Crisis Communication: How to Use the IAAPA Crisis Communications Plan Template

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Presenter

- Colleen Mangone, Director of Media Relations, IAAPA
- 17 years in media relations and PR
- Joined IAAPA’s staff in 2009.
- Prior to IAAPA worked in politics (campaigns to Capitol Hill)
AGENDA

- Reputation Management
- Defining a Crisis
- Crisis Planning
- Working with the Press
- Questions
Reputation Management

Image Bank
Image Bank: Deposits
Image Bank: Withdrawals

- Child injures foot at trampoline park
- Protestors hang banner near park entrance
- Park faces lawsuit for refusing ride access to person with disability
- Water-pump malfunction causes chemical leak
- 40 businesses involved in data breach
- Zoo investigating death of animal
- Firefighters put out small kitchen fire at bowling center
- 2-year old hospitalized after near-drowning
- Company to compensate victims of recent incident
Guiding Principle

Long-term Credibility Is Critical for Long-term Success!
Defining a Crisis

**Crisis**: An unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending; especially one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome.

www.merriam-webster.com
Causes of Crisis Events

- Mechanical Malfunction or Defect
- Employee Performance or Behavior
- Guest Behavior
- Nature
- Financial or Business Problem
- Lawsuits/Government Regulations
- External Events
Characteristics of Crisis Events

- Unexpected
- Rapid Onset
- Require Attention of Top Management
- Impact Multiple Groups of People Important to Your Success
- Undesirable Outcome
Characteristics of Crisis Events

STRESS!
In the Beginning of a Crisis

- Accurate Information is Scarce
- Public Perceptions are Forming
Plan + Practice = Less Stress!

AND More Effective Management and Better Outcome
Crisis Planning

Types of Plans
- Emergency Response Plan
- Crisis Communications Plan

You Need Both
Crisis Communications Plan

Six Easy Steps

1) Review the Template
2) Customize it for Your Facility
3) Practice
4) Refine
5) Update
6) Practice
Key Considerations

- Who (Assign Responsibilities)
- Where (Determine Locations)
- What (Deliver Consistent Information)
- How (Working with the Press)
Section 2.0 – Roles and Responsibilities

- Tell What Happened
- Tell It Fast
- Tell the Truth
Who Needs to Hear From You

- Guests/Potential Guests/Customers
- Employees
- Politicians
- Community Leaders
- Government Regulators
- Business Partners
- Shareholders/Bankers
- Suppliers/Vendors
The Crisis Team

WHO (Assign Responsibilities)
The Crisis Team

- Crisis Communications Team Leader
- Spokesperson(s)
- Public Relations Support Personnel
- Public Safety Officer
- Operations Officer
- Guest Relations Officer
The Crisis Team

- Human Resources Officer
- Family Support Officer
- Telephone Call Center/Switchboard Officer
- Website/Information Technology Officer
- Social Media Officer

*Roles can be combined/adjusted.*
Golden Rules

- Never Lie, Deny, or Hide Your Involvement
- If You Ignore the Situation, It Will Only Get Worse
- Only the Spokesperson Talks with the Press
Spokesperson

- Primary
- Backup
- Technical Experts
Spokesperson

Qualifications

- Trained to Work with the Press
- Comfortable on TV
- Credible
- Available and Ready
Press Policies

- Respond Quickly, Remember Deadlines
- If You Don’t Talk, Someone Else Will
- All Employees Should Be Trained to Direct Inquiries to the Spokesperson
- Treat Press Equally
TIP:
Build Good Working Relationships with the Press *BEFORE* a Crisis Occurs.
Tough Questions

- Know Your Facility
- Anticipate and Prepare for the Worst
- Don’t Talk “Off the Record”
- Practice
- Warm Up
Section 3.0 – Forms and Logs

- 3.1: Crisis Communications Team Contact List
- 3.2: Senior Management/Corporate Office Contact List
- 3.3: Additional Emergency Notifications List
- 3.4: Press Inquiry Log
Section 3.0 – Forms and Logs

