

# Crisis Communication QUICK GUIDE

Communicating before, during and after a crisis is important – not only when working with the media, but also with employees, family members, and company stakeholders.

## This Quick Guide will help you to:

- ▶ **Understand** your communication role in an emergency
- ▶ **Follow** and support your Company's procedures
- ▶ **Know** what communication actions to take

# ABC Company Crisis Definition

A crisis is any event that affects normal business operations, attracts extraordinary attention and may result in one or more of the following: loss of life or property, damage to corporate reputation and/or financial harm.

# ABC's Eight Crisis Communication Steps

The following are the top communication steps to take immediately in a crisis. These steps should be followed in order.



# Assumed Crisis for this Presentation

ABC is a large general contractor at a location in downtown Baltimore. They are refurbishing a building (pre-1981) and the initial pre-bid walk through indicated this building may contain ACM. If so, this type work is considered Class I unless a “negative exposure assessment” shows otherwise. The short term ACM removal work is expected to take only about 3 months. As part of the renovation, ABC hired XYZ subcontractor to remove any ACM including boiler and pipe insulation. The XYZ subcontractor has “presumed” the materials to be removed are not ACM and informed ABC general contractor that it did sufficient testing to prove a “negative exposure assessment” when in fact it did not but modified the IH report from another location. ABC general contractor did not request the results of this testing.

If ACM is present, then employees must be trained for this type of work activity. Also, a competent person must frequently inspect the work site and have been certified by EPA or a state approved trainer. XYZ subcontractor has elected not to use the positive pressure respirators and has supplied its employees with N-95 dust masks. XYZ subcontractor has not designated “regulated areas” with the appropriate language and the exposed dumpster where the ACM is placed is located alongside a busy public side walk with dust that has migrated onto the sidewalk and on the cars parked nearby.

The PEL is .1f/cc as an 8-hr TWA and a STEL of 1f/cc over 30 mins.

OSHA arrives and conducts monitoring and finds high levels of asbestos exposure. It immediately shuts down the work site, covers the dumpster, and post signs to the entrance of the building that state “DANGER – CONTAINS ASBESTOS FIBERS – AVOID CREATING DUST – CANCER AND LUNG DISEASE HAZARD”

Jayne Miller  
I-Team Reporter - WBAL



# 1. You are ABC General Contractor - Verify the Crisis Situation

Coordinate at the site of the incident and immediately identify as many facts as possible:

**What** happened and where? **When** did this happen? **Who** is involved? **How** did it happen? **What** is currently being done?

# 1. You are ABC General Contractor - Verify the Crisis Situation

- ▶ **What** happened and where? ACM were found outside the regulated area in downtown Baltimore.
- ▶ **When** did this happen? Discovered by MOSH inspectors after a complaint was called into complaint.
- ▶ **Who** is involved? Subcontractor and IH firm and exposed employees and public, and public officials.
- ▶ **How** did it happen? Belief is that the subcontractor is responsible, trying to find out.
- ▶ **What** is currently being done? The job site is shutdown until more facts become available. Regulated areas established at the job site and public areas have been cleaned up and area has been posted.

# 1. You are XYZ Subcontractor - Verify the Crisis Situation

Coordinate at the site of the incident and immediately identify as many facts as possible:

**What** happened and where? **When** did this happen? **Who** is involved? **How** did it happen? **What** is currently being done?

# 1. You are XYZ Subcontractor - Verify the Crisis Situation

- ▶ **What** happened and where? ACM were found outside the regulated area..
- ▶ **When** did this happen? Discovered by MOSH inspectors after a called in complaint.
- ▶ **Who** is involved? GC, IH firm, and our project manager and the employees and exposed public, and public officials.
- ▶ **How** did it happen? Someone within organization may have falsified reports indicating no ACM were present.
- ▶ **What** is currently being done? The job site is shutdown until more facts become available. Regulated areas established at the job site and public areas have been cleaned up and area has been posted.

# 1. You are IH Firm - Verify the Crisis Situation

Coordinate at the site of the incident and immediately identify as many facts as possible:

**What** happened and where? **When** did this happen? **Who** is involved? **How** did it happen? **What** is currently being done?

