



2019 AAPA COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM

Port Tampa Bay

31 Seconds: Hurricane Irma

Entry Type:
13. Video

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View from Icebreaker AIVIQ's mission control on September 10, 2017

31 SECONDS: HURRICANE IRMA SUMMARY



YouTube link: 31 Seconds

If you are having troubles viewing this video, you can view it [here](#).

During the early morning hours of September 11, 2017, Hurricane Irma barreled through the Tampa Bay area, threatening lives, homes, businesses, and access to basic needs. Churning through the Caribbean as a deadly Category 4 hurricane, Irma stirred panic and fear, prompting a run on essential supplies including gasoline. As the hurricane neared the Tampa area, millions of people evacuated and nearly every business closed, including Florida's largest port, Port Tampa Bay. Port Tampa Bay supplies approximately half of the petroleum for the state of Florida.

Our challenge was to convince a terrified public, the media and our port tenants that we were still open for business, even if our channel remained closed. The hurricane threat also hit the billion-dollar cruise industry, canceling and rescheduling some cruises at the very last second.

When the hurricane struck Tampa, many feared flooding and damage at Port Tampa Bay. To monitor the situation overnight, a group of Port staff rode the storm out on an icebreaker ship anchored at the Port. The icebreaker ship was docked at Port Tampa Bay for annual repairs, but would normally roam the arctic.

Working from the icebreaker as a command center allowed staff to not only carefully observe the situation at the Port, but to communicate constantly with tenants, stakeholders, the media and public. Video captured and edited on a cell phone showed the hurricane's dramatic winds and rain, as well as the port director working through the night. The video was disseminated to news outlets in the late hours of September 10th, which repeatedly aired worldwide. Hunkering down on the icebreaker also indicated staff would not abandon the region's greatest economic driver, by sticking together at a port in the storm. This 31 second video provided assurance worldwide that Port Tampa Bay was not only monitoring the situation but still operating. It was one of the first videos showing Irma's fury released from the Tampa area. Interest in the video created hundreds of

requests for more Port Tampa Bay images: photographs and videos of petroleum vessels and gas tanker trucks fueling the Tampa Bay area and beyond.

In the end, Port Tampa Bay, like the rest of the Tampa area, escaped major damage, and began fueling tanker trucks just hours after Irma tore through the area. Florida Governor Rick Scott ordered police escorts for the fuel deliveries throughout the state. As the Port officially re-opened on September 11th despite the channel remaining closed, we were able to effectively deliver the message: we are open for business, we are fueling up the state, and we provide essential needs for the people of Florida. It all started with 31 seconds that went viral.



Everyday scenes from the Icebreaker AIVIQ as it works in the arctic

I. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

WHAT ARE/WERE THE ENTRY'S SPECIFIC COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGES OR OPPORTUNITIES?



Port Tampa Bay President/CEO Paul Anderson watches Hurricane Irma from the icebreaker A/VIQ

The challenge of determining a safe and appropriate place to ride out the storm was determined by Port Tampa Bay President/CEO Paul Anderson. He selected the icebreaker ship A/VIQ as a safe spot to monitor port activity, potential hurricane damage, and coordinate response.

The Director of Public Relations, hired six weeks prior to this hurricane, utilized her skills as a former TV news reporter to create the 31 seconds video. However, just like when she was a journalist, capturing video during a hurricane, during intense wind and rain was extremely challenging and sometimes dangerous.

was new to the team, she only had a port-owned cell phone. She borrowed wireless “hot spots” from other staff and used her own personal computer to disseminate information and images to the public. Power was limited.

The opportunity to showcase the port’s leadership and role in the state and nation was tremendous. At the same time, the port director was preparing the port for the storm, he was communicating with state and federal officials, and securing funding for a possible impact. Constant communication between the Port Tampa Bay President/CEO and the Director of Public Relations maximized the messaging opportunities while addressing the critical work for securing the port.

Also because the Director of Public Relations

Port Tampa Bay President/CEO Paul Anderson giving a live update on CNBC early morning September 11th, with the 31 seconds video on loop



II. OVERALL MISSION

HOW DOES THE COMMUNICATION USED IN THIS ENTRY COMPLEMENT THE ORGANIZATION'S OVERALL MISSION?

