

ERC Needs Assessment Checklist

Use this comprehensive checklist to help assess your organization's preparedness for responding to an emergency.

I. Planning, Research, Training, and Evaluation	Yes	No
1.1 Does your organization have an emergency response/crisis communication operational plan for public information and media, partner, and stakeholder relations?		
If yes, does the plan have the following elements:	Yes	No
a. Designated line and staff responsibilities for the public information team?		
b. Information verification and clearance/approval procedures?		
c. Agreements on information release authorities (who releases what/when/how)?		
d. Regional and local media contact list (including after-hours news desks)?		
e. Procedures to coordinate with the public health organization response teams?		
f. Designated spokespersons for public health issues in an emergency?		
g. Public health organization emergency response team after-hours contact numbers?		
h. Contact numbers for emergency information partners (e.g., Governor's public affairs officer, local FBI public information special agent in charge, local or regional department of agriculture or veterinarian public information officers, Red Cross and other non-government organizations)?		
i. Agreements/procedures to join the Joint Information Center (JIC) of the emergency operations center (if activated)?		
j. Procedures to secure needed resources (space, equipment, people) to operate the public information operation during a public health emergency 24 hours a day/7 days a week, if needed?		
k. Identified vehicles of information dissemination during a crisis to public, stakeholders, partners (e.g., e-mail list serves, broadcast fax, door-to-door leaflets, press releases)?		
	Yes	No
1.2 Have you coordinated your planning with the community or state emergency operation center?		
1.3 Have you coordinated your planning with other response organizations or competitors?		
1.4 Have designated spokespersons received media training and risk communication training?		
1.5 Do the spokespersons understand emergency crisis/risk communication principles to build trust and credibility?		

II. Message and Audiences		Yes	No
2.1 Are any of the following types of incidents (disasters) likely to require intense public information, media, and partner communication responses by your organization:			
a. Airborne infectious disease outbreak (e.g., pandemic influenza)?			
b. Foodborne infectious disease outbreak (e.g., listeria)?			
c. Waterborne (Cryptosporidiosis)?			
d. Vector borne (West Nile virus)?			
e. Outbreak with potential to spread outside your region or to your region?			
f. Unknown infectious agent?			
g. Chemical or toxic material disaster?			
h. Natural disasters?			
i. Unknown infectious agent (international) with potential to spread to U.S.?			
j. Known infectious agent (international) with potential to spread to U.S.?			
k. Large scale environmental crises ?			
l. Radiological event?			
m. Terrorist event			
m.1 Biological (suspected or declared)?			
m.2 Chemical?			
m.3 Radiological?			
m.4 Mass explosion?			
n. Site-specific emergencies			
n.1 Laboratory incident with laboratory worker?			
n.2 Laboratory incident/release of material in community?			
n.3 Death of employee/contractor/visitor while on campus/premises?			
n.4 Hostage event with/by employee/contractor on campus/premises?			
n.5 Bomb threat?			
n.6 Explosion/fire—destruction of property?			
n.7 Violent death of an employee/contractor or visitor on campus/premises?			
		Yes	No
2.2 Have you identified special populations (e.g., elderly, first language other than English, Tribal communities, border populations)? List any specific sub-populations that need to be targeted with specific messages during a public health emergency related to your organization (e.g., Tribal nations, persons with chronic respiratory illness, unvaccinated seniors).			
2.3 Have you identified your organization’s partners who should receive direct information and updates (not solely through the media) from your organization during a public health emergency?			
2.4 Have you identified all stakeholder organizations or populations (groups or organizations that your organization believes have an active interest in monitoring activities—to whom you are most directly accountable, other than official chain of command) who should receive direct communication during a public health-related emergency?			

II. Message and Audiences		Yes	No
2.5	Have you planned ways to reach people according to their reactions to the incident (fight or flight)? Are messages, messengers, and methods of delivery sensitive to all types of audiences in your area of responsibility?		
2.6	Are there mechanisms/resources in place to create messages for the media and public under severe time constraints, including methods to clear these messages within the emergency response operations of your organization (include cross clearance)?		
2.7	Have you identified how you will perform media evaluation, content analysis, and public information call analysis in real time during an emergency to ensure adequate audience feedback?		
		Yes	No
2.8	Have you developed topic-specific precrisis materials for identified public health emergency issues, or identified sources of these materials if needed:		
	a. Topic fact sheet (e.g., description of the disease, public health threat, treatment, etc.)?		
	b. Public Questions/Answers?		
	c. Partner Questions/Answers?		
	d. Resource fact for media/public/partners to obtain additional information?		
	e. Web access and links to information on the topic?		
	f. Recommendations for affected populations?		
	g. Background beta video (B-roll) for media use on the topic?		
	h. List of subject matter experts outside your organization who would be effective validators to public/media regarding your activities during a public health emergency?		

