



# CRISIS COMMUNICATION

## Best Practices

## Communication After a Crisis is Critical

The communication that takes place after a crisis or incident occurs can have a major impact on everyone – from employers and workers to the organization and community at large. It's crucial that the correct information be communicated quickly and effectively. This is especially important with the prevalence of social media in today's digital age. Unauthorized sharing of information, especially if it's inaccurate, can compromise the reputation and welfare of both the company and its employees.

Therefore it's essential to have an immediate coordinated communication plan in place – before an incident happens. And when an incident does occur, information needs to be shared quickly, before misinformation can be spread through social media, blogs or other sources. What's more, everyone, from upper management to the regular workforce, needs to be aware of the plan and its implications for them.

### Basic components of your crisis communication plan should include:

- A decision about who is responsible for drafting the message on behalf of the organization
- A clear outline of what is involved in the approval process
- How the message will be communicated, both internally and externally to the public

The goal is to ensure that the correct information is communicated quickly. Be sure employees know how, when and what the organization will communicate in the event of a crisis. And let workers know what is expected of them in the event of an emergency.

### Create a social media policy for your organization.

Social media has had a major impact on communications, both in the private and public realm. While traditional outlets such as press releases, conferences and media interviews are still used, the public increasingly seeks information via social media channels.

- For employees who participate in social media as part of their job, it's crucial to always communicate in a professional manner
- Transparency, honesty and integrity are essential to any communication
- Personal and professional communications should never be mixed
- Workers who are not responsible for communicating with the public shouldn't be posting on social media after an incident

### Other things your employees should be aware of:

- Online communication is rarely 100% private; workers need to be cautious about the information they share on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube
- Employees should never discuss financial, legal, health or other sensitive matters online
- Employees who disobey company social media policies are subject to discipline

Also, make sure your employees know that their use of your organization's electronic communication systems is subject to monitoring.



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## Keep in mind:

- You can't control social media. But you can keep it from controlling your message.
- The longer it takes to respond to a situation, the less control you have over the narrative
- A carefully prepared communication plan can help ensure your message gets out to the public, quickly and correctly

The digital age brings with it new obstacles and challenges, especially with the communication of crisis information. Be sure your organization is prepared to meet those challenges, quickly, effectively and professionally.

## References

*Safety+Health*® Magazine, *After the incident: Crisis communication in the digital age* by Kevin Druley, Associate Editor

*Crisis Ready – Building an Invincible Brand in an Uncertain World* by Melissa Agnes

*Social Media Guidelines* by the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP)

*Social Media Best Practices, Culture of Safety*, West Bend

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