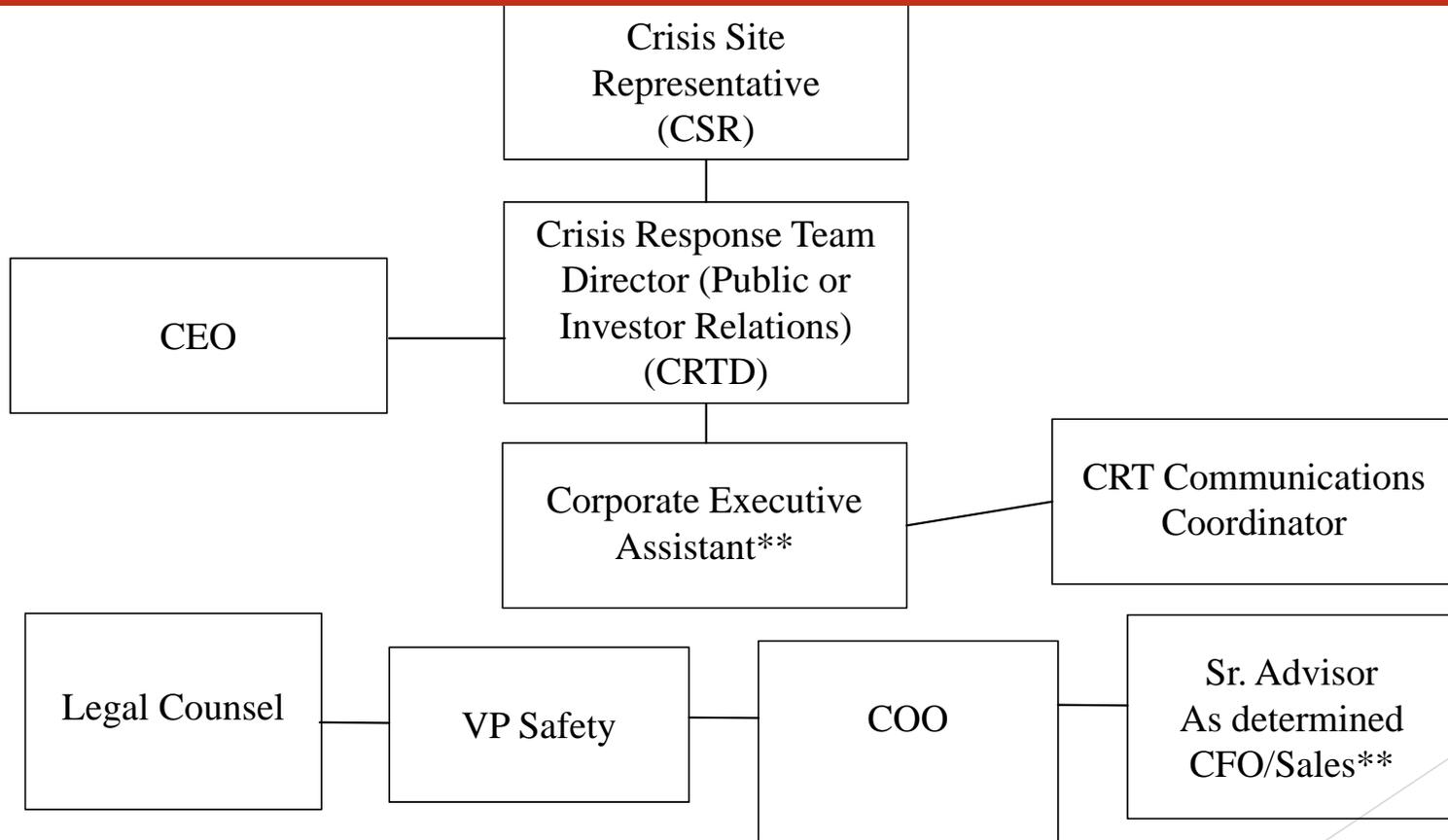
# 1. You are IH Firm - Verify the Crisis Situation

- ▶ **What** happened and where? ACM were found outside the regulated area..
- ▶ **When** did this happen? Discovered by MOSH inspectors after a called in complaint.
- ▶ **Who** is involved? GC, subcontractor, and our IH firm and the employees and exposed public, and public officials.
- ▶ **How** did it happen? Not sure since our firm never did an ACM assessment. Have done work for the subcontractor in the past.
- ▶ **What** is currently being done? The job site is shutdown until more facts become available. Regulated areas established at the job site and public areas have been cleaned up and area has been posted. Sampling is being done by another IH Firm.