III. Messenger	Yes	No
3.1 Have you identified public health spokespersons for media and public appearances during an emergency?		
If yes, have you:		
a. Identified persons by position to act as spokespersons for multiple audiences (e.g., media spokesperson, community meeting speaker, etc.) and formats about public health issues during an emergency?		
b. Ensured that the spokespersons understand their communication roles and responsibilities and will incorporate them into their expected duties during the crisis?		

IV. Methods of Delivery (information dissemination) and Resources	Yes	No
4.1 Does your organization have go kits for public information officers who may have to abandon their normal place of operation during a public health emergency or join a JIC?		
If yes, does the kit include:	Yes	No
a. A computer(s) capable of linking to the Internet/e-mail?		
b. A CD-ROM or disks containing the elements of the crisis communication plan (including media, public health, and organization contact lists, partner contact lists; information materials, etc.)?		
c. A cell phone or satellite phone, pager, wireless e-mail, etc.?		
d. A funding mechanism (credit card, etc.) that can be used to purchase operational resources as needed?		
e. Manuals and background information necessary to provide needed information to the public and media?		
f. Care and comfort items for the public information operations staff?		
4.2 Have you identified the mechanisms that are or should be in place to ensure multiple channels of communication to multiple audiences during a public health emergency?		
If yes, do they include:	Yes	No
a. Media channels (print, TV, radio, Web)?		
b. Web sites?		
c. Phone banks?		
d. Town hall meetings?		
e. Listserv e-mail?		
f. Broadcast fax?		
g. Letters by mail?		
h. Subscription newsletters?		
i. Submissions to partner newsletters?		
j. Regular or special partner conference calls?		
k. Door-to-door canvassing?		
4.3 Are contracts/agreements in place to post information to broadcast fax or e-mail systems?		
4.4 Have locations for press conferences been designated and resourced?		

V. Personnel	Yes	No
5.1 Have you identified employees, contractors, fellows, interns currently working for you or available to you in an emergency, that have skills in the following areas:		
a. Public affairs specialist?		
b. Health communication specialist?		
c. Communication officer?		
d. Health education specialist?		
e. Training specialist?		
f. Writer/editor?		
g. Technical writer/editor?		
h. Audio/visual specialist?		
i. Internet/Web design specialist?		
j. Others who contribute to public/provider information?		
5.2 Have you identified who will provide the following expertise or execute these activities during a public health emergency (including backup):		
Command and control:	Yes	No
a. Directs the work related to the release of information to the media, public, and partners?		
b. Activates the plan, based on careful assessment of the situation and the expected demands for information by media, partners, and the public?		
c. Coordinates with horizontal communication partners, as outlined in the plan, to ensure that messages are consistent and within the scope of the organization's responsibility?		
d. Provides updates to organization's director, EOC command and higher headquarters, as determined in the plan?		
e. Advises the director and chain of command regarding information to be released, based on the organization's role in the response?		
f. Ensures that risk communication principles are employed in all contact with media, public, and partner information release efforts?		
g. Advises incident-specific policy, science, and situation?		
h. Reviews and approves materials for release to media, public, and partners?		
i. Obtains required clearance of materials for release to media on policy or sensitive topic-related information not previously cleared?		
j. Determines the operational hours/days, and reassesses throughout the emergency response?		
k. Ensures resources are available (human, technical, and mechanical supplies)?		
Media:	Yes	No
a. Assesses media needs and organizes mechanisms to fulfill media needs during the crisis (e.g., daily briefings in person, versus a Web site update)?		
b. Triage the response to media requests and inquiries?		
c. Ensures that media inquiries are addressed as appropriate?		
d. Supports spokespersons?		

