

Crisis Communication Principles and Practices

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Discussion Topics:

1. What are some weather hazards to which your campus is vulnerable?
2. Who is currently involved in message development? Is faculty senate involved? Are external stakeholders involved? (i.e. National Weather Service, County Emergency Management, State emergency management)
3. What types of messages need to be issued? To whom?
4. What messages that your campus has issued during past emergencies that you remember to be effective? Ineffective?
5. If effective, what made them effective?
6. If ineffective, what made them ineffective?
7. How involved is the faculty in message development? How can this be relationship between message developers and faculty be improved?
8. What are some ideas or concerns not previously addressed that would benefit the group?

Some answers:

Preparing for Communications During Any Large-Scale Emergency

1. Identify your threats/hazards- Contact your emergency manager for a list of threats to your campus. Ask if they have a Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Analysis (THIRA)
2. Identify stakeholders. Who would need to be involved in communications

Suggested stakeholders

Internal

- A. University Relations/Marketing and Communications
- B. Academic Affairs/Provost/Faculty
- C. Chancellor/President
- D. Vice Chancellor Student Affairs/ Students
- E. Human Resources/Staff
- F. Emergency Management/Security Services
- G. Athletics
- H. Departments/units that deal with external stakeholders, such as groups that use campus facilities or campus activities
- I. Environmental Health & Safety
- J. Facilities/Physical Plant

External

- A. Parents
- B. Media
- C. Surrounding community
- D. Damage/emergency contractors
- E. Business associates/vendors
- F. Decision Support Providers (National Weather Service, United States Geological Survey, Tsunami Warning Center, United States Forestry)
- G. Local emergency service providers (County Emergency Management, Fire, EMS, Law Enforcement)- Typically done by emergency management or security services

Weather Specific Emergency

1. Coordinate with National Weather Service for Decision Support
2. Coordinate with Chancellor/President's cabinet for campus actions to be taken
3. Coordinate with Faculty Senate/Faculty Senate president
4. Coordinate with University Relations for messaging to faculty, Staff, Students, Parents

Do's and Don'ts of Crisis Communication

1. For critical communications, paraphrase and repeat back the key points that the other party as said to ensure you heard everything correctly (active listening)
2. Confirm critical tasks before performing them if you don't understand the directive
3. When you don't know the answer, admit it, note it, and get back to the questioner with the answer in a timely fashion
4. Don't be afraid to ask for help

Do's and Don't of Working with the Media

1. NEVER say "no comment"
2. Direct media to appropriate body that deals with the media regularly
3. If you do not know who this is, contact administration
4. If marketing and communication requests you be interviewed do the following:
 - a. There is no "off the record"
 - b. Assume all microphones are "hot"
 - c. Ask the interviewer if they can give you a list of questions before the interview
 - d. Ask if marketing and communication has a script or talking points to work from (a little time taken to do this before the interview pays off)
 - e. Stick answering the questions of the interviewer. Don't stray into areas you are unfamiliar
 - f. If you don't know, say so, and get the answer to the interviewer after the interview quickly as they are on deadline. If the interview is taped, they can edit out anything.
 - g. For television media: If you have a key point to make, work on it to get it down to 5 seconds or two sentences or less so the interviewer will have a good clip to go from. If you mess up during the interview, ask to be able to repeat the answer. Be ready for them to take your statements out of context for controversial topics so be careful what you say on air
 - h. Newspaper reporters and credible bloggers: You will be able to go into greater detail with newspaper reporters, or some bloggers. Remember that newspaper reporters have more time to fact check your answers and may do so
 - i. Bloggers: Take a minute to check out the blog before doing the interview. Be ready for slanted reporting, gotcha questions, or to be taken out of context. Don't be afraid to turn down the interview if after reviewing the blog it doesn't look right
 - j. Student news: Take the time to provide context and support to the student news. Ask if you can help them with the story. They may try to ask gotcha questions as well but being forthcoming and offering to assist will go a long way towards having a less biased story