



Crisis Communication Plan

SAMPLE Contracting Inc.

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Purpose & Objectives



Purpose & Objectives

WHY DO WE NEED A CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN?

The Crisis Communication Plan ensures a timely company response during crises and provides guidance for communicating with key audiences and the news media.

Crises may occur on jobsites, in our offices, or in the daily lives of those who work for and with SAMPLE. They may involve our employees, subcontractors, clients, or the general public. Regardless of the nature of the crisis, the most important objective is to keep all key audiences informed.

There are multiple levels of crises and the appropriate response varies for each. A crisis may be a minor incident that only impacts internal audiences, or could be major with affects that are far-reaching for multiple audiences, or could even be entirely outside of our control. Regardless of the level of impact, all of these situations require a deliberate, well-executed plan of response.

The three main objectives of our response to a crisis situation are:

- 1) Contain the crisis. Ensure our team members, subcontractors, Clients, and other directly impacted parties are safe and have access to all necessary resources.
- 2) Provide accurate information. Maintain transparency to minimize rumors, speculation, and negative information by utilizing the appropriate communications channels.
- 3) Maintain SAMPLE's brand reputation. Communicate with key audiences, providing accurate and timely information throughout the course of the incident, ensuring reinforcement of corporate ideology and, key messages, and themes.

This plan is intended to be a guide and is not an all-encompassing crisis response plan. The Communications, Safety, and Legal teams must be closely involved in all crisis-response efforts.

If you are involved in or aware of a crisis, immediately notify the Crisis Communication Leader. Regardless of the perceived threat level, it is imperative that this point of contact is made aware so that the situation can be monitored as it develops and necessary actions can be taken.



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Crisis Communication Cycle



Crisis Communication Process

HOW DOES THIS ALL CONNECT?

Crises require first and foremost rapid response. The steps below are a general outline of how the Crisis Communication Plan may proceed during a crisis situation. Each step is further outlined in detail throughout this document.

1. A SAMPLE team member or outside source (vendor, subcontractor, media, member of the public, etc.) identifies a potential crisis.
2. The Crisis Communication Leader (Communications) is immediately informed of the situation and notifies the Crisis Communication Team.
3. The Crisis Communication Team assesses the threat level and determines if a plan must be activated.
4. If the Crisis Communication Team determines that a plan should be activated, they meet to assess the situation and develop immediate holding statements for media inquiries and social media and website channels (as needed).
5. Once the holding statement is issued, the Crisis Communications Team works to:
 - Establish current understanding of the crisis situation and make contact with necessary sources
 - Identify key audiences
 - Determine approach, critical objectives, and formulate messaging
6. Once the messaging is developed, the Crisis Communications Team:
 - Determines a schedule for communicating the message
 - Selects appropriate communication channels and tailors the message for each channel
7. The Communications team ensures the message is disseminated through all selected channels.
8. The Crisis Communications Team continues to monitor the situation and inform as necessary. The Crisis Communication Leader (Communications) updates and releases new information as appropriate.
9. Once the crisis is considered mitigated, the Crisis Communications Team meets to determine any follow-up actions and assess performance, and any process improvements necessary.

Team Structure



Team Structure

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Crisis Communication Team members are outlined below. This roster is intended to be flexible; all team members may not need to be present for every crisis. Additionally, there may be situations that require outside counsel, and the team will adapt accordingly.

This roster is intended to be flexible; all team members may not need to be present for every crisis. At the same time, there will be situations that require input and assistance from people outside of those listed below, and the team will adapt accordingly. To ensure consistency in messaging during a crisis, team members are encouraged to wait for official communication to come out before sharing updates on their own.

In event of a crisis, the Crisis Communication Leader (Communications) will designate a Command Center for the team to meet in and strategize responses and monitor the situation.

To ensure consistency in messaging during a crisis, it is critical that SAMPLE employees, including leadership, await official corporate communication and direction before sharing any information on their own.

Crisis Communication Leader <i>Communications, Director, Communications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determines the need for crisis plan activation• Drafts response statements for affected audiences (internal and external) on all channels• Manages crisis response on web and social media• Coordinates with appropriate spokespeople• Serves as liaison between media and spokespeople• Provides on-site communications response and media staging
Alternate Crisis Communication Leader <i>Communications Manager</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assumes all responsibilities above if Director of Communications is unavailable• Supports the Crisis Communications Team as necessary• Helps to manage crisis response on web and social media• Contributes insight and editing for communication materials
Corporate Spokesperson <i>CEO Communications, Director, Communications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speaks with the media on behalf of the organization• Empowered as the “name and voice” for SAMPLE during crisis situations requiring an official spokesperson• The spokesperson is determined based on the level of crisis
CEO & Co-Presidents <i>CEO</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviews sensitive communications to ensure alignment with corporate values and core ideology• Serve as Spokesperson for high-profile crisis situations

