



Welcome In

Crisis Management for Cities

In 2017, the League's Annual Conference featured a panel on crisis management for cities. At the time, the emphasis was on external crises such as earthquakes and fires. In the intervening years, we are seeing an increased number of crises that arise internally, such as staff misconduct accusations, City Managers under fire, housing element requirements that enrage neighborhoods, and cyberattacks.

This panel will focus on this newer type of crisis and how to deal with intense scrutiny of a city's internal operations, including public record requests, media inquiries and City Council concerns about staff performance.



Crisis Management for Cities

League of California Cities City Managers Conference

February 8, 2024

9:00 – 10:15 a.m.

Moderator:

June Catalano – Senior Consultant, Renne Public Management Group (RPMG)

Speakers:

Jon Holtzman – Managing Partner, Renne Public Law Group (RPLG)

David White – City Manager, City of Santa Monica

Kelly McAdoo – City Manager, City of Hayward

Ramifications of Staff Misconduct

Presentation Overview

David White, City Manager of Santa Monica

- Not One Crisis... but Six
- Headlines in the Media
- The Uller Incident
- City Response
- Communicating to the Organization
- Key Lessons

Not One Crisis... but Six

2018

- City employee (Eric Uller) arrested and charged with five counts of sexual crimes against four minors

2020

- COVID-19 pandemic + economic crisis results in significant reductions in programs and services and the workforce
- George Floyd protests and looting
- CA Voting Rights Act case goes to California Supreme Court
- “Change slate” elected to City Council

2020 – 2021

- \$80 million paid out in Uller claims

October 2021

- David White joins as City Manager

2023

- \$122.5 million paid to 124 additional Uller claimants

Headlines



Santa Monica City Council Approves Cuts, Layoffs

Over 400 city employees set to lose jobs, \$203.2 million in budget cuts approved

By Sam Catanzaro May 6, 2020

Los Angeles Times

Santa Monica politics upended by pandemic, George Floyd protests and economic woes



Los Angeles Times



CALIFORNIA

Court battles could test constitutionality of California voting rights law

When most people think of landmark voting rights cases, places like Alabama or North Carolina, not Santa Monica, usually come to mind.

March 9, 2019

Los Angeles MAGAZINE

Inside the Santa Monica Police Department's Botched Response to May's Looting Spree

As business owners and the public continue to demand answers, the political casualties are piling up

ANDREW GUMBEL • NOV 17, 2020

The Uller Incident



City of
**Santa
Monica**

Programs | Services | Getting Around | Art, Culture & Fun | Businesses | Your City Hall

Select Language

City Response to Allegations Related to Former Employee Eric Uller

The City of Santa Monica places the highest value on the health, safety, and wellbeing of our youth. We were deeply disturbed by the heartbreaking allegations that Eric Uller, a former City employee, committed crimes against children in connection with the City's Police Activities League (PAL) program in the 1980s and 1990s. Since receiving these allegations, the City has taken, and will continue to take, steps to share information with the community and ensure the safety of all our youth across all City programs. Here, we share background on the allegations, the City's response, youth programs, and legal claims.

Background on the Arrest of and Charges Against Eric Uller

In late spring 2018, the Santa Monica Police Department (SMPD) received an anonymous tip about an alleged crime involving Eric Uller. Following identification of the victim, SMPD reported the information to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's

2018

- City employee (Eric Uller) arrested and charged with five counts of sexual crimes against four minors

Spring 2018

- Santa Monica Police Department receives an anonymous tip about employee and volunteer Eric Uller
- Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department launches investigation

October 18, 2018

- Uller arrested

October 18, 2018

- Los Angeles County District Attorney's Offices files charges against Uller: five counts of crimes against four minors

November 15, 2018

- Uller is found dead in his apartment of apparent suicide



Comprehensive City Response

Communications

- Proactive external campaign
- Dedicated city website

Actions

- Child Protection Committee and Officer
- Code of conduct
- Updated screenings + Live Scan
- Added trainings for employees, volunteers, contractors

Outreach

- Community meetings
- Onsite mental health support at city facilities, schools
- Trainings at libraries
- Independent investigation launched
- Consultant review of city practices at youth programs

- New volunteer coordinator
- Child Protection Resolution
- Administrative Instruction

Communicating to the Organization

Engaged Department Head Team – Early and Often

- Discussed communications strategy
- Many different opinions
- Trust and buy-in from leadership

Leadership Team

- 100 managers from all departments
- Meet with leaders ahead of news breaking
- Help message to the rest of the organization

What will we say?

