

Crisis Checklist

Within the First 60 Minutes

- Contain the immediate crisis.
 - Ensure that calls have been made to all appropriate emergency responders.
 - Coordinate and cooperate with emergency responders.
- Follow your city's internal notification process.
 - Notify the city manager's office and elected/appointed officials.
 - Notify appropriate department directors.
- Hold the first meeting or conference call to quickly assess and gather known facts.
 - What happened?
 - How did it happen?
 - When did it happen?
 - What was the cause?
 - Were there any injuries?
 - What was the extent of the damage?
 - Is there any current or ongoing danger?
 - What recovery efforts are under way?
- Notify front line staff to direct calls from the media, community, government and family members to administrative support, an appropriate team member or a prerecorded voice mailbox.
- Notify the appropriate staff of the possibility that reporters and media crews may show up. Direct the media to a predetermined holding area, if possible.
- Organize a public information response, based on what is known. Discuss whether to wait for more information or communicate proactively.
- Draft an appropriate holding statement, press release and talking points (samples are available online with this article at www.westerncity.com).
- Draft a potential Q&A document.
- Reach out to and coordinate with outside agencies.
- Determine if outside experts are needed.
- Provide an initial holding statement to the media.

Crisis Checklist

In the First 90 Minutes

- Determine the crisis level and response needed.
- Ensure a clear understanding of internal roles and responsibilities.
- Each team member should assume his or her role.
- Assess the need to bring in subject matter experts or additional outside resources.
- If the situation dictates, make sure that at least one public information official is at the incident site.
- After discussing proactive versus responsive communication, decide on the best communication method:
 - Holding statement;
 - News release;
 - Individual reporter briefings;
 - Phone notification of key audiences, or
 - Website.
- Identify spokespeople and potential third-party subject experts for the media.
- Update key management on the public information response.
- Send internal communication to employees advising and informing them about the situation.
- Begin media and Internet monitoring.
- Identify a location for media briefings that is away from the incident site.
- Discuss the level of crisis response. Is this a local crisis? What are the national implications? What are the implications for employees? What are the implications for the public?
- Get administrative assistance:
 - Record or update all the facts;
 - Screen calls from the media, government agencies and the public, and provide information to the appropriate staff; and
 - Distribute public information materials.
- Disseminate public information tools, as appropriate.
- Consider all other interested parties/stakeholders/audiences and communicate appropriately.

Crisis Checklist

In the First Half-Day

- Conduct a team update.
- Identify security, legal and liability issues.
- Discuss and approve public information strategies/tactics.
- Assess the need for additional resources. If the response becomes 24/7, sufficient personnel must be available to staff all shifts.
- Update key stakeholders who have not already been reached.
- Continue communicating with employees.
- Prepare and train a designated spokesperson to communicate with external audiences.
- Assess the need to hold a news briefing or other proactive communication.
- Evaluate news coverage and correct inaccurate information.
- Receive an update from city staff in the field, if applicable.
- Communicate, as appropriate, with the media.
- Coordinate with outside agency public information officials, if applicable.

Crisis Checklist

By the End of Day One

- Shift from reactive to proactive communications. Emphasize concern and efforts to resolve the crisis and prevent future incidents.
- Evaluate news coverage and correct inaccurate information.
- Assess the need to address rumors circulating internally or on the Internet.
- Monitor the continuing crisis situation to determine the next steps:
 - Conduct news briefings as events warrant;
 - Provide periodic updates and individual interviews to the media; and
 - Post updates to the website.
- Evaluate the need for and prepare or update any of the following communications documents:
 - News releases or media advisories;
 - An internal list of questions and answers; and
 - Letters to key stakeholders.
- Ensure all facts are documented and well-organized.
- Ensure action steps are documented and well-organized.
- Assess the need for additional resources.
- Assess the need for further support from technical experts or third-party experts.
- Brief or update legislative and regulatory audiences, where appropriate.
- Receive a briefing from field staff.
- Brief or update the media.
- Continue coordination with outside agency public information officials.