Co-Chairmen of the Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advises on actions and provides guidance when appropriate
Executive Liaisons <i>Executive Business Partners</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relay necessary information to the Board and CEO in the event that they are not present • Coordinate schedules and communications for the Board and CEO
Legal Advisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides legal insight and recommendations for crisis situation • Advises and assesses crisis response from a legal perspective
Safety Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversees all safety-related crisis response measures • Provides safety insight and loss mitigation on crisis situations • Advises and assesses crisis response from a safety, insurance, and risk mitigation perspective
Human Resources Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides human resources guidance during a crisis situation • Advises internal communications
IT Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides IT insight during a crisis situation
Sector Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent their respective sector in the event that it is involved in or impacted by a crisis • Provide insight and guidance on any communications related to their area of expertise • Communicates with affected stakeholders, as necessary
Regional Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents their respective region in the event their office location is involved in or impacted by a crisis • May be asked to function as the Spokesperson if appropriate • Communicates with affected stakeholders, as necessary

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Plan Activation



Plan Activation

WHEN AND WHO

WHAT TYPE OF INCIDENT REQUIRES ACTIVATION?

A crisis is a major incident that carries with it the potential of negative outcomes for the organization and/or our key audiences. There are different levels of impact, and thus different responses. We categorize crisis levels as Low, Medium, and High.

The Crisis Communication Plan is generally activated for medium-level crises and always activated for high-level crises. Low-level crisis typically do not require a fully activated plan. A detailed list of possible scenarios can be found in Section 9.

*Regardless of the perceived level of crisis, always immediately notify the Crisis Communication Leader (**Communications**) of any potential crisis.*

Additionally, a Crisis Communication Plan may be activated in other situations as needed, which will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Crisis Communication Leader (Communications).

WHO ACTIVATES THE CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN?

The Crisis Communication Leader (Communications) activates the plan should they determine it is warranted.

Key Audiences



Plan Activation

WHEN AND WHO

TYPES OF KEY AUDIENCES

When responding to a crisis, our three audiences of primary concern are:

1. People directly affected by the incident
2. SAMPLE team members
3. Stakeholders whose perception of SAMPLE may be influenced by the incident

Employees: It is critical that our team members feel informed in the wake of a crisis, ensuring that they will present SAMPLE positively to their network. Critical personnel will be notified first, even ahead of external audiences; closely thereafter we will inform all internal audiences. Corporate communications should be the first source of information as it is harmful for team members to find out about a crisis situation from the media or through word of mouth news before they've heard anything from the company.

Clients: Clear and timely communications with our Clients is critical. Regardless of the type of crisis, we will ensure transparent communications regarding our response and any possible outcomes that may impact their operations and our own. Our interactions with this group are critical to maintaining our reputation and securing future work for the company once the situation is resolved.

Subcontractors: Subcontractors are the backbone of our business. Should we find ourselves in a crisis, we must be transparent and convey trustworthiness—maintaining open lines of communication particularly with those directly affected. For crisis situations that are project-related, it is essential to communicate with the subs on the job to let them know how we are proceeding and the potential impacts. Whether we are the responsible party or the nature of the crisis is without blame, we need to ensure this group is informed about the situation, our reaction, and the impact it may have on their business.

Family Members: During incidents impacting the safety of our employees, subcontractors, clients and others it is important to consider the family of those directly affected. We want them to be informed and aware of what happened to their loved one, what is being done to help, and who they can contact for follow-up. We never want them to find out that their family member was affected from the media. With assistance from the proper authorities, we will be the ones to alert them of issues of this nature.

AEC Community: We want to ensure our relationships are not tarnished and that we maintain communication with our industry colleagues including architects and engineers.

Media: It is critical that we convey transparency and trustworthiness to the media, while maintaining privacy when appropriate. Our goal is for their coverage of the crisis to be fair and to ultimately reflect positively on SAMPLE.

General Public: Our goal is to foster connectivity with our communities by providing timely and accurate information through our own communications channels in addition to any general media coverage.

Regulatory Authorities: We will be transparent and cooperative with any and all regulatory bodies to ensure we maintain our good standing with these organizations and demonstrate our adherence to their policies. This includes cooperating with all police investigations.

Corporate Steering Committee: We will ensure SAMPLE leadership is informed of our plan and actions throughout the crisis response. We will impart our message to this group in a way that instills confidence in our response and allows them to pass along the information to their contacts. We do not want our leadership to be informed of news of the crisis from an outside source.

NOTIFYING KEY AUDIENCES

With input from the appropriate advisors, the Crisis Communication Leader will create messaging that addresses the questions and concerns of our key audiences to ensure they're provided adequate updates as we navigate the situation.

While we will incorporate messaging on our websites and social media platforms when appropriate, phone calls and direct emails are critical components managing crisis communications.

Listed below are the preferred methods of communication for each audience, escalating by threat level. Audiences appear in no particular order.