# Conference Line

Dial-In: xxx-xxx-xxx – Access Code: xxxxxxxx#

Leader Code: xxxx



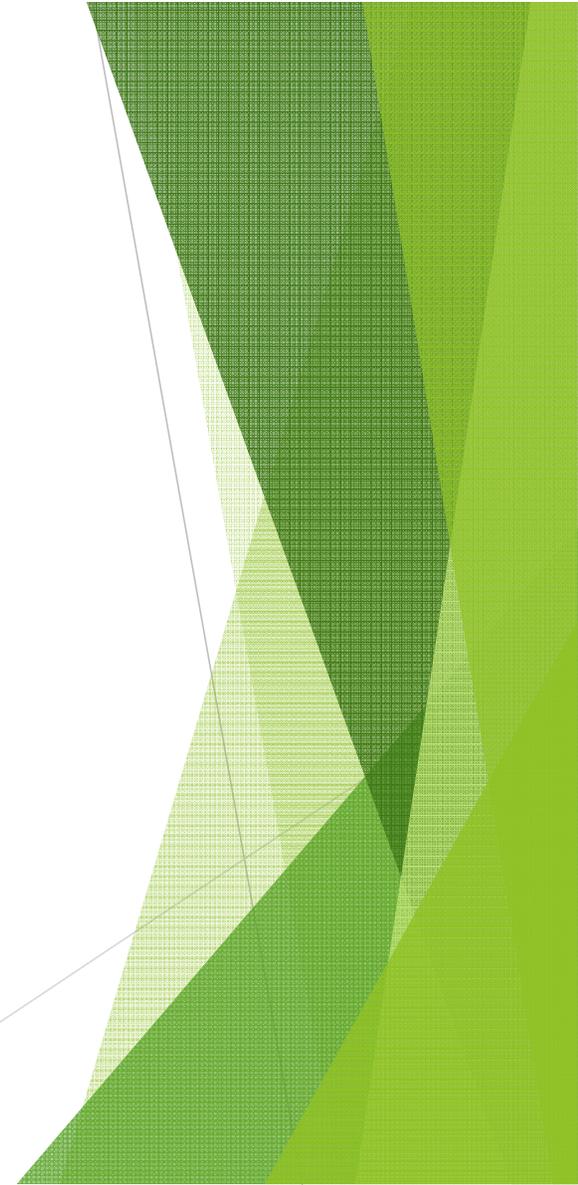
\*\*As required based on event

## 2. Call the Crisis Response Team Director

1. Crisis site representatives should immediately call the Crisis Response Team Director (CRTD)
2. CRTD will coordinate contacting all members of the Crisis Response Team.
3. A conference call will be scheduled with the CRT members listed in the call chart. These individuals will determine if there is a crisis, and if so, what communication crisis level it is at (see step 3).

### 3. Assess the Level of Crisis

Based on the level of communication required, as listed in the criteria on the next slide, determine the crisis level of the situation.



## Level

4

Highly  
Intense

3

Intense

2

Moderately  
Intense

1

Minimally  
Intense

## Characteristics

- Media have immediate and urgent need for information about the crisis
- One or more groups or individuals express anger or outrage
- Broadcast and print appear onsite for live media coverage
- Crisis causes growing attention from local and regional media
- Media contact non-CRT staff for information about the crisis
- In addition to the media, other stakeholders and community partners are present at site
- Affected and potentially affected parties threaten to talk to the media
- Crisis may/may not have occurred but attracts public media attention. Attention is slow, but steady
- External stakeholders (e.g. MSHA, OSHA, City, State or Fed officials) receive media inquiries
- Public-at-large is aware
- Crisis attracts little or no attention
- Pre-event information requests may be received
- Public and/or media are virtually unaware of crisis

## 4. Coordinate Communication Management

### Communication Message Management – Coordinated by the CRTD

1. Identify key audiences
2. Schedule regular internal updates
3. Start crisis inquiry log from public and/or media
4. Select Spokesperson site and/or corporate

### **Communication Operations Management – Coordinated by the Crisis Site Representative**

1. Identify main on-site contact person responsible for providing updated to the CRT
2. Address logistics site for media, location for communications operation center, etc.
3. Determine crisis hours of operation and who will be staffing the site

## Keep in Mind...

There are three main types of questions that may be asked during a crisis. Be sure that your messages are able to respond to each of these types of questions:

- ▶ Overarching Questions:

What is ABC doing to respond? What is XYZ doing to respond? What is IH Firm doing to respond? What actions should the community take?

- ▶ Information Questions:

What has happened? Who's involved? How can I get more information?