- Communications Manager, City Manager, Deputy City Manager, Chief of Staff
- Crisis Communications Firm

Citywide Communications

- “All Hands” meeting held once final settlement was reached

Key Lessons Learned

- Communicate with your Department Head Team early and often
- Trust your team
- Be yourself and be prepared
- Don't forget the financial rating agencies

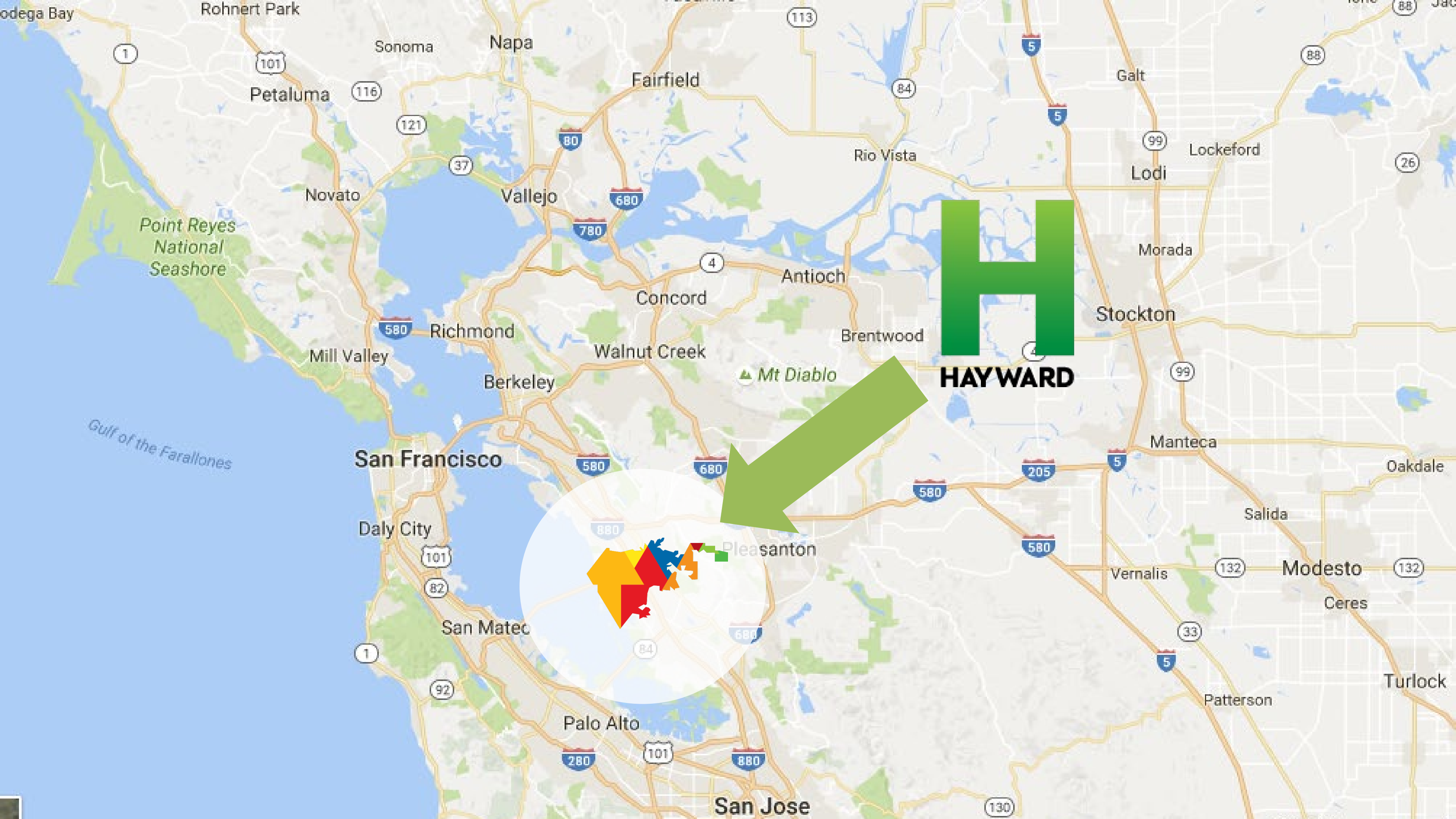
Surviving a Cyber Attack

(HINT: YOU NEED TO START PREPARING YESTERDAY)