Audience	Escalating Channels of Communication (Low to High)
Employees	Email → Meeting → Intranet
Subcontractors	Email → Phone → Meeting → Website / Social Channels
Clients	Email → Phone → Meeting → Website / Social Channels
AEC Community	Email → Phone → Website / Social Channels
Media	Email → Phone → News Release → Website / Social Channels → Press Conference
General Public	Email → Phone → Community Forum → Website → News Release
Regulatory Authorities	Email → Phone → Meeting → Website / Social
Corporate Steering Committee	Email → Meeting

While high level crises may affect all key audiences, there will also be situations where not all audiences require communication. It is also important to consider scale when determining what method of communication to use. As an example, if only one citizen has lodged a complaint about worksite noise, a phone call or email to the person would be appropriate. Should there be an entire neighborhood lodging a complaint, holding a community meeting to address the larger group may be a better approach.

Be cognizant that while an email is typically the first level of communication, it may be wiser to connect by phone during sensitive situations. A phone conversation ensures the correct tone and allows you to gauge your audience's response immediately rather than waiting on a return email.

For all Medium to High level crises, we will provide messaging that addresses all of these audiences on our website and social media pages, as appropriate.



Inquiry Response



Inquiry Response

OUR MESSAGE

KEY MESSAGES

During crises, it's beneficial to weave the values of our company into our crisis response. The key messages below convey the type of organization we are and establish credibility with audience members.

- As a company, we are dedicated to our craft and are hardworking, reliable, and capable professionals.
- We're both humble and gracious; we don't take our successes for granted.
- We're ethical in our practices, and are determined to do what is right by our people, industry, and colleagues.
- In the face of a crisis, we value safety, and strive to be transparent while instilling trust in our audiences.
- We will work to find a solution, and if responsible, will take ownership of our errors.

HOLDING STATEMENTS

The statements below are initial responses that allow us to inform, but also have time to fully understand the crisis at hand before providing further information. They may be used in verbal and/or written communications and can be adapted for any of our key audiences.

Beyond allowing us to address inquiries about the incident early on, these statements also allow us to incorporate themes from the key messages above to foster confidence in our organization, while also preventing speculation. These should be followed up with a more informed and thorough response as soon as possible.

- *"The situation is evolving, and we will keep everyone updated as we receive more information..."*
- *"Information is still arriving, and we will have another update by [time]..."*
- *"We have confirmed the following: [xyz]. As the investigation continues and more details emerge we will share them..."*
- *"SAMPLE is committed to the safety of our employees/subcontractors/community and will cooperate with all authorities during the investigation..."*
- *"We have implemented our crisis response plan, which places the highest priority on the health and safety of those affected..."*
- *"Our thoughts are with those affected by this incident, and we will continue to seek answers as the investigation continues..."*
- *"We will be supplying additional information when it is available and posting it on our website and social media networks..."*

Holding Statement Template

In situations where we have more information to share, the Crisis Communication Team can utilize the expanded Holding Statement Template below to shape the initial response:

Time: HH:MM

SAMPLE Contracting Inc. can confirm that at ____:____ (insert time) today at _____ (insert location) _____ (details e.g. A fire broke out at one of our job sites/ Charges were filed against an EVP / a bomb threat was called into our headquarters office).

_____ (what the company is doing about it e.g. An investigation is taking place (or will take place) into the cause of the fire/ The EVP has voluntarily stepped down pending the outcome of the investigation/ Our headquarters have been evacuated and all staff have been sent home pending a search of the building by the bomb squad.)

SAMPLE would like to _____ (express appropriate emotions, e.g. strenuously deny the allegations/ express our sincerest condolences to the victims) and assure the public that we are (taking corrective action, e.g. taking this matter very seriously/ moving quickly to establish the details).

We have _____ (concrete example of action taken, e.g.: established a task force/mobilized a response team/set up a call center) and will provide further updates as soon as the information we receive can be verified.

Our next statement will be issued at ____:____ (four hours from now).



Media Relations



Media Relations

SPOKESPEOPLE AND CONTACTS

SPOKESPEOPLE

The following individuals are trained to speak with the media and will serve as spokespeople in the event of a crisis. They will be assisted by the Crisis Communication Leader (Communications). The spokesperson must be fully versed in the crisis situation and the company's desired response. Spokespeople will adhere to the guidelines in the Media Relations Guide (Appendix A).

High Level Crisis

- Corporate Spokesperson: VP, Marketing and Corporate Communications
- Backup: CEO
- 2nd Back-up: Co-Presidents

Low to Medium Level Crisis

- Corporate Spokesperson: VP of Marketing and Corporate Communications
- Back-up: Co-Presidents
- 2nd Back-up: Executive Vice President

Low to Medium Level Regional Crisis

- Corporate Spokesperson: VP of Marketing and Corporate Communications
- Back-up: Executive Vice President
- 2nd Back-up: Regional Leader

The Legal, Safety, Regional, and Sector Leads may also be called on to serve as spokespeople and subject matter experts, as determined by the Crisis Communication Leader.