V. Personnel		Yes	No
e.	Develops and maintains media contact lists and call logs?		
f.	Produces and distributes media advisories and press releases?		
g.	Produces and distributes materials (e.g., fact sheets, B-roll)?		
h.	Oversees media monitoring systems and reports (e.g., analyzing environment and trends to determine needed messages, determining what misinformation needs to be corrected, identifying concerns, interests, and needs arising from the crisis and the response)?		
i.	Ensures that risk communication principles to build trust and credibility are incorporated into all public messages delivered through the media?		
j.	Acts as member of the JIC of the field site team for media relations?		
k.	Serves as liaison from the organization to the JIC and back?		
Direct public information:		Yes	No
a.	Manages the mechanisms to respond to public requests for information directly from the organization by telephone, in writing or by e-mail?		
b.	Oversees public information monitoring systems and reports (e.g., analyzing environment and trends to determine needed messages, determining what misinformation needs to be corrected, identifying concerns, interests, and needs arising from the crisis and the response)?		
c.	Activates or participates in the telephone information line?		
d.	Activates or participates in the public e-mail response system?		
e.	Activates or participates in the public correspondence response system?		
f.	Organizes and manages emergency response Web sites and Web pages?		
g.	Establishes and maintains links to other emergency response Web sites?		
Partner/stakeholder information:		Yes	No
a.	Establishes communication protocols based on prearranged agreements with identified partners and stakeholders?		
b.	Arranges regular partner briefings and updates?		
c.	Solicits feedback and responds to partner information requests and inquiries?		
d.	Oversees partner/stakeholder monitoring systems and reports (e.g., analyzing environment and trends to determine needed messages, determining what misinformation needs to be corrected, identifying concerns, interests, and needs arising from the crisis and the response)?		
e.	Helps organize and facilitate official meetings to provide information and receive input from partners or stakeholders?		
f.	Develops and maintains lists and call logs of legislators and special interest groups?		
g.	Responds to legislator/special interest groups requests and inquiries?		
Content and material for public health emergencies:		Yes	No
a.	Develops and establishes mechanisms to rapidly receive information from the EOC regarding the public health emergency?		
b.	Translates EOC situation reports and meeting notes into information appropriate for public and partner needs?		
c.	Works with subject matter experts to create situation-specific factsheets, Q/As, and updates?		

V. Personnel		Yes	No
d.	Compiles information on possible public health emergency topics for release when needed?		
e.	Tests messages and materials for cultural and language requirements of special populations?		
f.	Receives input from other communication team members regarding content and message needs?		
g.	Uses analysis from media, public and partner monitoring systems, and reports (e.g., environmental and trend analysis to determine needed messages, what misinformation need to be corrected, identify concerns, interests and needs arising from the crisis and the response) to identify additional content requirements and materials development?		
h.	Lists contracts/cooperative agreements/consultants currently available to support emergency public/private information dissemination?		

VI. Suggestions to Consider about Resources:		Yes	No
Do you have space:			
a.	To operate your communication teams outside the EOC? (You need a place to bring media on site, separate from the EOC.)		
b.	To quickly train spokespersons?		
c.	For team meetings?		
d.	For equipment, exclusive for your use? (You cannot stand in line for the copier when media deadlines loom.)		
Have you considered the following contracts and memoranda of agreement:		Yes	No
a.	A contract with a media newswire?		
b.	A contract with a radio newswire?		
c.	A contract for writers or public relations personnel who can augment your staff?		
d.	A contract for administrative support?		
e.	A phone system/contractor to supply a phone menu that directs type of caller and level of information desired, including:		
e.1	General information about the threat?		
e.2	Tip line, listing particular actions people can take to protect themselves?		
e.3	Reassurance/counseling?		
e.4	Referral information for health care/medical facility workers?		
e.5	Referral information for epidemiologists or others to report cases?		
e.6	Lab/treatment protocols?		
e.7	Managers looking for policy statements for employees?		
Do you have the following recommended equipment:		Yes	No
a.	Fax machine (with a number that's pre-programmed for broadcast fax releases to media and partners)?		
b.	Web site capability 24/7? (You should attempt to have new information posted within 2 hours; some say within 10 minutes.)		
c.	Computers (on LAN with e-mail listservs designated for partners and media)?		
d.	Laptop computers?		
e.	Printers for every computer?		
f.	Copier (and backup)?		
g.	Tables? (You will need a large number of tables.)		
h.	Cell phones/pagers/personal data devices and e-mail readers?		
i.	Visible calendars, flow charts, bulletin boards, easels?		
j.	Designated personal message board?		
k.	Small refrigerator?		
l.	Paper?		
m.	Color copier?		
n.	A/V equipment?		

VI. Suggestions to Consider about Resources:		Yes	No
o.	Portable microphones?		
p.	Podium?		
q.	TVs with cable hookup?		
r.	VHS VCR?		
s.	CD-ROM?		
t.	Paper shredder?		
Do you have the following recommended supplies:		Yes	No
a.	Copier toner?		
b.	Printer ink?		
c.	Paper?		
d.	Pens?		
e.	Markers?		
f.	Highlighters?		
g.	Erasable markers?		
h.	FedEx and mail supplies?		
i.	Sticky note pads?		
j.	Tape?		
k.	Notebooks?		
l.	Poster board?		
m.	Standard press kit folders?		
n.	Organized B-roll in beta format (keep VHS copies around for meetings)?		
o.	Formatted computer disks?		
p.	Color-coded items (folders, inks, etc.)?		
q.	Baskets (to contain items you're not ready to throw away)?		
r.	Organizers to support your clearance and release system?		
s.	Expandable folders (alphabetized or days of the month)?		
t.	Staplers?		
u.	Paper punch?		
v.	Three-ring binders?		
w.	Organization's press kit or its logo on a sticker?		
x.	Colored copier paper (for door-to-door flyers)?		
y.	Paper clips (all sizes)?		