



Nonprofit  
Risk Management  
Center

# Crisis Communications

Christy Grano

703.777.3504 | [Christy@nonprofitrisk.org](mailto:Christy@nonprofitrisk.org)

## Agenda



Why Crisis Communications?



Covering the Basics



Definitions



Pro-tips for Messaging



Trends



Post crisis



## Why Crisis Communications?

### Get excited about crisis communications:

- Crises are an opportunity to **prove your organization's values**.
- Planning out Crisis Communications is a great way to **reinforce** you values internally.
- A good crisis communication plan will provide **peace of mind** now and **efficiency** if a crisis arrives.





**“I always tried to turn every disaster into an opportunity”**

-John D. Rockefeller

| 6



**Definitions**



Crisis definition from Managing Crisis, Harvard Business Press  
"Pocket Mentor:"

*"A change – sudden or evolving – that results in an urgent problem that must be addressed immediately"*

## What makes it a Crisis?

**ISO 22300**

**Crisis**  
"situation with high level of uncertainty that disrupts the core activities and/or credibility of an organization and requires urgent action"

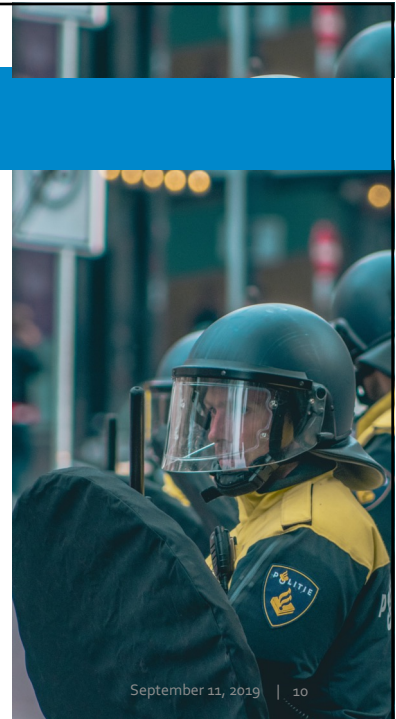
**Incident**  
"situation that might be, or could lead to, a disruption, loss, emergency or crisis"

9



## What makes it a crisis *for you*?

- Allegations of sexual harassment or child abuse
- Lawsuits
- Misconduct by volunteers, board members, or staff
- Unexpected death
- Disgruntled team members spreading dissent
- Damaging remarks from public figures or celebrities
- Destruction of facilities



September 11, 2019 | 10



## The Goal

“Crisis communication ensures that all relevant personnel can quickly and effectively communicate with each other during such crises, sharing information that will allow the organization to quickly **rectify the situation, protect employees and assets, and ensure business continuity.**”

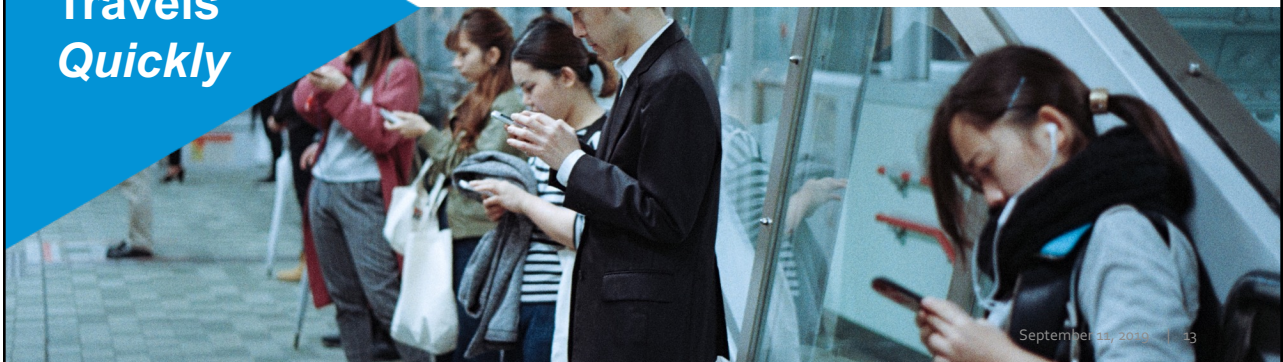
-Rock Dove Solutions



## Trends

**Social media sources can proliferate information in seconds, whether good or bad, correct or rumored.**

**News  
Travels  
Quickly**





# “Emergency Mass Notification Software” distributes information instantly across platforms

News  
Travels  
*Quickly*

- “GIS mapping” is location-specific messaging
- “Multichannel” communications (i.e. text, voice, and email)
- Two-way messaging

September 11, 2019 | 14



## Crisis Communications Basics

# 1

## Designate a Primary Spokesperson

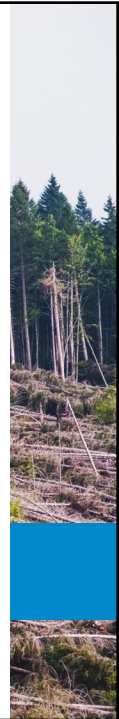
- Designate a primary spokesperson, and also a backup!
- Inform staff of roles.
- Consider board members and respected community figures for supporting communications .



# 2

## Remember your Audience

- Staff and families
- Volunteers
- Participants and clients
- Board members
- Chapters
- Venders and retained professionals





# 3

## Be ready to respond

### How quickly can you create

- An alert on your website?
- A global email update?
- A custom recording for all incoming phone calls?
- A special donation fund?
- A media fact sheet?



September 11, 2019 | 18

## Design Check lists

# 4

- Are identities being protected?
- Have the correct parties been consulted?
- Have internal directives gone out?
- Have available communication tools been utilized?
- Do you have your keys?

September 11, 2019 | 19

## Remember

Plan to have limited mental capacity! The distractions and stress of a crisis will inevitably detract from your usual presence of mind.



## Pro-tips for Messaging





## Be ready to comment

Remember, saying “no comment” can say a lot!

Stay “on  
message”



Be positive  
but concise



Be  
truthful



Express  
emotion



Have  
on  
hand:

**Pre-written  
statements**

**Policies**

**Documents**

**Contact lists**



## Post Crisis

### Continue to communicate

- Families
- Media
- Press





## Consider the emotional side effects

### Stress



### Loss



| 26

## Reminders

### Memorialize internally



### Manage media at anniversaries



| 27



# Questions?

## Resources

- "Internal Crisis Communications: The Inside Track," RISK eNews, <https://nonprofitrisk.org/resources/e-news/the-inside-track-internal-crisis-communications/>
- "The Future is Now: Preparing for the Unknown Crisis," RISK eNews, <https://nonprofitrisk.org/resources/articles/future-now-preparing-unknown-crisis/>
- "7 Crisis Communications Tips Every Organization Should Master," Lauren Landry, Northeastern University Graduate Programs <https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/crisis-communication-tips/>
- "Engage Supporters Talking about your Crisis," Jeanette Russel, NTEN <https://www.nten.org/article/engage-supporters-talking-about-yourcrisis/>

September 11, 2019 | 29



# Thank you!

**Christy Grano**

703.777.3504 | [Christy@nonprofitrisk.org](mailto:Christy@nonprofitrisk.org)