PRESS CONFERENCES

For scenarios requiring a corporate response via press conference, we will stage the conference either in the lobby of the SAMPLE headquarters building or at a situationally-relevant location such as a jobsite. Only designated spokespeople will respond to questions during a press conference. Refer to our Media Relations Guide (Appendix A) for recommendations and guidelines on conducting in-person communications with the press.

The Crisis Communications Team Lead will ensure the following materials are assembled for the designated spokesperson: podium / staging, microphone, and supporting visuals, as necessary.

PRIMARY MEDIA CONTACT

The Crisis Communication Leader (Communications) will serve as the primary contact for all media inquiries, with members of the communications team serving as backup if necessary. In case of the Director's long-term absence, the VP of Marketing and Corporate Communications will be designated the primary contact.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Appendix A: Media Relations Guide

This document provides guidance and tips on how to interact with the media, including granting interviews and responding to general inquiries.

Appendix B: Media Inquiry Log

This document is be used to create a record of all media interactions made during the crises. This is important to ensure timely follow-ups are made, and that contact information is retained for future outreach. These records are also very helpful to review when assessing our performance once the crisis is resolved.

Appendix C: Hold Harmless Agreement

In the event that a reporter is granted access to report from one of our jobsites, it is imperative that they sign a Hold Harmless Agreement to acknowledge the potential danger associated with being on site.

Additionally, before stepping onto the site, they must also undergo a mandatory safety briefing.

Crisis Response Channels



Crisis Response Channels

MEDIA PLATFORMS AND MONITORING

In the event of a crisis, we will utilize electronic communications to share information and updates on the situation on our website, social media pages, and through email correspondence, allowing us maximum control over the timeline and content that is being shared publicly. By proactively releasing information and updates over these channels, we can reduce the number of inquiries, prevent rumors, and own our story.

The Crisis Communication Leader is responsible for crafting ALL communications regardless of what channel they are distributed on.

EXTERNAL WEBSITE

During a crisis, we want to ensure those seeking information online can easily find it on our website.

High-Level Crisis: A Crisis Response landing page is developed detailing our response to the situation. The page is linked to from a large banner image on the homepage, and the carousel would only feature this banner; all other content is unpublished. The page will be updated as new information becomes available, and the link is continually shared across social media as the content is updated.

Mid-Level Crisis: If appropriate, a News Hub post is created to address our response to a situation.

Low-Level Crisis: No content appears on our website.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Connecting directly to members of several of our key audiences via social networks gives us control over our messaging and allows us to quickly respond during a crisis situation.

High-Level Crisis: All scheduled posts are stopped; the only posts are official communications regarding the crisis. The Crisis Communication Leader will monitor social media to get a pulse on how the crisis is being discussed by others, and will respond appropriately if needed.

Mid-Level Crisis: If appropriate, messaging regarding the crisis is included in our normal stream of social media posts. Social media is monitored and posts are adjusted if necessary.

Low-Level Crisis: No mentions on social media are necessary; we monitor to track development of the crisis and continue to monitor if our response should be upgraded.

In the event that a crisis (of any level) begins on social media, the Crisis Communication Team Lead will determine the appropriate response and execute it. At any level of crisis, we may choose not to post at all and have our accounts “go dark,” for example out of respect for the loss of an industry peer. Similarly, in situations where there is a global, national, or local tragedy we may choose to suspend all posts as well.

EMAIL

Email communication may be necessary at any threat level; our messaging and distribution will be adjusted based on sensitivity. Should we need to connect directly with a target group to provide tailored communications, the appropriate team (listed below) will compile the necessary contact lists and assist in the messaging;

- For client communications, Corporate Business Development will develop the contact list.
- For subcontractor communications, Subcontractor Relationships will develop the contact list.
- Messaging for these groups will use the Crisis Template. For smaller distributions, emailing through Outlook is sufficient.

When we deploy email communications, appropriate contact information will be included in the content to ensure that any follow-up questions are managed by the Crisis Communication Leader.

PRESS RELEASES

For medium to high-level crises, a press release may be necessary. In these situations, the Crisis Communication Leader drafts a news release to broaden the reach of our communications.

Possible Crises



Possible Crises

IDENTIFYING POSSIBLE THREATS

The list below is a sample of potential crises that our organization may encounter; is not intended to be exhaustive.