- 3.5: General Public Inquiry
- 3.6: Fact Finding Form
- 3.7: Phone Tree
- 3.8: Website Alert Function
- 3.9: Social Media Alerts and Guidelines
- 3.10: Press Contact List
Section 3.0 – Forms and Logs

- 3.6: Fact Finding Form
  - Tell What Happened
  - Tell It Fast
  - Tell The Truth
Section 4.0 – Command Centers

- WHERE (Determine Locations)
- Primary
- Backup
Section 4.0 – Command Centers

- 4.1-4.2: Crisis Communications Team Center
- 4.3-4.4: Press Center
- 4.5-4.6: Employee Information Center
- 4.7-4.8: Affected Guests, Family, Friends Center
“Thank you for your question. I am not a designated spokesperson for the company. Please go to _______________ or call ___________ and someone there can help you.”
Call Center/Switchboard/Operator

- All Press Calls to Spokesperson
- Designated Number for Family/Friends
WHAT (Deliver Consistent Information)
Section 5.0 – Considerations

- Incident-Specific
- CONFIDENTIAL
- 5.1 Ride Accident
- 5.2 Power Outage
- 5.3 Structural Incident
- 5.4 Drowning
TIP:
Use Section 5.0 to Learn about Your Facility and as an Operational Checkup.
Section 6.0 – Statements/ Messaging

- Communicate Immediately
  - Establish Information Pipeline
- Confirmed FACTS Only
  - Who, What, Where, When
- Do Not Speculate
- Verbal, Print, E-mail
- Show Concern
- Remember Social Media
Section 6.0 – Statements/Messaging

- Truth
- Empathy
- Brevity (3 sentences)
- 3 Key Points
  - Factual
  - Focused
  - Freedom
Section 6.0 – Statements/ Messaging

“The safety and security of our guests and employees are our top priorities in all we do.”

“Our thoughts and prayers are with the affected party and his/her family and friends.”

“We will reopen as soon as it is safe to do so.”
Section 6.0 – Statements/ Messaging

- 6.3: Press Release Checklist
- 6.4: Facility/Company Fact Sheet
Section 7.0 – Sample Press Releases

- 7.1: Ride Accident – Preliminary Statement
- 7.1: Ride Accident – Follow-Up Statement
- 7.3: Power Outage
- 7.4: Ride Evacuation – Power Outage Etc.
- 7.6: Guest Denied Access to Ride
- 7.8: Animal Attack
How (Working with the Press)
Section 8.0 – PR Resources

- 8.1: General Rules for Handling Press Interviews
- 8.2: TV and Radio
- 8.3: Newspaper and Magazines
- 8.4: Press Conference Outline
Section 8.0 – PR Resources

**DO:**
- Tell the Truth
- Be Correct
- Be Concise and Succinct
- Prepare Key Messages
- Anticipate Questions, Prepare Responses
- Know What to Expect (Who, What)
Section 8.0 – PR Resources

DON’T:
- Speculate
- Go Off the Record
- Use Dramatic Language
MEDIA TIPS

Do Interviews with Smaller/Less Influential Press Outlets First to Warm Up.
Avoid:

- Negative Words
- Putting Words in Your Mouth
- The Silent Treatment
MEDIA TIPS

If you don’t say it, they can’t quote you!

Stick with the facts and your messages!
Plan + Practice = Less Stress!
Electronic Version for IAAPA Facility Members

- Order by emailing your name, title, company name, and IAAPA member ID # to pressoffice@IAAPA.org.

IAAPA Support and Resources

- IAAPA Hotline +1 703/299-5127 (For use by Members and Press)
  - www.IAAPA.org/pressoffice
Cameron Jacobs, cjacobs@IAAPA.org
Manager, Media Relations

Colleen Mangone, cmangone@IAAPA.org
Director, Media Relations

David Mandt, dmandt@IAAPA.org
Senior Vice President, Marketing and Communications

Thank you!
Questions