

# *Risk Communication*

## *City of Cottage Grove*

Local Unit of Government  
Perspective

Jennifer Levitt, City Administrator



# *Communication Keys*

- Open, Transparent Communication
- Timely and Regular Communication
- Clear, Concise and Courageous Conversations



# Open, Transparent Communication

**State Agencies**



**City Staff**



**City Council**



**Prepare communication strategy for local residents and businesses**



# *Timely and Regular*

- Situation: Declared a State of Emergency
- Silence creates a gap that others will fill
- Build trust and confidence with the public immediately



# Communication



VIEWPOINTS

## Cottage Grove is working to supply water to all

I know that the timing of the city of Cottage Grove's watering ban is difficult. I know that the weather is hot, and the recent lack of rain has many missing the city's splash pad, or have concerns about their lawns and gardens. But I also know that it's important that the city have the capacity to deliver water at all times for households to cook, clean and bathe.

This is why we had to put the watering ban in place after the Minnesota Department of Health informed the city of the new lower health-based values. Once we learned that eight out of the 11 city wells would not meet the new values, we acted fast to make sure every resident had safe drinking water. We took five wells off line and began blending the other three that didn't meet the new limits with our wells that did. By doing so, the city's water meets the new values, but there is less available.

Right now, we are only operating three wells at full capacity, and



**MYRON BAILEY**  
Cottage Grove Mayor

another three at limited capacity. Our water capacity is roughly half of what is normally available to supply the city.

I've been asked, why did we take the wells offline immediately? As your mayor, I want all of us to be safe. We had too many wells above the new health-based limits and we needed to be in compliance with the state's limits. We needed to ensure we had safe drinking water for everyone.

We are working hard to restore this capacity and get our wells back online. Work has already begun to install a temporary treatment facility for one of the offline wells.

It's not a simple task. It involves installing piping, multiple carbon filtration, electrical work, and building a temporary facility to house tanks. Grading and concrete are underway. We expect to bring that well online by

which will help ease some of the outdoor watering restrictions.

But for the time being, it's important to respect the watering ban we have in place. Otherwise, we simply won't be able to supply water to everyone on a hot day, when it's most in demand. The city doesn't want to give anyone a fine for violating the water ban, and will educate the offender first, but if needed, citations will be issued. The citation would be a misdemeanor and has a mandatory court appearance and fine up to \$1,000. Please do your part, and ask your friends, family, and neighbors to do theirs too.

Going forward, I will be providing



# *Clear, Concise & Courageous Conversations*

- *Key message – Repeat, repeat, repeat*
- *Be honest – Your integrity can be lost in heartbeat*
- *Be empathetic - Relate to your audience*
- *Do what you say you are going to do*



# *Moving Forward*

- Now that the emergency is over, changing the narrative
- Focusing on the positive messaging
- Staying true to our key principles
- Building on the trust we built during the crisis