Port Tampa Bay's Mission Statement is central to the planning process of our marketing and communications efforts.

MISSION: *Port Tampa Bay will be recognized as a leader in the maritime industry. Port Tampa Bay will have a customer driven, strategic business focus in working with stakeholders to develop and manage marine terminals and supporting infrastructure for the benefit of the regional economy. Port Tampa Bay will employ sound financial, business, environmental management, and public safety practices in fulfilling its mission.*

Port Tampa Bay's mission is to leverage its maritime assets to increase economic vitality and impact on community and region, as well as to create sustainable jobs. The Port is the largest and most diverse port in Florida, with more than 5,000 acres in its complex and handling 37 million tons of every category of cargo as well as cruise passengers.

The very nature of its industrial operations, its sheer size, its cargos and the diversity of business lines means that Port Tampa Bay must be crisis-ready, anticipating the wide variety of circumstances and scenarios where potential disaster lies, either man-made or natural.

A petroleum vessel docked at Port Tampa in the days before Hurricane Irma rolled into Tampa



Port Tampa Bay is the first seaport in the U.S. to receive the designation as "StormReady" by the National Weather Service.

The mission provides a basic framework for how to convey our messaging. In a crisis, Port Tampa Bay's mission guides the immediate and swift communication with tenants, customers, public safety officials, the media and the public.

III. PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

WHAT WERE THE COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMPONENTS FOR THIS ENTRY?

Located in Tampa and stretching into Hillsborough County, Port Tampa Bay supplies approximately 48% of the petroleum for the state of Florida – in fact, petroleum is Port Tampa Bay’s largest commodity, handling 17 tons annually.

DRILLS, TRAINING EXERCISES & THE CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

In order to prepare for any danger to the port, Port Tampa Bay conducts regular, system-wide drills to test emergency preparedness and determine threats to the organization. Within these drills, there is an annual hurricane response exercise attended by port staff, local law enforcement, first responders, the U.S Coast Guard, and NOAA. The exercise represents an opportunity for the crisis communications team to identify potential issues and areas for improvement in the emergency communications plan. Under the leadership of Port Tampa Bay President/CEO Paul Anderson, port staff additionally hold an annual Tampa Bay Safety Summit which also features hurricane readiness preparation.

The crisis communications plan serves as a guide for Port Tampa Bay senior leadership. It is modeled after plans put in place by other ports and large businesses following the evaluation of emergency communications models, offering significant flexibility in implementation.

“During and after a crisis event, Port Tampa Bay’s first priority must be to protect human life and the environment; we are also responsible for protecting property and operations, and for communicating with affected parties. Communications in a crisis provides an essential public service, while helping to protect our reputation. If we do not communicate, Port Tampa Bay may appear to be uncaring, or not managing the situation effectively. We also run the risk that those with inaccurate information may speak for us, thus creating rumors and confusion. Port Tampa Bay is responsible for maintaining open communications with people and organizations affected by a crisis, emergency or unforeseen accident involving Port Tampa Bay-operated or tenant operations. This means that to the greatest extent possible, we must provide complete, accurate and timely information to the news media and to concerned individuals and groups.”

- Port Tampa Bay Crisis Communications Plan

TARGET AUDIENCES

There was one primary target audience, and three secondary audiences:

Primary:

1. The public, including the media - local, statewide, and global populations

Secondary:

1. Port Tampa Bay tenants, customers, and stakeholders
2. Local, state, and federal officials
3. Port Tampa Bay staff

MESSENGING GOALS

Primary

The public & media: Early on, the Director of Public Relations established several communication goals. An early goal was also to humanize the Port by creating messaging which connects the average person to what the Port provides: the gas that fuels your car, the cruise you save up for during the year, or the orange juice in your glass.

Another major goal was to be extremely responsive in all communications efforts. The Director of Public Relations asked to have her contact information posted on the website immediately, which helped enormously in terms of communication with the hundreds of people who called with questions. The VP of Branding & Regional Alliances quickly updated Port Tampa Bay's website with the latest news releases and information about the situation.