- ▶ Challenge Questions:

Why should we trust ABC? Why should we trust XYZ? Why should we trust IH Firm? Isn't it your negligence actions or omissions that caused this situation? Can you guarantee that my family member or the public is safe?

## 5. Develop Messages

1. Develop or refer to a list of potential questions that could be asked about the crisis
2. Modify pre-scripted messages, or develop new messages
3. Identify best method for delivery of key messages
4. Monitor crisis and update messages based on the crisis

## 6. Approve Messages

All messages that will be distributed externally must be approved through the following:

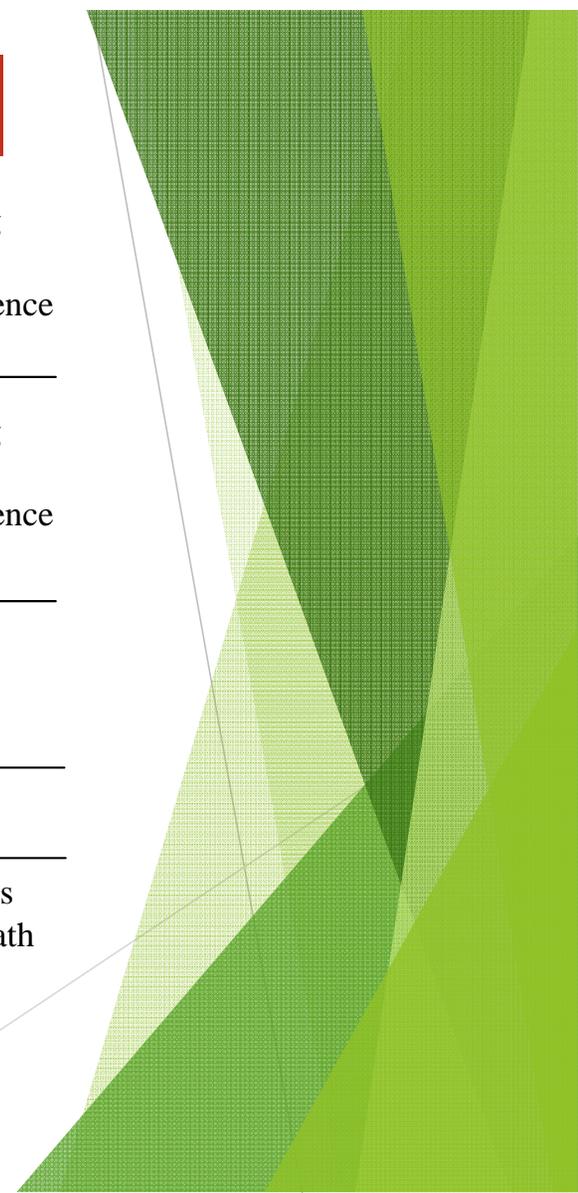
1. CRTD
2. General Counsel/Outside Counsel
3. CEO

# 7. Release Messages

In crisis levels 3 or 4, the main statement or overarching message should come from the CEO and if deemed appropriate include a message of empathy and caring. Delivering messages to a broad range of people will need to be a team effort as outlined in the chart on the next slide; however, ALL messages should be coordinated with the CRTD.



Stakeholder	Audience	Messenger	Means	Information Release Timeframe
<b>Internal</b>	Sr. Advisors	CRTD	Phone call and e-mail if specific details or documents need to be sent	As determined during initial crisis level determination conference call
	Board Members	CEO/CFO	Phone call and e-mail if specific details or documents need to be sent	As determined during initial crisis level determination conference call
	Employees	Written Communications Coordinator	Blast e-mail local & enterprise-wide	0-1 hour
	Families	Family Liaison	In-person	0-3 hours
	Clergy	Family Liaison	Phone call in-person	0-3 hours only if crisis involved injury or death



Stakeholder	Audience	Messenger	Means	Information Release Timeframe
<b>External</b>	Partners & Customers and other Business Relationships	Sr. Advisor Sales & Mktg	Phone call and e-mail if specific details or documents need to be sent	0-1 hour if affected 1-3 hours potentially affected
	Current & Potential Shareholders	CFO/CRTD	Phone call and e-mail if specific details or documents need to be sent	As determined
	Elected Officials	Sr. Advisor Gov Relations	Phone call E-mail	0-1 hour if affected 1-3 hours potentially affected
	Local & State Fire/EMS	Site Management	Phone call In-person	0-1 hour
	Media: Local, Regional & National	CRT Communications Coordinator	Website, press release, phone interviews, and in-person interviews	0-1 hour – Level 4 0-3 hours – Level 3
	MSHA/OSHA/City-State-Federal Officials/Industry Trade Association	Project Site Management Corporate Representative (if needed)	Phone call Conference call In-person	0-1 hour Continuous as determined
	Public	CEO/CRT Communications Coordinator	Through the media, official statements and website updates	0-1 hour – Level 4 0-3 hours – Level 3