Threat Type	Probability	Crisis Level	Reputation Impact
Inclement Weather			
Storms cause damage or delay for major job	Med	Med	Neg/Neut
Storms cause site debris to blow causing property damage/ bodily harm	Med	High	Negative
Civil Unrest			
Demonstration blocks or damages one of our project sites	Low	Med	Neutral
Demonstration participant is injured by something on one of our sites	Low	Low	Neg/Neut
Employee is publically and negatively associated with a protest or cause	Low	Low	Negative
Employees, subcontractors, or other associates stage a walk-out or strike	Med	Med-High	Neg/Neut
Biological/Environmental Hazard			
Construction site waste causes environmental harm	Med	High	Negative
Construction materials cause illness or harm	Med	High	Negative
Utility Issues			
Crews strike or cut a water, gas, or electrical line at a job site	High	Low	Negative
Network Failure			
Computer network is hacked or infected with a virus	High	Med	Neg/Neut
Computer network compromised; client and confidential data accessed	Med	High	Negative
Computer network is down for an extended period of time	Med	Low	Neutral
Espionage			
Confidential company information is stolen or leaked	Low	Med-High	Neg/Neut
Employee, subcontractor, or other associate threatens national security	Low	High	Negative
Fires/Arson			
Office or jobsite damaged by arson	Low	High	Neutral
Office or jobsite damaged by electrical or other unintentional fire	Med	Med	Neg/Neut
Employee, subcontractor killed or injured due to fire on jobsite	Low	High	Neg/Neut
Terrorist Acts/Bomb Threats			
Office or jobsite threatened by a bomb or other terror attack	Med	High	Neutral
Bomb or terror attack occurs at office or jobsite	Low	High	Neutral
Bomb or terror threat impacts business operations	Low	High	Neutral
Employee is a victim of a terror attack	Low	High	Neutral
Employee or other associate is perpetrator of a terrorist attack	Low	High	Negative
Death, Injury, or Illness			
Employee, subcontractor or associate is injured on the jobsite	High	Low-Med	Negative
Employee, subcontractor or associate is killed on the jobsite	Med	High	Negative
Death of high-profile employee	High	High	Neutral

Death of industry peer	High	Low	Neutral
Employee contracts serious and/or deadly communicable disease	Low	High	Negative
High-profile employee steps down due to illness	Med	Med-High	Neutral
Automobile			
SAMPLE work vehicle is involved in a crash that causes death/ serious injury	Med	High	Negative
SAMPLE work vehicle is caught disobeying traffic laws	High	Med	Negative
SAMPLE employee is caught driving under the influence	Med	Med	Negative
Collapses			
Building or crane collapse	Low	High	Negative
Building or crane collapse that causes death or injury	Low	High	Negative
Business Management			
Employee is caught embezzling, taking kick-backs, etc.	Low	High	Negative
Company is accused of fraud or waste	Low	High	Negative
Workplace Violence/Threats			
Mass shooting takes place at office or jobsite	Low	High	Neutral
Employee is being threatened while at work	Low	Med	Neutral
Community Comment			
Citizen complains/reports jobsite for noise, safety, or other violation	High	Low	Negative
Employment			
Employee retaliates following termination	Low	Low	Negative
Employee commits serious crime	Low	Medium	Negative
Employee is not a legal citizen	Medium	Medium	Negative
Disgruntled former employee exacts some sort of revenge	Medium	Medium	Neg/Neut
SAMPLE Sister Companies			
Illegal business practices	Low	High	Negative
Foodborne-illness at restaurant	Medium	Med-High	Neg/Neut
Subcontractor/Supplier Issue			
Defect in material causes an issue or accident	Low	Med-High	Neg/Neut
Company goes out of business	Med	Low-Med	Neutral

Even low-level crises can escalate quickly if not appropriately handled. These threats must be dealt with swiftly and effectively to prevent them from evolving into a larger issue for our organization. Even speculation of some of the issues above should be met with appropriate communication to prevent rumors.

Low-level crises may also have a larger impact when they're tied to other potential crises. For example, if crews cut a utility line, the fallout is likely minimal, however if they cut a gas line that results in gas poisoning, the impact level is understandably elevated.

10 Crisis Communication Centers



Crisis Communication Centers

LOCATION, SUPPLIES, AND SUPPORT

CRISIS COMMUNICATION CENTERS

Each office location will establish a Crisis Communication Center (CCC). The Crisis Communication Team will use this as a central location to plan and strategize.

PRIMARY	
Headquarters (<i>note: line does not work after hours</i>)	<p>This CCC will be operational any time there is a high-level crisis, regardless of whether or not the incident takes place in the HQ region.</p> <p>It may also be stood up for medium-level situations, though it is unlikely it will be used for any low-level crises.</p> <p>For crises that occur outside of the area, the CCC will provide corporate support to the affected regional office.</p>

For crises that involve one of our regional locations, a secondary CCC will be established in the largest conference room at their locations (listed below).

SECONDARY	

In the event that the Crisis Communication Team is unable to meet at a SAMPLE office due to safety concerns, power outage or other issue, the team will convene at an alternate location, which will be shared with all members ahead of time.

EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

The CCC, typically a conference room, must provide the following tools and amenities:

- Table and seating
- Telephones and video conferencing capability
- White boards and markers
- Computer plug-ins and Wi-Fi/Internet access
- Television with cable hook-up
- Paper, pens and pencils
- Printed copies of the Crisis Communication Plan, the Media Inquiry Log (appendix B), and the Media Relations Guide (appendix A)

ON-SITE SUPPORT

While the above locations function as the command centers for our Crisis Communication efforts, there are some situations that will require boots on the ground. In these situations, the Crisis Communication Lead will operate from the location of the incident in order to directly connect with media and provide status updates back to the team. To provide sufficient support while remote, the following materials must be readily accessible:

- Copies of the Hold Harmless Agreement (appendix C), the Media Inquiry Log (appendix B), and the Media Relations Guide (appendix A)
- Paper, pens and pencils
- Laptop and charger
- Cell phone and charger
- PPE (hardhat, vest, glasses, boots)

REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the event of a high-level crisis at one of our regional offices, the Crisis Communication Leader and any other appropriate personnel will travel to the affected location and work remotely from that location with virtual support from other Crisis Communication Team members.

For low- and mid-level crisis, select Crisis Communication Team members will work together remotely by phone, email, or teleconference with the Regional Leader to communicate or respond appropriately to the situation.

Should a regional crisis grow to become an issue for the entire organization, the corporate spokesperson will speak for the company, with the Regional Leader responding on behalf of that office.



Crisis Debrief



Debrief

ASSESSING & ADJUSTING

Once the crisis is resolved, we will resume normal communication functions. The Communications team will ensure that any crisis webpages are unpublished and our regular content will resume.

EVALUATION

The Crisis Communication Team will debrief and evaluate the response to ensure SAMPLE is better prepared for future situations. A thorough evaluation covers all aspects of the crisis, including media relations, spokesperson preparation and performance, response of key audiences, and collaboration efforts among team members.

Within one week after the crisis is considered to be mitigated, the Crisis Communication Team will meet as a group to review feedback and discuss process changes.

Thoroughly review the crisis:

- Could we have seen the crisis coming? Did we miss any indicators?
- Did we handle the incident effectively?
- Has confidence in our organization been maintained?
- What went well, what could have been improved?
- What extra manpower and equipment was required and was it made available?
- Did the company communicate in a timely and effective manner?
- Were the company's messages consistent?
- Were all Key Audiences kept appropriately informed?

Assess media coverage: Check for message consistency and saliency. Identify news outlets where we fostered a strong connection and received positive coverage. Review social media interactions as well as broadcast and print media. Update the media contact list if needed.

File and update materials: Archive notes, clips, talking points, and other relevant documents. Revise the Crisis Communication Plan to reflect any changes or lessons learned.

The Crisis Communication Lead will produce a follow-up report detailing the feedback generated during the meeting, which will be provided to the Corporate Steering Committee.



Media Relations Guide

MEDIA RELATIONS TRAINING

While your day-to-day responsibilities may not include liaising with members of the media, there may come a time when you find yourself in that situation. Whether you're an official spokesperson for SAMPLE or not, it is critical that you know how to interact with the media in order to preserve your reputation and that of the company.

TYPES OF MEDIA RELATIONS

Though crisis response is an essential component of media relations, there are far more mundane reasons you may be called upon for comment. Crisis response may be more publically visible than other interactions; however it's just one component.

In an official spokesperson capacity, you may encounter two types of media outreach:

1. **Crisis Communication:** The media seeks response and reaction to a serious organizational issue impacting employees, clients, subcontractors, and/or general public; likely involves numerous media outlets seeking initial comment as well as follow-up.

Example: Press conference is called after a tower crane collapses at large-scale project, killing an employee and injuring a member of the public.

2. **Expert Commentary:** Journalist is looking for your input as a Subject Matter Expert on something related to your professional experience and expertise; typically involves single media outlet that reaches out for comment.

Example: Media contacts our VP of Healthcare for input on hospital construction trends in the DC Metro area.

Regardless of the type of media engagement, our goal is to remain in control of the flow of information as much as possible. We want to be proactive, informative, timely, and reliable in our communications. You may also encounter journalists outside of your professional obligations. Be cautious and smart about how you choose to engage with the media in these scenarios, too.

1. **General Commentary:** A reporter seeks your comment on something general that is unrelated to your profession or expertise.

Example: Reporter encounters you on the street and asks for your thoughts on an upcoming election.

2. **Unintentional Commentary:** Typically relates to social media - something you've posted on your personal accounts is picked up by the media and attributed to you publically.

Example: A review you post about poor service at a restaurant goes viral.

TYPES OF MEDIA

While there are three distinct media channels (Broadcast, Print, and Digital), news outlets don't operate exclusively in one sphere. Rather, they may operate primarily in one channel, but also share information through the others. This means that a live interview given to a local TV news station will run during their 10 o'clock broadcast,

however, it will likely appear across the network's other media channels as well. You can expect that the content will be reformatted to run as an article on their website or a post on their social media page.

Broadcast – TV news and radio

Print – Newspaper and magazines

Digital – Blogs, websites, social media, eNewsletters, and video

SPOKESPEOPLE

SAMPLE has identified a very limited number of official spokespersons for the organization. These team members are responsible for being the face and the name associated with our media response. We have a primary corporate spokesperson, as well as regional spokespersons.

