

ALASKA



FOOD COALITION

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"There cannot be a crisis today, my schedule is already full." *Former U.S. National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger*

Crisis or Not, Have a Plan!

What is Crisis Management?

Crisis management is the nature of activities to respond to a major threat to a person, group or organization; it is a relatively new field of management. Proactive crisis management activities include forecasting potential crises and creating a plan to deal with them; for example, how to recover if your computer system completely fails.

Organizations should complete a crisis management plan before they experience a crisis. Crisis management in the face of a current, real crisis includes identifying the real nature of a current crisis, intervening to minimize damage and recovering from the crisis. Crisis management often includes strong focus on public relations to recover any damage to your public image and assure stakeholders that recovery is underway.

Many of us don't work for organizations that will ever have a crisis quite like BP or Tylenol, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be ready to handle any negative situation that comes our way. The more quickly and efficiently you can address any crisis that hits your organization, the less damage to your image. Developing a crisis plan can seem like a daunting task, but in actuality it is a common-sense document.

Creating a Plan

The time to create a Crisis Communications Plan is before you need it, not in the height of a crisis. Every critical person in your company should have a copy, review it twice a year and make suggestions to improve it as time goes on.

Documents in your plan should include a:

- Crisis checklist
- Sample press release
- Announcement to employees
- Checklist for anyone dealing with a threatening phone call
- List of sources for information and assistance in the event of a product crisis

Here are five essentials of a good crisis communications plan:

1. Keep it brief. It does not need to cover every possible crisis but be a manageable, readily accessible and actionable document that gives you strategies and concrete plans for handling likely types of scenarios your agency might encounter, including injury of a client, death of a key employee, charges against an executive, legal challenge, accusations of impropriety or product recall.

2. Nurture your relationships. In a time of crisis, you will need to reach out to key people who can help you figure out what you're up against and how to mitigate the damage. Identify your allies, including community leaders and friendly media who might help tell your side of the story.

3. Be proactive. Break bad news yourself so you can ensure your side of the story is heard. Waiting for someone else to tell it means you will only be responding and not able to present the issue in the most helpful way. Reach out to the media and make your website a destination by updating it with the information the media and the public want, including the bad news.

4. Be truthful. It is imperative the public trust that you are doing everything in your power to make the situation right and ensure that it doesn't happen again. If you are caught in a lie or have bent the truth, your credibility will be shot. And you won't have a leg to stand on.

5. Your Executive Director should be prepared to be the spokesperson. When something goes terribly wrong, people want to hear from the person in charge. Your director should be media trained and able to explain the situation and the agency's side of the story simply, with humility and authenticity.

Office of Crisis Management

The Office of Crisis Management (OEO) serves as the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) focal point for coordinating emergency and crisis response activities involving FDA regulated products or in situations when FDA regulated products need to be utilized or deployed. OEO provides interagency coordination and response to adverse events, food borne illnesses, injuries, product tampering and man-made and natural disasters. It coordinates intra-agency and inter-agency activities related to crisis management, emergency preparedness and response, and security operations. OEO manages the National Consumer Complaint System.

Resources

U.S. Food and Drug Administration Office of Crisis Management

<http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/CentersOffices/OC/OfficeoftheCounselortotheCommissioner/ucm197844.htm>

Seven Dimensions of Crisis Communication

<http://www.e911.com/monos/A001.html>

Crisis Communication Planning

<http://www.babbleoncom.com/2011/01/crisis-communications-planning/>

Managing Crisis: Risk Management and Crisis Response Planning

http://strengtheningnonprofits.org/resources/guidebooks/Managing_Crisis.pdf

Public Relations 101: Creating Your Crisis Management Plan

<http://www.business2community.com/public-relations/public-relations-101-create-your-crisis-management-plan-044576>

The Alaska Food Coalition is here to help. Copies of Alaska Food Coalition White Papers are available Online: <http://www.alaskafood.org/whitepapers.shtml> for additional information, contact Vanessa Salinas, Alaska Food Coalition Manager: afc@foodbankofalaska.org

NEXT MONTH: One Community, One Pallet of Food