## 8. Monitor and Provide Feedback

During and after the crisis the CRTD will coordinate with the CRT to:

1. Review media coverage
2. Identify story trends
3. Identify public and key stakeholder issues
4. Incorporate lessons learned into crisis plan

## What to do if the media calls?

### Media Questions to ABC or XYZ or IH Firm:

All information released to the media, family members and curious external sources should be coordinated by the CRTD. If the media calls, simply tell them that ABC would be happy to answer questions and the CRTD [state name] is available at location, number, etc. *NOTE: the CRTD should not be referred to by this title to the media.*

If the CRTD is not available, however, it is important not to brush the media off or simply say “No comment.” You may say that “the situation is under investigation and that all questions, communications or requests for information will be addressed by [NAME, TITLE] at [MEDIA CONFERENCE TIME or TELEPHONE NUMBER].”

A phone number, website and contact will be designated at a central information area for media calls, inquires online, and at the scene of the crisis.

### General Holding Statement:

*(For use only with CRTD approval)*

There may be a time when you will be asked to give a statement to the media as a holding point until the CRTD is able to coordinate response. Below is a sample statement.

*“The situation is under investigation. At this time we can confirm that at approximately [TIME] OSHA issued a stop work order at a worksite located at [STREET ADDRESS] due to improper work practices found. Immediate actions were taken to remediate any hazards to workers or the general public. As the investigation continues and more details become available, we will provide you with updates.*

# ABC Message Map - Example

Key Message 1	Key Message 2	Key Message 3
ABC has a safety culture and process we call "Do It Right" that we ask all of our subcontractors to adhere to.	ABC projects are proactive in safety and health by resolving potential issues immediately with our subcontractors.	ABC projects conduct employee training throughout is company and have an incident rate well below industry average, and hire subcontractors with good incident rates as well.

Subpoint 1.1	Subpoint 1.2	Subpoint 1.3
ABC conducted 5,000 hours of class room training with its employees and project managers on the principles of "Do It Right" and the procedures for executing this process. We expect the same from our subcontractors.	If a situation cannot be fixed immediately, we won't hesitate to stop the project.	We provide our employees with the best tools and equipment and continued training to make sure they and the general public are safe. We expect the same from our subcontractors.

# IH Firm Message Map - Example

Key Message 1	Key Message 2	Key Message 3
IH Firm has the highest standards of professional care, service, and quality control set forth in a process we call "Do It Right".	IH Firm projects deploy the highest standards of professional service. We work with our clients to ensure the highest level of integrity possible in the results we obtain.	IH Firm conducts employee training throughout is company to ensure the standard by which we are judged are met in all aspects of our work.

Subpoint 1.1	Subpoint 1.2	Subpoint 1.3
IH Firm has conducted x number of sampling events and has been through x number of audit certifications that have met the standards by which we are judged. This could only be achieved by implementing our culture of "Do It Right" and the procedures for executing this process.	If a situation cannot be fixed immediately, we won't hesitate to stop the project. We expect the same from our clients.	We have provided our employees with x number our hours of professional training to improve their competencies and to retain the certifications in the field of science they operate.

# XYZ Message Map - Example

Key Message 1	Key Message 2	Key Message 3
XYZ subcontractor has a safety culture and process that we follow and train all our employees so that we can be the best at what we do.	XYZ has always maintained a high-level of integrity in the projects it has completed and has always taken a proactive approach in resolving safety and health issues.	XYZ has been performing contracts with the City and State for years with a good track record. XYZ will investigate this matter thoroughly and take the appropriate measures to make it right.
Subpoint 1.1	Subpoint 1.2	Subpoint 1.3
XYZ conducts many hours of safety talks with its supervisors and its employees. We conduct preshift safety meetings daily.	If a situation cannot be fixed immediately, we won't hesitate to stop the project. Our safety record has always maintained an EMR well below industry average.	We have assigned an independent team of professionals to this matter and have completed the necessary tasks to ensure our employees and the public are not at risk.

QUESTIONS?

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