



**Canadian Centre  
for  
Emergency Preparedness**

**Crisis Communications Plan**

Date Created: *mmm dd, yyyy*  
Date Revised: *mmm dd, yyyy*

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## **Purpose of the Plan:**

*<This section documents the main goals of the plan – for example:>*

A crisis communication plan provides policies and procedures for the co-ordination of communications within the organization, and between the organization and any applicable outside agencies (e.g. - the media, regulatory agencies, customers, suppliers, stakeholders (board of directors, shareholders, unions) and the public) in the event of an emergency or controversial issue. Emergencies may include fires, bomb threats, natural disasters, or major crimes. Controversial issues may include police investigations, protests or other situations that demand a public response.

This plan not only addresses media relations and communications issues, but also includes procedures for the rapid assessment of potentially harmful situations and the methods for responding to these situations quickly and effectively.

It is the goal of this crisis communications plan to establish guidelines for dealing with a variety of situations, and to ensure that staff and communicators are familiar with those procedures and their roles in the event of a crisis. The plan is designed to be used in conjunction with the normal decision-making hierarchy of the organization and does not supplant that decision-making process.

## **Plan Objectives:**

*<This section documents specific objectives – for example:>*

1. To factually assess the situation and determine whether a communications response is warranted.
2. To assemble a Crisis Communication Team that will make recommendations on appropriate responses.
3. To implement immediate action to:
  - Identify those parties that should be informed about the situation.
  - Communicate facts about the crisis.
  - Minimize rumours.
  - Restore order and/or confidence.

## **Readiness Preparation:**

*<This section documents the infrastructure and procedures in place prior to an emergency. Subsections should include:*

*Inventory of potential crisis and public relations vulnerabilities  
Makeup of the Crisis Management team  
Team Assignments and Responsibilities  
Location of the Emergency Operations Centre(s)>*

## **Response:**

*<This section documents how the organization will respond to an event or incident. Subsections should include:*

*Assessment Procedures  
Designation of a Spokesperson or Spokespersons  
Internal Communications  
External Communications  
Rumour Control  
Response Activity Checklist>*

## **Follow Up:**

*<This section documents communications protocols within the organization and with outside agencies as well, including relationships with the media, both after the event, and before. Provisions for assessing and documenting the nature and severity of the incident are also documented in this section.*

*Follow up information, Thank You Letters, Etc.  
Rumour Control  
Post-mortem Meeting(s)  
Plan Update>*

## Appendix A: Contact Log

*< A log should be established to record all telephone calls from the media or other parties inquiring about the crisis. This will help to ensure that the many callbacks required are not overlooked. It will also assist in the post-crisis analysis.*

*The contact log should contain the following information:*

*Date | Name, Title, Company and Telephone number of caller | Questions(s) asked | Person responsible for response | Additional follow-up needs>*

Date	Caller	Topic	Follow Up
	Name: Title: Company: Telephone:		By: Action:

## **Appendix B: Emergency Operations Centre**

*<This section provides detailed information for each EOC location. For each EOC state the location, directions on how to locate, physical layout and supplies required.>*

## Appendix C: Sample Scripts

*<This section will contain some pre-formatted press release or press conference scripts which can be used or modified quickly during initial incident response, during the on-going crisis and follow up.>*

### Sample News Release

A \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ involving \_\_\_\_\_ occurred today at \_\_\_\_\_. The incident is under investigation and more information is forthcoming.

A (what happened) at (location) involving (who) occurred today at (time). The incident is under investigation and more information is forthcoming.

For instance:

An explosion at 1210 Market Street, the main plant for the Acme Toy Company occurred today at 3 p.m. The incident is under investigation and more information is forthcoming.

You could put down a definitive time for the next news conference or release of information if you know it but it is not necessary. This will not solve your problems, but may buy you enough time to prepare for the next news conference or release.

You could also add information if it is available such as how many casualty's there are known up to this point or any other pertinent information available. Once again, this information should be definitive and not speculative, verify everything you say. This will help your credibility in the long run.

## **Appendix D: News Conference Guidelines**

*<This section documents guidelines for conducting a news conference. For example:>*

1. When you notify media of news conferences/availabilities, be sure to define what kind of event you are having. News conferences are held to announce something for the first time. Press availabilities are held simply to make individuals available to answer questions or demonstrate something.
2. Don't call unnecessary news conferences/availabilities. If it's not worth their time, the media will only be angered.
3. If holding a news conference, try to tell media in advance some details of what you will be announcing.
4. Gauge the size of your crowd carefully when reserving a room; better to have too much than too little space. Make sure microphones, chairs, lighting and water are in place at least 30 minutes prior to the event.
5. Decide format in advance -- who will introduce speakers, who decides when question/answer period ends, and other details.
6. Decide in advance whether handouts are needed. If speaker is giving a talk for which there is a text, you may want to wait and hand out material after the talk so media will stay and listen. However, it's advisable to tell the media you will provide a text of the speech so they are not irritated by having to take unnecessary notes.
7. Check to see what else is happening in your organization or in the community before scheduling a press conference.
8. Consider whether you need to let other organizations and agencies know you are having a news conference. (You may wish to invite others to attend or participate in your event.)
9. Decide who will maintain control at the news conference, who will decide where cameras are set up, who sits where.
10. Try to plan the length of the news conference, but be flexible.
11. Consider the time of the news conference. If you want to make the noon, 6 p.m. or 11 p.m. TV and radio news, you need to allow time for crews to travel and edit tape.
12. If you are going to set restrictions on an event such as limited photo access, try to put the restrictions in writing and communicate to the media at least 24 hours in advance.

