



Media Relations

Dealing with the media On city legal issues



Presentation by John Bender
TML Consultant
February 12, 2016



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**No
Comment**



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Even worse:

“Phone calls and emails to the office were not returned.”



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What “no comment” says:

- We’ve got something to hide.
- The other side is right.
- We can’t get our act together.



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Every contact with the media is an opportunity to deliver a message.



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Lawsuit Example

Family of Killed Cyclist Files Suit Against City of Lakeland

City Attorney Tim McCausland said he had not completely read through the lawsuit Thursday evening. However, he said that he does not think the city should be held liable, but that the court will make that determination.

"On behalf of the city, this is a tragic incident, and our sympathy goes out to all the people who were impacted."



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Personnel Example

Orange family calls for justice after dogs were euthanized

Orange Fire Chief David Frenzel, who supervises the city's animal shelter, said the employees were disciplined but will keep their jobs. He declined to disclose the nature of the discipline applied, citing personnel information confidentiality.

The two employees are compassionate workers who "made an error in judgment" and were disciplined for it. He said he feels apologetic toward the family, but there isn't anything he can do at this point.

"We've taken the measures to make sure this never happens again," he said.



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Workers Comp Case

News story August 2015:

Bedford firefighter fighting cancer and more

He has helped save lives his entire career, but now a Bedford firefighter is in need of help. The problem is the help he needs is being denied by the city.

Lt. Keith Long has been battling stage 4 cancer for two years now. He's applied for workers compensation from the City of Bedford to help with the financial impact his treatment has caused him and his family but city officials have repeatedly said no.



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Workers Comp Case

TMLIRP statement on appeal October 2015:

“Our hearts go out to Lt. Long and his family and we admire his dedication to serving his fellow citizens by continuing to work while battling colon cancer. Situations like this involving a dedicated, long-time public employee are very difficult for everyone involved, especially for the family, friends and co-workers. And it is difficult for us when we have to make decisions based on the law rather than our sympathies and emotions.”



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Workers Comp Case

TMLIRP statement on appeal October 2015:

“After carefully considering the decision of the hearing officer, we filed an appeal because the decision is contrary to the guidelines set forth in state law for deciding whether an illness is associated with firefighting. Colon cancer is not one of the cancers identified as having been caused by firefighting.

“Lt. Long’s medical expenses have been covered and they will continue to be covered but this case does not qualify for workers compensation benefits according to the laws we are required to follow.”



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Workers Comp Case

News story October 2015:

Carol Loughlin, executive director of the risk pool, said in a statement this week that the administrative law judge’s decision “is contrary to the guidelines set forth in state law” and that Long’s medical bills “have been covered and they will continue to be covered.”

“Our hearts go out to Lt. Long and his family, and we admire his dedication to serving his fellow citizens by continuing to work while battling colon cancer,” she said. “Situations like this involving a dedicated longtime public employee are very difficult for everyone involved, especially for the family, friends and co-workers. And it is difficult for us when we have to make decisions based on the law rather than our sympathies and emotions.”

Long’s attorney said in an email Thursday that she couldn’t comment and that her client didn’t want to be interviewed.



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The “no comment” comment

“I can’t comment on the specifics but I can say we are confident we have a solid case and we are looking forward to presenting all the facts.”

“Out of respect for the court and the judicial process, we will wait and make our case in the courtroom. That’s all I can say at this point.”

“I can’t discuss the details but I want to assure everyone that we take these allegations very seriously and there will be a thorough investigation.”



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