

When a crisis breaks - follow these 5 steps

Before a crisis breaks it's important to create a crisis communications plan to guide your efforts during a crisis situation.

When in a crisis situation, activate these five steps to successfully manage communications and control internal and external dialog around the crisis.

1. **Convene your crisis team:**

- When a crisis breaks it's important to quickly pull your designated crisis team together and to enact your crisis communication protocols
- Establish an incident command center at a municipality building or at a field command center, if the situation dictates, that includes city leadership, the communications team, department heads and legal counsel

2. **Assess the crisis:**

- Begin to monitor all media and social media chatter about the crisis incident - on your municipality channels and others
- Appoint crisis team members to check in with municipality, local, state and national contacts, as dictated by the crisis situation, to gain a full picture of the gravity of the situation
- Assemble the full crisis team to present an internal briefing on information learned. The goal is to:
 - Determine the current stage of the crisis
 - Discuss expected developments
 - Assess high-level future impact

3. **Determine messaging strategy:**

- Develop a list of all internal and external audiences that need to be communicated to:
 - Designate team member responsible for communications to each
 - Indicate best mode of communication for each
 - Develop timeline and flow {message cascade}
- Establish internal and external key messages based on the facts known

- Agree upon a media strategy and outreach process. Options include:
 - Press conference
 - Individual media interviews
 - Proactive media statement
 - Reactive media statement
- Review messaging, anticipate line of questioning that is likely to occur. Share questions with all spokespeople to prepare for any possible press appearances

4. **Execute messaging strategy:**

- Organize and execute messaging strategy to stakeholders as determined in step three
 - Press conference/media interviews:
 - Designate a location for media to convene for availability
 - Distribute statements or materials to media
 - Ensure you designate a point of contact for future communications
 - Proactive/reactive media statements:
 - Distribute media statements proactively or reactively, as determined in step three
 - Create a running list of media requests, follow up questions and statements distributed
 - Note all requests for interviews, even if you do not grant an interview at that time
 - Coordinate follow-up questions and answers with crisis communications team and distribute to media, as appropriate

5. **Regularly reassess and regroup:**

- After the initial messaging strategy runs its course - return to step one
 - Reconvene the crisis communications team to discuss:
 - The state of the crisis
 - Anticipated events moving forward
 - Media and social media coverage
 - Community chatter about the incident
 - Outline additional communication needs or 'waves' for the future
 - Assess current messaging strategy and determine if changes are needed for internal and external audiences
 - Execute updated media and communications strategy