## **Appendix E: Media Relations Reminders**

*<This section documents guidelines for dealing with the media. For example:>*

### **In General**

1. Always return media calls. The more co-operative you appear, the better.
2. Communicate with the media -- talk to them as well as listen to them. During crisis time, you may learn a great deal from the media that can be useful to you in further dealing with the crisis.
3. Avoid antagonizing the media. A short tone at a press conference, during a phone call, or elsewhere can affect your future relationship with an individual or other media who may hear the conversation.
4. Consider establishing a dedicated call-in phone line that will offer information to media or others. Information on news conferences, rumour control information, newly acquired information, can be placed on a tape that can be updated. This is particularly useful when regular phone lines are tied up with calls.
5. Consider how information you release to media may affect other agencies, businesses or individuals. If you say things that may result in media calling other agencies, call those agencies first to warn them of impending calls.
6. When talking to the media, be sure to give credit to other agencies, groups or individuals working on the crisis, including your own staff.
7. Try to be pro-active with new information. Even those things may be frantic; if you acquire new information regarding the crisis, reach out to the media.
8. Be honest. Don't make false or misleading statements.

### **Handling Media Interviews**

#### How to prepare for Broadcast Interviews

- Prepare "talking paper" on primary points you want to make.
- Anticipate questions--prepare responses.
- Practice answering questions.
- Cover controversial areas ahead of time.
- Know who will be interviewing you, if possible.
- Determine how much time is available.
- Audiences often remember impressions, not facts.

### Do's and Don'ts During the Interview process

- Do build bridges.
- Do use specifics.
- Do use analogies.
- Do use contrasts, comparisons.
- Do be enthusiastic/animated.
- Do be your casual likable self.
- Do be a listener.
- Do be cool.
- Do be correct.
- Do be anecdotal.
- If you don't have the answer or can't answer, do admit it and move on to another topic.
- Don't fall for that "A or B" dilemma.
- Don't accept "what if" questions.
- Don't accept "laundry list" questions.
- Don't go off the record.
- Don't think you have to answer every question.
- Don't speak for someone else --beware of the absent-party trap.

### How To Handle Yourself During A TV Talk Show Interview

- Talk "over " lavalier microphone.
- Audio check-- use regular voice.
- If makeup is offered, use it.
- Sit far back in the chair, back erect...but lean forward to appear enthusiastic and force yourself to use hands.
- Remember... TV will frame your face--be calm, use high hand gestures, if possible.
- Keep eyes on interviewer-- not on camera.
- Smile, be friendly.

### Tips On Appearance

- Avoid wearing pronounced stripes, checks or small patterns.
- Grey, brown, blue or mixed colored suits/dresses are best.
- Grey, light-blue, off-white or pastel shirts or blouses are best.
- Avoid having hair cut right before interview.

### How To Respond During A Newspaper Interview

- Obtain advanced knowledge of interview topics.
- Make sure you are prepared in detail; print reporters are often more knowledgeable than broadcast reporters and may ask more detailed questions.
- Begin the interview by making your point in statement by making your major points in statement form.
- Try to maintain control of the interview .
- Don't let reporter wear you down.
- Set a time limit in advance.
- Don't let so relaxed that you say something you wish you hadn't.
- Avoid jargon or professional expressions.
- Reporter may repeat self in different ways to gain information you may not want to give.

- Don't answer inappropriate questions; simply say it is "not an appropriate topic for you to address at this time," or "it's proprietary" for example.
- Be prepared for interruptions with questions...it is legitimate for reporters to do that.
- Do not speak "off the record."
- Remember, the interview lasts as long as a reporter is there.

### After The Interview

- You can ask to check technical points, but do not ask to see advance copy of the story.
- Never try to go over reporter's head to stop a story.
- Do not send gifts to reporters--it is considered unethical for them to accept them.

### Exercise Log

**Document Revision History** <This section logs the date, type of exercise and any pertinent comments each time the plan is exercised..>

Date	Type of Exercise	Comments

## Document Revision History

**Document Revision History** <On the last page of the plan, you will track of all revisions made to this document in the following table. Make an entry when the plan is first created and put in “Plan Created” in the Revision column. Keep the title page of the plan updated as well with the creation date and last revision date.>

Date	Author	Revision