Presentation Overview

Kelly McAdoo, City Manager of Hayward

- About Hayward / Brief on Tech Environment
- High-level Situation Overview
- What Went Well
- Challenges
- Key Takeaways



Technical Landscape

- Computers: ~1,200
- Over 200 applications used throughout the City
- Cybersecurity Training: All City Staff are scheduled for cybersecurity training and tested frequently
- Cloud-First Strategy: A Cloud-First Strategy was adopted several years ago moving most services to the cloud
- SOC/NOC Managed Service: IT engages with 3rd party partners for security and network operations centers

High-Level Situation Overview

- Early Sunday morning on July 9, 2023
- Identification: SOC identified suspicious behaviour, received ransomware letter
- Contain & Assess: Shutdown systems and determined impact (on-premises)
- CAD, GIS, Facilities Management, Access Management
- Forensic Evidence: Could not remediate before securing evidence and allowed for tracing of the threat
- Eradicate: Removal of all threats
- Recover: Utilized 3rd parties for remediation assistance, vendor executive escalations, other agency personnel
- Learn: Identify what went well and what needs to be addressed

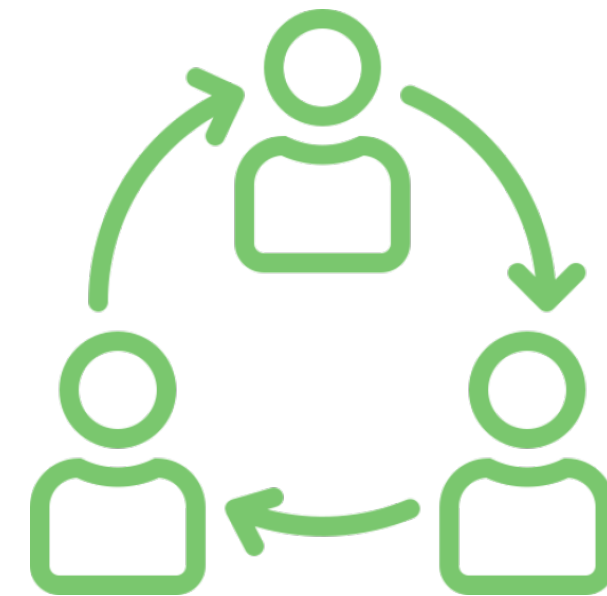
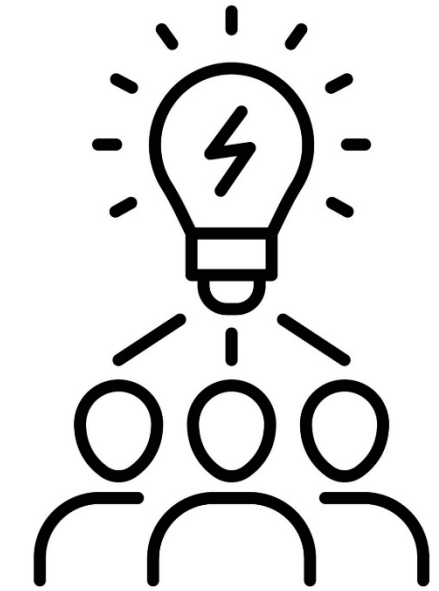


Hayward hacked: City suffers ransomware attack, turns off website

By Henry Lee and KTVU staff | Published July 10, 2023 | Updated 10:18AM | Hayward | KTVU FOX 2 | ➔

