Sample Crisis Management Plan

Location:

Effective Date: [DATE]

Revision Number: 1

[COMPANY]

This is a sample crisis management plan—one that should be customized on a per organization basis to account for specific concerns and processes. It is not meant to be exhaustive or construed as legal advice. Consult additional insurance and/or legal counsel for professional advice. Please modify this plan to meet your business needs, taking all relevant federal, state and local compliance requirements into account.

Every business, regardless of the industry it operates in or the products or services it offers, will likely face a crisis at some point during its existence. These crises can threaten an organization’s standing in the public and even affect clients, donors and other third parties. If and when such an event occurs, it’s critical that [COMPANY] is prepared to respond effectively.

To aid in our response efforts, this sample crisis management plan will be customized to meet the organization’s unique needs in terms of preparing for and responding to crises. Additionally, this plan will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it accounts for:

* Organizational changes (e.g., a merger or acquisition)
* The introduction of a new process or technology
* Staffing changes that affect [COMPANY]’s crisis response efforts
* New or unaccounted for exposures

**GOALS OF THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

* Protecting employees and the general public from serious injuries
* Preventing or minimizing damage to property, company finances, company assets or the environment
* Safeguarding the company’s reputation
* Maintaining operations or returning to business as usual following a disruption

**CRISIS SITUATIONS**

Simply put, a crisis is any situation that falls outside normal business and emergency response plans. A crisis may be an event your business could have avoided if the proper protocols were in place (e.g., a social media crisis, or organizational errors and omissions) or a situation that’s completely out of our control (e.g., natural disasters or a pandemic).

When a crisis occurs, it may significantly:

* Threaten the safety or well-being of a company’s people
* Impair a company’s ability to operate effectively
* Harm a company’s public reputation or image
* Impact a company’s bottom line
* Increase a company’s insurance exposures

The chart below outlines some common types of crises that may affect our operations:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Type of Crises** | **Examples** |
| **Organizational Crises** | * Product recalls * Dangerous goods/material spills * General employee safety concerns * Public relations blunders * Active shooter incidents * Acts of terrorism * Civil unrest * Communicable disease outbreaks |
| **Environmental Crises** | * Earthquakes * Fires * Floods * Hurricanes |
| **Personnel Crises** | * Workplace violence * Employee strikes * Issues regarding sexual harassment * Senior leadership errors, omissions and wrongdoing * Kidnapping or hostage situations involving employees traveling for work * Illegal or unethical employee misconduct |
| **Financial Crisis** | * A drop in demand for the company’s products or services * Bankruptcy * Stock price concerns |
| **Technological Crisis** | * Cyberattacks * Data loss * Mismanagement of confidential or proprietary information |

**THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM**

To aid in our crisis response efforts, [COMPANY] will create a crisis management team responsible for:

* Evaluating each crisis situation
* Determining the threat level of each crisis situation and responding appropriately
* Identifying outside experts to help execute or improve crisis response efforts
* Coordinating with the proper authorities
* Crafting and executing communication strategies
* Reviewing and improving the crisis management plan on a regular basis

The crisis management team accounts for the following roles and responsibilities:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Role** | **Responsibilities** |
| **Crisis Team Leader – [Insert individual/individuals responsible for this role]** | * Developing and implementing the crisis management plan * Managing the crisis management team and the company’s crisis response efforts * Classifying and ranking the threat levels of individuals crises * Maintaining communication with the company’s CEO and other key stakeholders, keeping them informed of crisis situations * Scheduling meetings with the crisis management team as needed * Securing the necessary resources or expertise to successfully execute the crisis management plan * Coordinating communication with outside stakeholders (e.g., local authorities) * Debriefing the crisis management team and planning follow-up measures post-crisis * Recording lessons learned post-crisis * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] |
| **Crisis Coordinator - [Insert individual/individuals responsible for this role]** | * Assisting the crisis team leader as necessary * Assisting with the development, review, training and distribution of the crisis management plan * Evaluating and suggesting improvements to the organization’s crisis response efforts * Classifying and ranking the threat levels of individual crises alongside the crisis team leader and other key stakeholders * Creating and maintaining supplemental documentation pivotal to crisis response efforts * Creating and conducting practice exercises * Overseeing the support team * Creating situation updates or briefing reports * Suggesting follow-up measures post-crisis * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] |
| **Communications Coordinator/Spokesperson - [Insert individual/individuals responsible for this role]** | * Assisting the crisis team leader as necessary * Assisting with the development, review, training and distribution of the crisis management plan * Developing and implementing the internal and external communication strategy * Preparing and delivering press briefings, if applicable * Prepping the spokesperson to deliver press briefings, if applicable * Responding to media inquiries * Working alongside the crisis team leader, senior leadership and other key stakeholders to approve the release of information to the public * Suggesting follow-up measures post-crisis * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] |
| **Legal Counsel - [Insert individual/individuals responsible for this role]** | * Providing legal counsel to the crisis management team as necessary * Evaluating the decisions of the crisis management team, taking potential legal consequences into account * Advising the communication coordinator * Managing relationships with third-party legal support (e.g., contracted lawyers) * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] |
| **Human Resources Coordinator - [Insert individual/individuals responsible for this role]** | * Providing human resources counsel to the crisis management team as necessary * Working with support staff and their managers to set and approve overtime hours as needed * Evaluating the decisions of the crisis management team, taking potential human resources consequences into account * Serving as the point of contact for union and employee representatives * Coordinating with grief counselors and psychologists, if applicable * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] |
| **Support Staff - [Insert individual/individuals responsible for this role]** | * Assisting the crisis management team with the following:   + The creation and preparation of supporting documentation   + The development, review, training and distribution of the crisis management plan   + The evaluation of the organization’s crisis response efforts   + Securing the necessary resources or expertise to successfully execute the crisis management plan   + The development and execution of internal and external communications   + [Insert more]   + [Insert more]   + [Insert more] |
| **[Insert more]** | * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] |
| **[Insert more]** | * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] |

**STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

In the event of a crisis, it’s crucial that [COMPANY] is able to communicate with key stakeholders and provide necessary updates. The chart below identifies these stakeholders and the communication channels that will be used for the dissemination of information.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stakeholders** | **Communication Channels** |
| * Customers and clients * Employees and their families * The media * The general public * Company management, and directors and officers * Investors and shareholders * Board members * Government organizations, regulators and other authorities * Suppliers * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] | * Social media * Company websites * Intranet portals * Mass notification systems (e.g., emails or text message alerts) * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] * [Insert more] |

**ALERT LEVELS**

To ensure our organization and its crisis management team knows how to respond to individual crises, it’s important to establish an alert system. This system should allow our organization to rank various threats to our operations and outline recommended response practices.

The chart below outlines [COMPANY]’s alert levels and suggested responses:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Level 0 – Normal Operations** | | | |
| **Potential Characteristics** | **Media Implications** | **Recommended Actions** | **Resources Needed** |
| No outside factors are currently impacting the organization. | Media inquiries, if there are any, are in regard to general business topics. | N/A | N/A |
| **Level 1 – Minor Incident** | | | |
| **Potential Characteristics** | **Media Implications** | **Recommended Actions** | **Resources Needed** |
| A potential or current incident is impacting business operations, but not seriously. Any damage or business interruptions are localized. | The business is seeing minimal media attention. | On-duty employees should be able to handle the situation. | The business may need to secure outside resources, but this support is either minor or securable on the local level. |
| **Level 2 – Potentially Critical** | | | |
| **Potential Characteristics** | **Media Implications** | **Recommended Actions** | **Resources Needed** |
| An incident is currently impacting business operations. This incident is localized, isolated and minor. However, this incident could be exacerbated if corrective actions aren’t taken. | The situation is slowly attracting media attention. There may be steady online coverage, but little to no public reaction. | * Observe the situation and how it develops. * Notify supervisors. * Notify members of the crisis management team. Please note that the crisis management plan does not need to be activated at this point. * Allow on-duty employees to handle the situation. | * The organization may need to secure additional resources on a regional or large scale. |
| **Level 3 – Crisis Warning** | | | |
| **Potential Characteristics** | **Media Implications** | **Recommended Actions** | **Resources Needed** |
| * A major emergency is currently impacting the organization—one that disrupts normal operations and affects multiple business units. * The incident poses a considerable threat to personnel, customers, clients, external resources (e.g., supply chain members) or the business’s reputation. * To remedy the situation, quick responses and decision-making are required. | * The incident is gaining growing attention from local media and online publications. * Circumstances regarding the situation are known to the public. | * Observe the situation closely. * Begin information sharing, and provide regular updates to key stakeholders regarding the situation’s progression. * Consider activating the crisis management plan. At a minimum, the crisis management team should meet and begin to monitor the situation. | * Outside emergency resources are required. * Major effort from internal resources is required. * External support is required from numerous sources. |
| **Level 4 – Major Crisis** | | | |
| **Potential Characteristics** | **Media Implications** | **Recommended Actions** | **Resources Needed** |
| * The incident is considered to be a severe emergency. * The incident severely impairs or disrupts the business’s operations or its stakeholders. * The incident has led to injuries or fatalities. * The incident has majorly damaged the business’s reputation or resources. * Response efforts require considerable coordination with other organizations. | * The media has an immediate or urgent need for information regarding the situation. * There is broad coverage of the situation on social media and online. * External communication needs are increasingly difficult to manage. | * Activate the crisis management plan. | * The business needs external support from the authorities and other organizations on a large scale. |

**EVALUATING CRISES AND TAKING ACTION**

Once an incident is detected, we will evaluate it (based on the alert level and other factors) and determine what action is necessary. During the evaluation, we will consider the following:

* The details of the incident, including:
  + What happened?
  + When and where did the incident occur?
  + Why did this incident occur?
* Potential consequences of the incident, and whether or not the incident could turn into a full-blown crisis.

Once we have determined a crisis exists and action is necessary, we will activate our crisis management plan. This involves getting the crisis management team together to go over objectives and individual responsibilities.

Tasks we will account for when initiating our crisis management plan include:

* Rolling out the communication plan
* Developing a response timeline
* Seeking assistance from external parties, including legal or technology experts
* Moderating and responding to media
* Monitoring the crisis and escalating response efforts

**UPDATING THE PLAN**

One of the most important actions we will take following a crisis is to evaluate and update our crisis management plan. This is because every crisis event is unique and offers an opportunity to learn from our mistakes, improving our response to future incidents. When evaluating our crisis management plan, we will:

* Discuss what went well
* Discuss what went poorly
* Determine follow-up actions
* Review any available metrics
* Review relationships with third parties for gaps