Other messaging included: we are a team – and we are prepared. It included maximizing all visuals of the port director and his staff in planning meetings, port staff surveying port property, law enforcement securing facilities, port leaders monitoring the hurricane's impact as it made landfall in Tampa, and the steady roll of petroleum vessels charging through the channel on the way to Port Tampa Bay, as well as the rapid dispatch of fuel tanker trucks from the port, to demonstrate the flow of petroleum, and its priority.



Port Tampa Bay President/CEO Paul Anderson addresses the annual Hurricane Training Exercise

Secondary

Tenants, customers & stakeholders: Port Tampa Bay staff used information from the news releases to tenants and customers. The Marketing & Business Development VP used the latest updates generated by the Director of Public Relations to directly engage with anyone doing business with the port.

Local, state, & federal officials: Port Tampa Bay President/CEO Paul Anderson, side by side with his Chief of Staff, remained in constant contact with Florida's governor, legislative representatives, and federal officials.

Port Tampa Bay staff: The VP of Human Resources, along with the VP of Information Technology created an email group with senior leadership in order for all to share information. Senior leadership was able to communicate the latest updates to their respective staff.



Port Tampa Bay executes hurricane planning as Irma threatened the Tampa area

IV. ACTIONS TAKEN

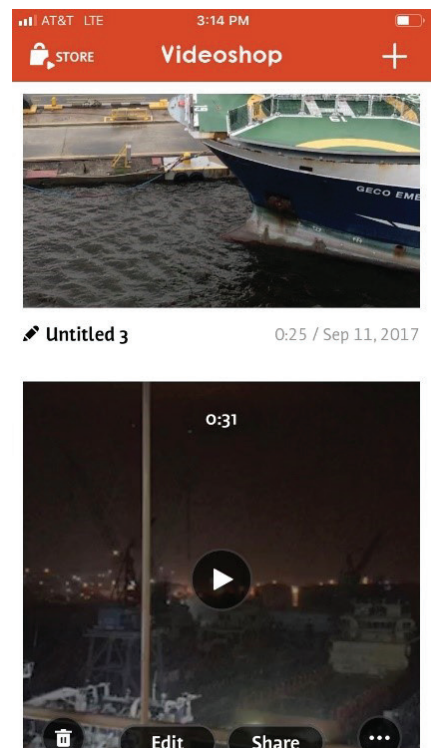
WHAT ACTIONS WERE TAKEN AND WHAT COMMUNICATION OUTPUTS WERE USED IN THIS ENTRY?

As the hurricane's strongest bands came through the Tampa area, the Director of Public Relations, hunkered down on the icebreaker *A/VIQ* with other port staff. In evening of September 10th, the PR Director donned storm gear, climbed the staircase to the top of ship's deck, and shot cell phone video while holding on to metal piping as the hurricane passed through the port. The first few seconds of video show transformers blowing up, pounding rain, and howling winds. The PR Director shot and edited the video on her cell phone. She immediately returned to the ship's command center and edited 31 seconds of cell phone video on her phone using a mobile app called "Videoshop".

The video was widely disseminated nationwide, and was one of the first images of the hurricane hitting the Tampa area.

The dramatic images showed Port Tampa Bay was still operating, despite wide power outages and damage to the area.

The PR Director sent the video out first via Twitter, and then what's called "media alert." She had just signed up Port Tampa Bay on the local "media alert" system which sends news releases instantly to all media representatives and newsroom assignment desks in the Tampa Bay area. The media alert system became the primary method to send extended updates because it could be utilized via cell phone or computer at no cost to the Port.



Signing up Port Tampa Bay on the local media alert system used by all Tampa Bay media outlets, ensuring instant notification of updates and images.

Media Alert ZCZC porttampabay
&fltpa

Date: Mon Sep 11, 2017 08:46:15

From: Port Tampa Bay

Port Tampa Bay Update

Right now, Port Tampa Bay President Paul Anderson and PTB staff are out evaluating the Port.

At initial assessment, the Port suffered minor damage (like signs blown down) and minor flooding.

Although the Port remains closed, arrangements are now underway to begin the first transfers of fuel tanker trucks today. We'll let you know when that happens.

