CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

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WE ARE SEC
CRISIS VS EMERGENCY

- Crisis – Time of intense difficulty when difficult and important decisions must be made
- Emergency – Serious and dangerous incident that requires immediate action
- Crisis can occur without an emergency
- Emergencies can occur without a crisis
- Assume worst-case scenario every time
- Document everything!!
The FIRST HOUR!!

The **DECISIONS** *you* make;

The **ACTION** *you* take; and

The **WORDS** *you* say
### ASSETS - THREATS

#### ASSETS
- Staff
- Students
- Families
- Employees
- Financial Strength
- Reputation
- Physical Facilities/Property

#### THREATS
- Employee Error
- Employee Misconduct
- Student Actions
- Health Safety Risk
- Criminal Activity
- Outside Actors
INITIAL CHALLENGES

- Initial Information is generally wrong
- Pressure to communicate quickly
- Data and information not available
- Policies don’t exist
- Events are escalating
- Media focus
- Reputation and Culture are under attack
- Rumors and misinformation
- Command and Control may be lost
PHASES OF ACTIVATION

EVENT

PREAMPTION
- Readiness/Mitigation

ONSET
- Life/Safety - Protect Assets

IMPACT ASSESSMENT
- What happened and How bad is it?

RESPONSE
- What are we going to do?

RECOVERY
- Lessons Learned
GATHER INFORMATION

• What occurred?
• How did it happen?
• Who is involved?
• What is known?
• What will happen next?
• What are we concerned about?
• What is the plan?
• What should be monitored?

• What are the metrics?
• What are the 3 key messages?
• Who is the spokesperson?
• What are the threats/risks/vulnerabilities?
• Who are the internal & external stakeholders?
CRISIS SCOPE

- Anger – Are people outraged
- Responsibility – Is it our fault
- Fear – Can it happen to me or my family
- Scope – How large is the problem
- Escalation – Is it getting worse and how fast
- Reach – Is it local, regional, or national
CRISIS SEVERITY

- **Minimal impact to school operations, limited potential for imminent risk and ongoing disruption.** Situation needs to be monitored for any signs of escalation.

- **Requires convening of crisis team to coordinate response and communication.** The risk to the school community and assets is high and escalation is likely.

- **Situation requires immediate and coordinated response.** Potential impacts are severe and imminent. A significant crisis response will be necessary, and the impacts are likely to be ongoing.
COMMUNICATION KEY AUDIENCES

INTERNAL
• Staff
• Students
• Volunteers
• Board of Education

EXTERNAL
• Emergency Services
• Parents and Families
• Community
• Other Schools
• Legal Counsel
• Regulators
• Suppliers/Vendors
CRISIS COMMUNICATION

• Begins after life safety issues have been addressed

• When to communicate

• How to communicate

• Who to communicate with (Media?)

• Explaining = Losing
• In almost every case, **avoid media contact**.

• In rare, catastrophic scenarios involving life/safety, there may be a role for the media to play.

• Media should never be contacted unless coordinated with spokesperson or alternate, in consultation with insurer/crisis consultant/legal counsel.

• Communications with the media, if absolutely necessary, must adhere to the crisis communications procedures using message maps.

• Changing circumstances and new information learned will result in the need for continuous updating of both the response actions and the message maps.
CRISIS SERVICES

• Counseling
• Hotline
• Monitoring Media
• Ongoing and Anniversary
QUESTIONS

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