

Crisis Communication Spokesperson Checklist

Criteria	Yes	No
Message Preparation*		
1. Did you mobilize resources and staff quickly?		
2. Did you recognize that public perceptions matter more than facts?		
3. Did you seek outside help , including volunteers?		
4. Did you coordinate efforts with other emergency response organizations?		
5. Did you enlist support from credible third parties ?		
6. Did you monitor and listen closely to what the news media, public officials, and other important players were saying and the questions they are asking?		
7. Did you refrain from trying to control the flow of information?		
8. Did you withhold names of injured or deceased until next-of-kin were properly notified?		
Message Content*		
9. Did you express and show concern, empathy, and compassion consistently for damages, injuries, and any inconvenience?		
10. Did you emphasize dedication, commitment, and social responsibility ?		
11. Did you provide an early or immediate apology ?		
12. Did you provide a list of facts and an action plan ?		
13. Were you open and honest about capabilities, needs, and problems?		
14. Did you know exactly what you wanted to say to the media and did you use two key messages?		
15. Did you acknowledge responsibility but avoid placing blame?		
16. Did you indicate that investigations are under way to determine the cause?		
17. Did you tell the truth as best you knew it?		
18. Did you use examples, human-interest stories, and concrete analogies to establish a common understanding ?		
19. Did you use simple visuals and graphics as much as possible?		
20. Did you test your message content prior to delivery?		
21. Did you refrain from going "off the record" ?		

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22. Did you avoid saying "no comment?"		
23. Did you avoid evading statements and shifting responsibility?		
24. Did you avoid statements that imply that cost is more important than public safety, health, or environment?		
25. Did you avoid the use of technical and legal jargon ?		
26. Did you avoid providing too much technical detail ?		
Message Delivery*		
1. Was top management involved and visible ?		
2. Did you go immediately to the scene?		
3. Were you easily accessible to the media?		
4. Did you stay calm ? (not lose your temper)		
5. Did you practice what you planned to say to the media aloud and did you test it?		
6. Did you indicate that you would get back by a specific time with an answer if you did not know an answer to a question?		
7. Did you avoid conjecture and speculation ("What if" questions)?		
Nonverbal Communication**		
1. Were you sensitive to the non-verbal messages you were communicating?		
2. Did you sit up straight , showing that you are paying attention and respecting your audience?		
3. Did you make eye contact ? (Avoiding eye contact can make you look deceitful. If it is very difficult to make eye contact, focus on the back of the room, not on your notes or the floor.)		
4. Did you avoid defensive, argumentative, and unreceptive body language (e.g., arms crossed)? Did you stand with your arms straight at your sides?		
5. Did you avoid fidgeting , shuffling papers, or playing with your pen? (Keeping your feet planted on the ground, sitting or standing still will make you look more controlled and confident.)		

**This material is based largely on the findings of advanced environmental communication research conducted by Dr. Vincent T. Covello and the staff of the Center for Risk Communication, 1995.*

***This material is based largely on the ATSDR Handbook 8-01.*