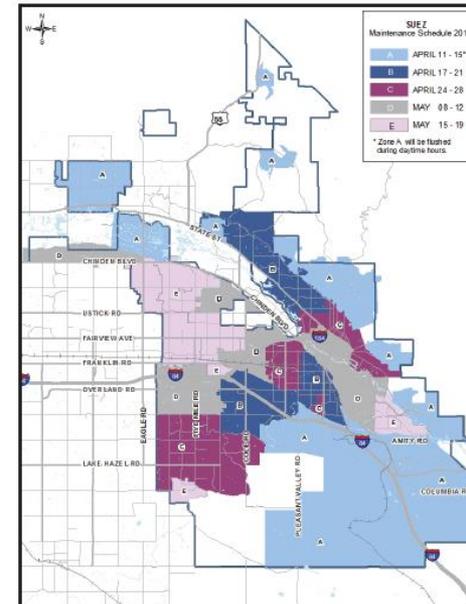
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- Paid Media

## SUEZ' water main maintenance program begins April 11

For daily updates of where where crews are working, go to [mysuezwater.com](http://mysuezwater.com) or call 362-7334.



For a map showing which days our crews will be working in your neighborhood, visit [www.mysuezwater.com](http://www.mysuezwater.com).

Every spring, SUEZ clears the water mains in our distribution system to clear any iron and manganese buildup. These minerals occur naturally and are not harmful to health, but can affect water clarity.

Beginning April 11 and continuing through May 19, SUEZ crews will be maintaining the water mains throughout our Boise service area.

The first week (April 11 - 15), crews will work during the day, starting April 17, they will work at night, between 10:00 pm to 6:00 am, Sunday through Thursday.

While crews are working, you may experience a temporary drop in water pressure or have discolored water.

While your water is perfectly safe, we recommend that you wait until it clears before drinking, washing clothes or using dishwashers.

The map shows approximately where our crews will be working during the program.

If you have any questions, please contact our customer service department at 362-7304.

**If you experience discolored water, try these simple steps to clear it:**

- Run your COLD water tap for a few minutes until your water clears.
- Avoid using hot water during this short period.
- If discoloration continues, or if you have questions, call our customer service team at 362-7304.



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- Paid Media
- Earned Media



# How Do You Communicate With Your Customers?

In non-emergency situations, you probably use these common communication tools:

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- Owned Media



SUEZ Water Idaho @SUEZwaterID · 14 Jul 2015

Starting to excavate main break @ Capitol & Front to begin repairs. Traffic is moving on both streets.



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In non-emergency situations, you probably use these common communication tools:

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- Paid Media
- Earned Media
- Owned Media
- Community Activities



# How Often Do You Communicate With Your Customers?

Do you regularly communicate with your customers in a targeted, strategic way?

Do you invite customers to interact with you, either through online forums, (Twitter, Facebook, blogs), or in person?

Who in your organization is responsible for communicating with customers?

- Customer Service Representatives
- Field Service personnel
- Management
- In-house PR/Communications staff
- Outside PR consultant
- City staff

# Who Should Communicate With Your Customers?

The answer should be EVERYONE.

Everyone who wears a company uniform, drives a company vehicle, answers the phone or designs a treatment system is a potential spokesperson for your utility.

Not everyone is your MEDIA spokesperson.

All company/utility personnel should receive some training in communicating with the public.

PR staff should anticipate issues and prepare CSR's and others who deal with the public with talking points.

# You Want a Unified Message

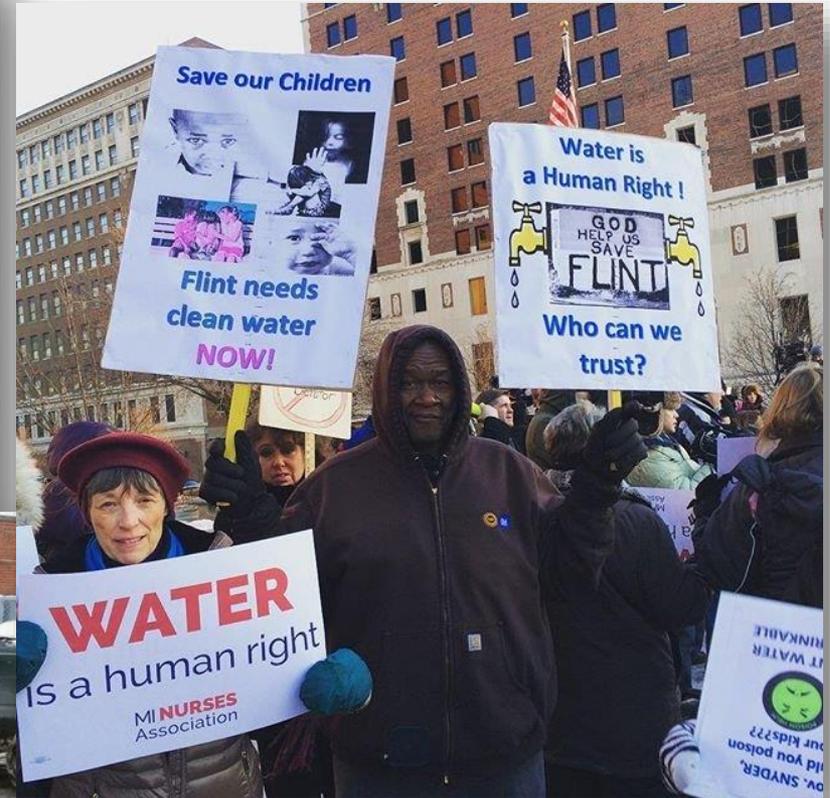


# When Things Go Wrong





# Really Wrong



## In Times of Crisis or Emergency:

Those employees who have received training and are comfortable in dealing with customers can be an asset when it's "all hands on deck" in dealing with an emergency.

They will not be your media spokespeople, but they can help take the pressure off by handling customer calls, e-mails, etc.

And how do you get there?



# Get a Plan

You need to develop an Emergency/Crisis Communications Plan

**Our Disaster Communications  
Plan Goes Something Like This...**



# Find Your Emergency Plan



# Elements of Emergency Communications Plan

Who is on the Crisis Communications Team?

- Utility General Manager
- Mayor or City Manager
- Water Superintendent
- Public Works Director
- Legal Counsel
- Public Safety (Police/Fire)
- PIO
- Others as needed (subject matter experts)



# Elements of Emergency Communications Plan

## Contact information

- Internal company numbers (home/cell)
- External numbers (news media, regulators)



# Our Experience

Corporate Emergency Operations Center based in Boise.

Communications Team back East had limited connectivity

Relied on Boise to update media and post to social media.

Didn't have media contacts, numbers



# Elements of Emergency Communications Plan

Your Emergency Plan should include:

Checklist for response to initial incident  
Draft Press Release/Public Notice  
Contact for news media/regulators/resources  
Post-Incident Communications plan

- Contact Corp. 637-8926 (cell)
- ) Prepare media statement
  - Stick to the facts. Don't speculate or try to
  - Communicate concern and compassion
- Crisis Communications Team develops message for the media. (Event-specific)

# How Will You Get Your Message Out?

In times of emergency, you may not be able to rely on the “traditional” methods of getting information out to customers.

The key is to have a plan in place, and practice.

Maybe it’s using employees away from the immediate vicinity to handle social media.

Calling on other agencies or companies (WARN network).



# Multi-Agency Cooperation



But the Key Is...

cred·i·bil·i·ty

(kredə'bilədē)

*noun* 1. the quality of being trusted and believed in.

2. the quality of being convincing and believable.

Thank you.

Questions?

Comments?

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