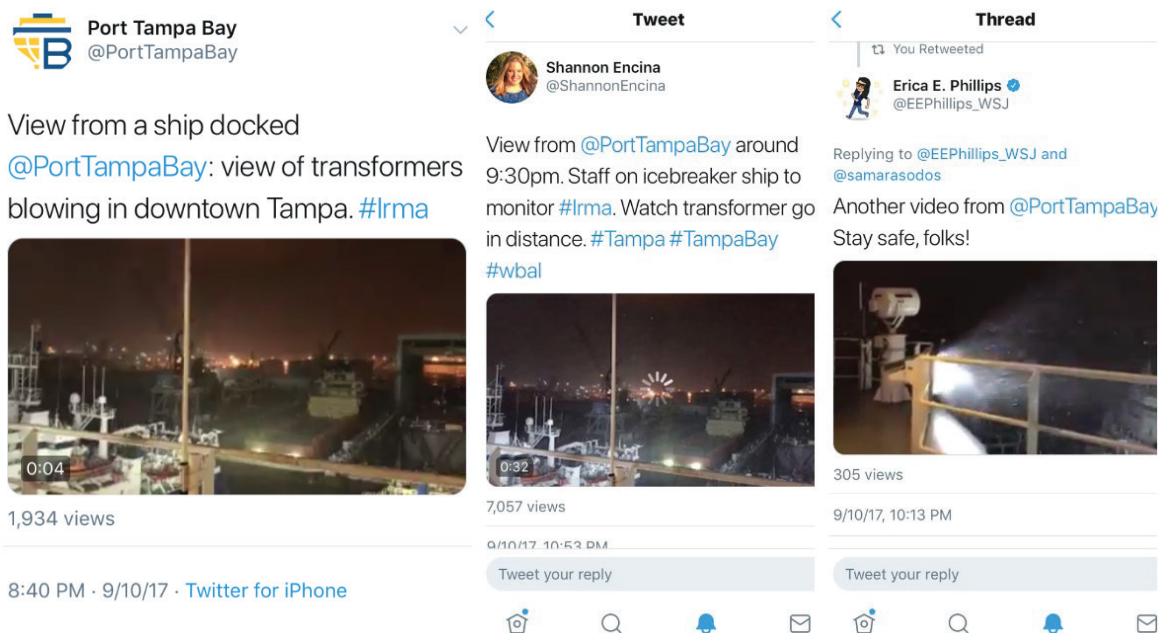
Video of Irma passing through Port Tampa Bay is posted on our website, www.tampaport.com as well as Twitter @PortTampaBay. This video was taken from a docked icebreaker ship where Port staff rode out the storm and monitored conditions throughout the night and into the morning.

Video from today's assessments will be posted later today.

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USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO URGENTLY COMMUNICATE WITH THE WORLD

The PR Director also ramped up all social media efforts, particularly Twitter, where some updates, photos and videos were shared solely on this medium. It was the first time the port's social media channels were used to communicate breaking developments. Twitter was the most highly engaged form of social media before, during, and after the storm because of its immediacy and its responsiveness from the media and public. The *31 seconds* video was first shared on Port Tampa Bay's Twitter account. From there it was retweeted and downloaded, and eventually picked up by hundreds of TV stations and online sites worldwide.



The Director of Public Relations also uploaded four videos on her Vimeo page on the evening of September 10, 2017.

- Docked on an Icebreaker Ship at Port Tampa Bay during Hurricane Irma: <https://vimeo.com/235205367>
- Watching, Waiting, Worrying: <https://vimeo.com/235205493>
- Florida Highway Patrol Fuel Escort: <https://vimeo.com/235210894>
- Scenes from the window of my cabin: <https://vimeo.com/235211772>

31 SECONDS LOOPS ON NETWORK NEWS

The video was one of the first images of Hurricane Irma released from Tampa. It looped on news outlets within hours of its release.



CNBC – Port President Paul Anderson in the hours after Irma strikes Tampa: <https://www.cnbc.com/video/2017/09/11/irma-inflicts-minor-damage-on-tampa-bay-port-ceo.html>

Irma inflicts 'minor damage' on Tampa Bay port: CEO

9:46 AM ET Mon, 11 Sept 2017

Paul Anderson, Port of Tampa Bay president & CEO talks about the impact Hurricane Irma is having on one of Florida's biggest and busiest ports.