If you are not designated as an official spokesperson of the company per our Crisis Communication Plan, you are not approved to speak on behalf of the organization.

Any statements you give as an official spokesperson will be crafted by the Communications Lead in conjunction with input from leadership, legal, safety, and others. The Communications Lead will then provide talking points as well as assistance, coaching, and guidance to ensure you're prepared ahead of issuing comment.

Even if you aren't identified as an official spokesperson for SAMPLE, you may be sought out for comment. Members of the media may ask you for your response or reaction if you're a bystander on the scene of an event, or find you online and reach out for your opinion on a situation. If your comments are in any way connected to your employment with SAMPLE, you risk becoming an unintentional spokesperson for the company.

Similarly, in a professional setting you may be put on the spot to comment about a past or ongoing crisis the company faces/d. In both situations, be mindful that your response could have both personal and professional consequences. If you are not a designated SAMPLE spokesperson, please refrain from commenting on the company's behalf.

Connect with the Communications Leader should you even find yourself in a scenario where you became an unofficial spokesperson.

GATEKEEPING

SAMPLE's Director of Communications is responsible for arranging interviews and issuing statements on behalf of the company. She is your ally in managing media response of any scale and functions as a gatekeeper between the media and our organization. Do not respond to any media on behalf of SAMPLE without first consulting with her.

Should a member of the press contact you, the best course of action is to put them in touch with the Director of Communications, who will assess the inquiry and work with you to develop a timely and appropriate response. Never take it upon yourself to comment or answer questions on behalf of SAMPLE, regardless of media deadlines.

In the event of a crisis, an accurate and appropriate media response will be prepared by the Crisis Communications Team. This team will provide legal, professional, and institutional input to determine the best course of action and identify an official spokesperson to represent the organization.

All media inquiries, urgent or otherwise, should be brought to the attention of the **Director of Communications**.

ENGAGING WITH REPORTERS

The media is a valuable partner in telling our story and minimizing any fallout from crises, but working with a reporter can be intimidating for a lot of people. Outlined below are steps to help you feel confident, maintain composure, and boost the impact of your interview:

- Show respect (and earn it, too). Treat reporters as allies and establish a rapport—look them in the eye, call them by name, extend a firm handshake. Be mindful of anyone that gets too friendly, though.
- Swap contact information. Be accessible. As you may be dealing with more than one reporter, ask each for the best way to follow up with them and provide the same details for yourself.
- Manage expectations. Find out the timeline and deadlines the reporters are working with, including when the story will run; share your own constraints as appropriate so they are aware of SAMPLE's schedule and concerns.
- Stick to your notes. You will have talking points outlining SAMPLE's position on the topic; review these to ensure you stay on track and avoid straying from the company's message.
- Practice what you plan to say. While you don't want to recite answers, run through your talking points mentally as well as verbally before you go live.
- Take a few deep breaths before you start. Your state of mind will influence your tone of voice. Give yourself a moment or two to clear your head and energize yourself. Don't worry—you'll be great!
- Be mindful of body language. Convey the same confidence with your body as you do with your words. Stand up straight, but don't be rigid. Imagine you are trying to connect with a viewer at home.
- Listen to the whole question. Avoid interrupting the reporter, both for the sake of etiquette, and to buy time to formulate a response that answers the question and conveys SAMPLE's message.
- Collect your thoughts and keep your emotions in check. Aim to respond in way that shows you're calm, confident, and empathetic. Watch out for any questions that aim to elicit a reaction or force your hand.
- Take your time responding. Speak clearly, avoid jargon, and be honest. If necessary, rephrase questions to limit any accusatory, false, speculative, or negative wording used by the reporter.
- Don't answer if you don't know. Never speculate or guess. If you don't know the answer, it's perfectly acceptable to say that you don't have that information and will follow up when you do.

- Don't feel pressure to fill silences. They may feel awkward in the moment, but once you've finished your thought, you don't have to continue to fill the void. The reporter may use the gaps to try to keep you talking.
- Don't get hung up on perfection. As long as the facts are correct, it's okay if your delivery isn't flawless. You're only human, and that's what editing is for.

Media relations doesn't always entail a press conference or on-camera interview. In many situations, the communication will be far simpler, but no less significant. You may find yourself connecting with reporters over the phone, in person but off camera, or by email. It's equally important to be prepared and convey confidence and knowledge in these settings too. Much of the above advice still applies, but there are some other tips to help you succeed in these scenarios.

Phone Interviews: These interactions take place over the phone typically with a single reporter from a publication; they will either take notes or record your responses.

- Energize yourself—stand up or sit up straight, smile, and clear your mind.
- Take the call somewhere quiet.
- Ensure your phone is fully charged and has adequate service if you're using a cell phone.
- Get the name, title, and contact information for the person you are speaking to.
- Have the Communications Lead in the room/on the phone during the interview.
- Ask the journalist to let you know when the feature will be published.

