

Incident Command Strategies for Crisis Communication

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3 Main Topics of Discussion

- What is incident command
- Crisis leadership
- Crisis Communication Plan



Proactive Crisis
Communication

Incident Command System (ICS)

- Incident Command System- standardized hierarchical structure that allows for a cooperative response by multiple agencies, both within and outside of government, to organize and coordinate response activities without compromising the decision-making authority of local command.



Unified Command (within ICS)



- **Unified Command** is a team effort process, allowing all agencies with geographical or functional responsibility for an incident, to assign an Incident Commander to a Unified Command organization. The Unified Command then establishes a common set of incident objectives and strategies that all can subscribe to.

Press Information Officer (PIO)

- Member of your command staff-as important as your deputy
- Choose wisely
- Need to be right beside you
- Only releases what you authorize
- Presences is everything



Command Responsibly During Crisis

- Organize and control what is happening now
 - Simultaneous operations
 - Build your team and pull it together
- Beginning planning for the next operations phase
 - Relatively short term look (What does this look like 12 hours from now?)
 - Establish objectives, strategies, and tactics
- What's on the horizon?
 - Always look two or three steps ahead
 - Demobilization planning starts at activation

Crisis Leadership

- Do your job not everyone else's
- Define the destination
 - Define what a successful resolution looks like
- Chess v. checkers
- Slow it down!
- Leaders are born and die in crisis
- There may not be a win, but you can always lose
- Amateurs discuss tactics, professionals discuss logistics
- What is the next, next?
- Recovery begins when the crisis begins!



Communication During a Crisis: Basics



- Starts well before the event. Relationship, practice, exercise, training.
- How long is this event going to be newsworthy?
- “No comment” is a comment.
- Can always be faster, never fast enough.
- This is your Super Bowl! Are you ready today?

Best Practices

- Be first. The first source of communication often becomes the source against which all others are measured.
- Be right. Accuracy is critical to credibility.
- Be credible. Honesty is fundamental to maintaining trust.
- Express empathy. Emotion cannot be countered with facts. People must first know that their leaders care.
- Promote action. Giving people something specific to do restores a sense of control over out-of-control circumstances.
- Show respect. Lack of respect for a public in crisis undermines trust.
- Own it. Earn and wear your brand.
- Can you over communicate?
- Be available.
- Be proactive.
- Frame it.
- Know your platforms.
- One voice. From PIO to call takers in unaffected buildings.
- Empathy, empathy, empathy.
- Celebrate your successes, acknowledge your failures.



Reminders and Questions

PIO Briefings

Situation: Here's what I think we face.

Task: Here's what I think we should do.

Intent: Here's why I think we should do it.

Concern: Here's what we should keep our eye on because if that changes, we're in a whole new situation.

Calibrate: Now talk to me. Tell me if you don't understand, cannot do it, or see something I do not.

PIO Pulse Check

What have I missed?

What is unclear?

What has to change?

Did I learn something others should know about?

Who's acting if lead is unavailable?

Do PIOs have regular communication with command?

Are PIOs aware of incident-within-incident procedures?

Regular communication with host unit / key contacts?

Are we learning from our mistakes

Platforms and Methods

- Press conferences
- Social media
- Your website
- Email
- FAQ
- Town Halls
- Podcasts
- Messaging Video
- Phone calls



Questions?

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