

Crisis Communications Checklist

Which do you think about more often, your building's sprinkler system or it's air conditioning?

Just because something never gets used doesn't mean its function is not important or even critical to the survival of your operation. A solid crisis communications plan is one of the most important components of your media relations repertoire and can mean the difference between a stressful day and a potentially crippling PR disaster.

It's important to remember that a crisis can be large international/national news, but it can also be a small problem that disables your ability to do business or reach your customers. No matter the size or scale of your business, you should always plan for a crisis to occur and be ready to respond in a timely fashion.

When thinking through a possible crisis communications situation, we recommend you use the following checklist to prepare your business and team:

- ⇒ Identify top threats to your organization and assign a point person to each category
- ⇒ Create a draft holding statement with your logo, media contact information and boilerplate that can be customized during a crisis
- ⇒ Create a "dark page" on your website that can be activated during a crisis and ensure staff members know how to activate and edit the page in real time
- ⇒ Give every staff member a designated and clearly defined communications role complete with expected responsibilities and reporting structures
- ⇒ Ensure designated company spokespeople receive regular media training and rehearsals for crisis situations – even if they say they've been trained before
- ⇒ Create a prioritized list of critical business functions and their assigned ownership
- ⇒ Establish and regularly test secure emergency communication channels
- ⇒ Create an accurate and up-to-date database of contact info for both internal and external contacts
- ⇒ Establish a specific "media zone" from which to issue all messaging and where you can engage with media or social media influencers in real time
- ⇒ Hold regular crisis drills to solidify action plans and loop in new hires into the processes
- ⇒ Practice, practice, practice