TIMELINE

Starting on September 1st, going into Labor Day weekend, Port Tampa Bay staff began monitoring Irma closely. On September 4th, the crisis communications plan was implemented, and messaging goals were established. By September 5th, the media inquiries were at a steady, frenetic pace. The first news release regarding Irma's potential impact was issued on September 6th. The *31 seconds* video was posted on Twitter on September 10th at 8:40 p.m. It was then posted on Vimeo and the local media alert system within the next 12 hours, eventually distributed to news outlets worldwide.

V. OUTCOME

WHAT WERE THE COMMUNICATIONS OUTCOMES FROM THIS ENTRY AND WHAT EVALUATION METHODS WERE USED TO ACCESS THEM?

The *31 seconds* video as part of the larger crisis communications response significantly raised Port Tampa Bay's profile – reaching millions and millions of people. It instantly created a national media presence and generated and solidified dozens of new key media contacts, including those in the maritime community. The stark rise in use of the Port's social media channels also became a superior branding mechanism and an extremely effective method of controlling messaging – through simply sharing images. The video would later be used in a blog describing the experience on the icebreaker which received accolades for its humanizing approach. Irma taught us all that Port Tampa Bay has a larger impact on our daily lives than perhaps we ever imagined. Months later, as a new hurricane season approached, Port Tampa Bay was the subject of many news stories about how to prepare for a storm and the port's role as the fuel gateway for southwest and west central Florida.



FOX 13 88° ☁️ ☰

Port officials prepare state's 'fuel gateway' for hurricane season

f t e

Port officials prepare for hurricane season

FOX 13
5:39 88°

By **Crystal Clark, FOX 13 News**

Posted Jun 05 2018 03:57PM EDT
Video Posted Jun 05 2018 05:47PM EDT
Updated Jun 05 2018 05:48PM EDT

TAMPA (FOX 13) - Less than a year after Hurricane Irma devastated parts of Florida.



(top) As the 2018 Hurricane Season began, news crews showcased Port Tampa Bay's critical role as a fuel gateway

(left) Port Tampa Bay: The Fuel Gateway <http://www.fox-13news.com/news/local-news/port-officials-prepare-state-s-fuel-gateway-for-hurricane-season>

VI. APPENDIX

CREATIVE EXAMPLES AND ADDITIONAL RESULTS

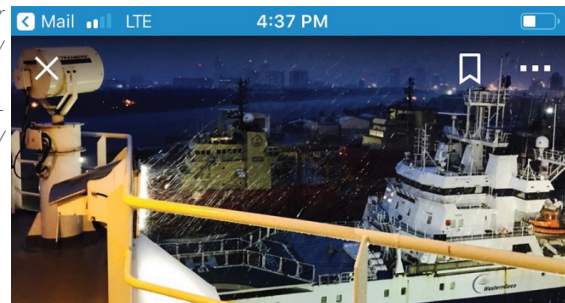
To evaluate the impact of the *31 seconds* video during Hurricane Irma on Port Tampa Bay, the Director of Public Relations created several reports: tracking where the video aired.

In the weeks following Irma's The PR Director also wrote a few first person account of the bracing for Hurricane Irma on her LinkedIn page, which was garnered several awards.

1. LinkedIn blog
2. Broadcast media report 9/10/17 – 9/11/17 of *31 seconds* video (attached)

LinkedIn Blog - Bracing for Irma's Impact: Watching from an Icebreaker Ship at Port Tampa Bay

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/bracing-irmas-impact-watching-from-icebreaker-ship-port-sodos/>



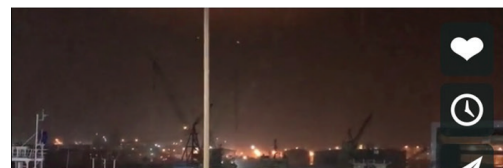
Bracing for Irma's Impact: Watching from an Icebreaker Ship at Port Tampa Bay

Published on Sep 24, 2017



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