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Crisis Communications Planning Checklist

During an emergency, clear and consistent communication from your organization is essential to a swift and seamless recovery. The best crisis communicators judiciously prepare and dynamically react as the situation unfolds. The following checklist will highlight some recommendations for developing and executing a well-rounded communications strategy in the face of any disaster scenario.

✓	DEVELOPING YOUR COMMUNICATIONS PLAN
☐	Start with a general risk assessment: • Identify the top threats to your organization and any vulnerabilities. • Analyze what business functions are critical to your operations. • Identify the resources needed to protect those critical business functions.
☐	Establish a crisis management team, and those within that group are responsible for communications.
☐	Develop and regularly update an emergency contact list to include: • Home phone • Cellphone • Personal email • Family contact information • Evacuation plan
☐	Set up an alert notification system capable of multiple means of communication with employees, stakeholders and clients. Test regularly.
☐	Ensure that employee, vendor and supplier mobile voice communications are not reliant on a single network. Train all critical personnel to use multiple channels of communication during a crisis.
☐	Establish a separate, formal notification plan for employees' immediate families and close relatives in the event of loss of life, missing personnel, etc. Additionally, ensure that caregivers, day care operators and others upon whom employees may depend for family member support can receive appropriate information.
☐	Ensure that a formal system exists to integrate new hires into the crisis communications plan.

In association with

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Crisis Communications Planning Checklist (cont.)

✓	**DEVELOPING YOUR COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**
☐	Consider establishing a public hotline or a hidden website that can be activated on short notice to provide information during an emergency to organizational stakeholders.
☐	Consider using social media to communicate during an emergency, especially messages that need to be real-time.
☐	Establish an easily accessible database of information about the company for critical personnel in case of emergency — include company background information, critical documents, key contacts, passwords, etc.
☐	Consider setting up a password-protected online message board specific to your organization.
☐	Establish remote hosting for your corporate website. • Ensure proper bandwidth capability for spikes in traffic during crises. • Ensure remote access to your website and establish a team to manage updates to the site during disasters.
☐	Develop a tactical response plan for voice/phone redirection.
☐	Establish processes and plans to reestablish your network connectivity. • Email • Core processing • Virtual private network (VPN) • Remote services
☐	Coordinate all crisis communications planning with key vendors and suppliers to ensure a seamless transition.
☐	Develop and test your media communications strategy: • Designate primary and secondary spokespersons. • Ensure all employees know who the spokesperson is. • Arrange for media to have 24-hour access to a spokesperson. • Give designated spokespersons training in dealing with the media. • Establish a policy for all employee interaction with media, on- and off-site. • Maintain trustworthy, credible relationships with the media all of the time. If you do, the media will be less suspicious and more cooperative in the midst of a crisis. • Identify key audiences and develop a strategy for each. • Create key messages and talking points to ensure consistent messages. • Ensure you have a media kit at the ready containing information about your company or organization, as well as a list of approved contacts. • Discuss possible problem areas and potential negative impacts.
☐	Identify main media outlets through which information about your organization will be disseminated (radio and TV stations, print media, etc.).
☐	Find a signage vendor with multiple regional locations to use for signage needs before, during and after a disaster.

Crisis Communications Planning Checklist (cont.)

✓ DURING THE CRISIS

- ☐ Have all employees, vendors, clients and media contacts information on hand.

- ☐ Be the first to break the news about how your organization is responding. Even if the situation is still evolving, begin with full disclosure. Always respond to media requests.

- ☐ Continue to communicate with all key audiences until the crisis has passed. Consistency is important.

- ☐ Monitor online and offline conversations in order to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your strategy and messaging.

- ☐ Confirm facts, communicating openly and accurately about the situation. Your communications team must be fully aware of all the facts and know the proper, approved messages. Consider nothing off the record during this time.

- ☐ During evacuation, have a central point of contact for all employees, and ensure you know where your people are located.

- ☐ During evacuation, consider your phone lines. Redirection to cellphones, answering service, Google Voice, etc. could be critical.

✓ AFTER THE CRISIS

- ☐ Notify all critical people of the next steps.

- ☐ Learn from the experience and anticipate the next crisis. Plan for likely and even unlikely scenarios based on this most recent crisis, and know the steps you're going to take before you have to take them.

- ☐ Debrief staff on their experiences, praising people for what went well.

- ☐ Improve your plan as needed, and aim to regularly update it, including response to lingering fallout from the most recent crisis.

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