In Person/Off Camera Interviews: For these instances, a member of the press will schedule a time to meet with you and either tape record or take notes of your responses to their questions.

- Select a professional location, free of distractions and interruptions.
- Connect with the Communications Lead ahead of the interview, and follow up after. They may want to be present if it's a sensitive situation, and are also willing to be there if it makes you feel more comfortable.
- Ask the journalist to let you know when the feature will be published.

Email Correspondence: In these situations, a reporter will typically email you questions on whatever subject they are writing about.

- Identify the reporter's deadline and communicate your capability to meet it.
- Work with the Communications Lead to craft your responses.
- Ask the journalist to let you know when the feature will be published.

OFF THE RECORD

Be keenly aware that there is no such thing as "off the record." Any comment made to the press, regardless of if it was spoken before or after the formal interview, is fair game for reporters. Any off-the-cuff remarks not intended as part of your official commentary may be quoted, so try not to let your guard down.

NON-VERBAL COMPONENTS

There's no getting around it, appearance matters when it comes to televised interviews and weighs heavily on in-person meetings as well.

Your body language will speak volumes to viewers and the reporter; take care to send the right message.

- Match the emotions on your face with the emotions of your message. Smile when appropriate.
- Project low-key thoughtfulness when listening to questions.
- Maintain conversational eye contact with the interviewer, avoid staring.
- Keep the gestures to a minimum.
- Sit up straight; don't lean to one side.
- Keep your feet flat on the floor with your legs together or crossed at the knee towards the interviewer.

As for your attire, dress to convey competence, confidence, and professionalism.

- Preferred dress: Business professional with jacket/blazer (avoid loud patterns or bright colors)
- Alternate option: SAMPLE Gear and/or safety gear if on site
- The only time it's appropriate to wear a hat and/or sunglasses are if they are part of your personal protective equipment.
- Never smoke or chew gum.

WHAT NOT TO DO

As an official spokesperson for the company, there are some key behaviors and responses to avoid when dealing with the media.

- Saying "No Comment": Saying this immediately makes it look as though SAMPLE is on the defensive, and may cause journalists to think you're hiding something.
 - *Instead:* Explain why you are not able to answer the question. It's okay to say that we don't currently have that information or that we're working to get details and will follow back up when we have them.
- Apologizing or Taking Responsibility: Unless it's SAMPLE's express and intended purpose for the comment, do not take responsibility or apologize on behalf of the company.
 - *Instead:* Express empathy for the situation and a desire to be transparent as we work to collect information and learn more about what has occurred.
- Sharing Names: Avoid giving employee names or any other personally distinguishing details to the media, especially if there has been a death or injury.
 - *Instead...* State that, at this time, we are not able to comment on, or confirm the identities of, anyone involved.
- Passing Blame: In situations where the media is looking to hold someone responsible, don't try to shift attention to someone else or to another organization.
 - *Instead...* Share that we are cooperating with all parties involved and are equally eager to have a resolution.
- Make Politically Incorrect Statements: Never stereotype, cast judgement, or use inflammatory or insensitive language.
 - *Instead...* Stay on the straight-and-narrow. Stick to the talking points, and play it neutral.

- Giving Your Opinion: As an official spokesperson, you're speaking on behalf of the company. Refrain from offering your own thoughts or perspective.
 - *Instead...*Steer the conversation back to the company's position.
- Speculating: If we aren't able to provide all the facts, you may be asked what you think happened. Avoid giving any hypothesis.
 - *Instead...*State that we don't wish to speculate about the circumstances, and stress our commitment to finding out what happened.

Rather than partake in any of the behaviors above, elect to use a holding statement (see examples in the Crisis Communications Plan) to address the issue, reassure the media and public, and ultimately allow more time for the company to learn more about the situation and determine the most appropriate response.



Media Inquiry Log

Media Inquiry Log

(One call per page)

Date / Time of call	
Person taking the call	
Publication / Station	
Reporter's name	
Telephone number	
Deadline	
Date / Time call returned	

The following information was given:

(Attach a written copy of information given, if more than general information)



Hold Harmless Agreement

Hold Harmless Agreement - Media

In executing this agreement, _____ (“Media”) acknowledges that it is entering an active construction site(s), and therefore assumes the risk of any injury incurred or suffered, and accepts responsibility for its actions, and the actions of its employees or agents. Media further acknowledges that it will exercise sound safety measures at all times while on the active construction site and comply with the safety procedures directed by SAMPLE.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, Media shall indemnify, keep, and save harmless SAMPLE and its respective officers, agents, and employees against all suites, claims, damages, or costs, including attorneys’ fees, that may be based upon any injury, death, or damage to property, that may arise or allegedly arise in whole or in part from Media’s performance of its services on active construction site(s).

Media Company Name

Date

Authorized Signature