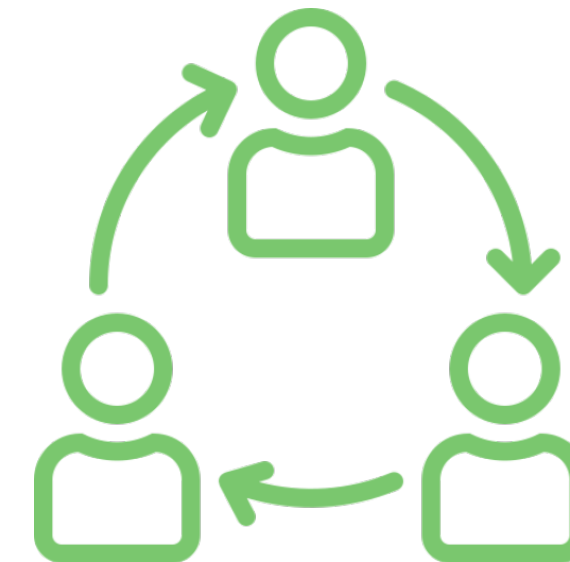
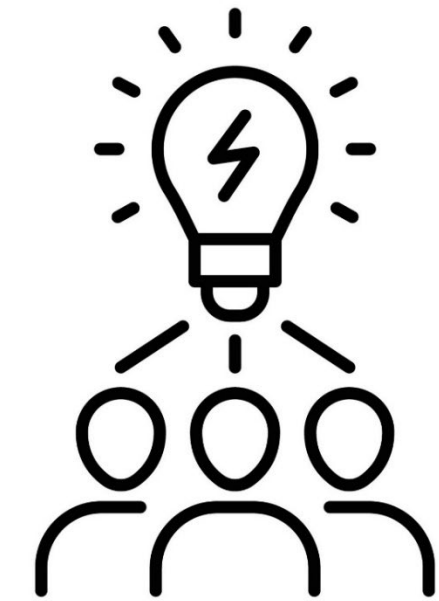
City's Response – What Went Well

- Early Detection/Remediation: Allowed for isolation, quick purchase of equipment, mobilization, and faster recovery
- Committed Executive Leadership & Support: All departments stepped in to assist and show support. Dedicated IT Staff
- Communications: Held daily check-ins twice a day. Utilized Teams to disseminate info. Comm Staff handled public communications.
- External Support: Outside counsel, key vendor executives, partnerships, and other agencies
- Remote Work: Embracing of remote work policy allowed for recovery and continued operations



City's Response - Challenges

- Staff Burnout: Make key staff are taking care of themselves, taking breaks
- Prioritization: Squeaky wheel syndrome, be prepared for difficult conversations
- Inconsistent Business Continuity Plans: Had to figure out on the fly how to pay staff, pay vendors, how to run Council meetings, badge access, HVAC systems
- Local Drive Saving: Many people still save work to local computers without backing up. That data is gone if machine is compromised.
- THREAT ACTOR MIGHT CALL YOU! Be prepared on how to handle.



Key Takeaways

- **It's not a matter of if, but WHEN**

Government agencies along with healthcare and education are top targets

- **Media/Communication Strategy**
- **Engage & Protect Employees First**

Credit/ID monitoring, Dispatch, POA

- **Preparation is key!**

All departments should have **business continuity plans** for their key services. What is the next big event?

- **Track Costs & Activities**

Assign someone to track the event. Use project code or internal order to report to insurance, CalOES, reimbursements, etc.



Public Response to Police Use of Force

Presentation Overview

Jonathan V. Holtzman, Managing Partner – Renne Public Management Group (RPLG)

- Categories of Response
- Considering the Legal Risk
- Immediacy and Speed of Response
- Takeaways from Informal Interviews

Categories of Police Crisis Response

- Situations in which the community looks to Police for guidance vs. situations in which the community is critical of the Police
- Both situations share a need for speed and a pre-planned response strategy
- Reactions to external events vs. actions of agency employees
 - Difference in the extent of legal risk
- Lots of content about response to the former, but not as much for the latter

Legal Risk vs. Crisis Response: Use of Force

- Lawyers want to know all the facts – you will not have them
- Lawyers want to do research
- Lawyers are concerned about lawsuits against the agency for various violations
- Lawyers are slow and cautious

The Need for Speed

- Shift started in 2014 after the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO
- Checklist
- Disseminate all known information, including footage – only speak on what you know
- Form a pre-developed communications plan – establish what is known and what can and cannot be disclosed before speaking
- In a crisis situation, a trial down the road will not help matters – it's the here and now
- Have an established policy about the release and timing of release of information and tapes

My Informal Interviews

A good, speed-driven crisis response should have the following components:

1. Prime directive: never present inaccurate information
2. Be prepared to balance risk – asymmetry and kitchen cabinet
3. Communicate with the Union
4. Policy
5. Choose the best spokesperson – command/control, neutrality, compassion, candor, and authenticity
6. Admit what you do not know
7. Emphasize available legal protections

Housing Element & Group Discussion

- City Managers often are required to promote programs that many do not want in their City
- Need careful management of communications
- Housing sites need to be talked about well before they become set in stone

Participants' Experience

Q & A

Thank you!

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