

CRISIS MANAGEMENT GUIDE



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I. UNDERSTANDING CRISIS

A crisis is a reputation-defining event in the life of your organization. It's an unpredictable event that thrusts your organization into the spotlight. It presents danger that threatens the organization, and at the same time, opportunity that can strengthen and infuse new life into the organization.

Purpose of a Crisis Plan

Why Plan for Crisis

- If we fail to plan, we essentially plan to fail.
- If we don't manage the crisis, the crisis will manage us.
- If we don't work together in a united effort, divided we will fall.
- If we don't act, we will be forced to react.
- If we're not prepared to play offense, we will end up on defense.

Get the picture?

Benefits of Planning*

— In compliance with General Conference and North American Division requests, this plan has been developed to help Adventist organizations in the Central Jamaica Conference responsibly and effectively manage crisis situations as necessary. It provides basic, yet clear information, guidelines, and action steps that will help us:

- Protect our name and reputation in the community
- Prevent or reduce a crisis situation
- Reduce and avoid probability of litigation
- Control damage from false information, critics, or negative news
- Get the positive message out about the Adventist Church
- Establish an infrastructure and working plan for managing a crisis
- Operate from a team approach
- Be prepared

*Source: Crisis Management Seminar Training Manual (2002), General Conference

Adopt and Adapt

– This plan is designed as a template that provides general guidelines for crisis management. It should be adapted to each unique situation, tested and practiced, and updated annually. Also, Adventist schools and healthcare facilities have specialized and more extensive crisis plans in place and should refer to them.

II. PRINCIPLES FOR OPERATING DURING CRISIS

The following should be characteristic of our organizations all the time. During a crisis, be especially mindful to display:

Openness

– What have you to hide? At times, there is sensitive and confidential information that should not or cannot be disclosed for legal reasons. But otherwise it's better to appear helpful and informative than silent and secretive.

Integrity

– Honesty is the best policy; otherwise you can be sure your sins will find you out! Consider the affects on everyone involved, protect privacy, and show genuine care and concern. This isn't just a story or an event; for someone, this is devastating and painful.

Accuracy

– Check and double-check facts before going public. If you make a mistake, point that out before it's brought to your attention so integrity will not be questioned.

Consistency

– Once you learn what has occurred and what you can disclose, share your story and stick to it. Nothing can hurt more than changing your tune, facts, and information. Keeping a detailed record of the information, designating one spokesperson, and distributing the same statement to all your publics can help.

Flexibility

– Be accommodating to the people — media, staff, inquiries — who can actually help get the story you want told to specific target audiences or the general public. Work with them, not against them. Be a reliable source of appropriate information.

Appearance

– Be mindful of what you wear, how you speak, and how you come across to others. Don't appear defensive or afraid. Be appropriate to the situation and appear confident, sincere, and helpful. Also, don't wear white or checked clothing for television.

Fairness

– Building relationships with key publics in times of peace will help when crisis situations arise, but don't play favorites during a crisis. Don't let your guard down or speak off the record to anyone. Treat all inquiries equally, and respond to each in a timely and professional manner.

III. CRISIS TYPOLOGY

Every organization should prepare for crisis. Here's a list of the types of crises our organizations should prepare for and what could trigger them:

Organizations

- Conferences
- Union Office
- Churches/Members
- Schools/Colleges
- Healthcare Facilities
- Community Service Centers

Possible Crisis

- Layoffs or institution closing
- Employee, administrator, pastor volunteer, or student accused of sexual misconduct, abuse, theft, or other crime
- Property arson or vandalism
- Natural disaster or terrorist attack
- On-site hostage situation or attack
- Death of employee or student
- Law or media investigation of the church, church official, program, institution, or agency
- Confrontation between church, school, hospital, and government
- Litigation against the organization or employee

- Unauthorized use of Church name in negative advertising campaign
- Media confuses Church with another organization
- Member, pastor, or Church ministry leader engages in illegal activity (i.e., polygamy, murder, domestic violence, embezzlement)
- Escalating conflict at office, church, or school

Triggers/Indicators

- Major gatherings (i.e., graduations, camporees, class trips, camp meetings, retreats, summer camp, road trips, church services)
- Disgruntled members, employees, students
- Layoffs, dismissals, suspensions, poor evaluations or grades at school work
- Overwork and extreme exhaustion that could cause accidents or conflicts
- Lack of financial accountability, regular evaluations, or procedural reviews
- Outdated equipment and dilapidated buildings
- Failure to review and practice safety procedures regularly
- Lack of a communication infrastructure and regular communication within the organization; or misinformation

IV. CRISIS KIT CHECKLIST

Communication Materials

Gather the following materials and set them aside in a designated location for use during a crisis.

The crisis team coordinator should keep copies at home, the office, and iPad:

- A copy of this planning guide and additional pertinent information
- A list of the organization's crisis team members with office, home, email, and cellular contact information
- A current list of the organization's employees with contact information
- A current contact list of public media in your community
- A current contact list of police, fire, emergency, health, poison control, and disaster response officials in the community and the area your organizational members will be visiting
- (notify officials prior to group's arrival)
- A copy of the fundamental beliefs of the Adventist Church (available online)
- A list of the topics the Adventist Church has voted official statements about (i.e., marriage, human cloning, gambling, same sex unions, sexual abuse, etc.), or the book that contains them, *Adventist Statements and Guidelines* (visit www.adventist.org)
- A copy of the Adventist Church's mission statement and that of your organization
- Fact Sheet
- Profiles/Bio for each key person with photo

Travel Items

Keep a bag packed with the following items or gather them immediately when crisis occurs. As the crisis management coordinator for your conference or school, you may have to travel (i.e., to your conference campground or a church):

- Communication materials listed above
- Extra cell phone charger
- Pads or paper and pens

- Camera, laptop computer, and other equipment
- Conference, school, church, and public media directories
- U.S. Atlas and a large, detailed map of the state where organization is based
- A Bible
- Water and nutritious snacks
- Change of clothes, comfortable shoes, and travel-size toiletries
- Organization banner with logo

Designated Locations

Determine where you will 1) meet, 2) work, and 3) give briefings during a crisis. Regardless of the location of the crisis, members of the crisis management team should know the designated meeting location, and convene there immediately after a crisis occurs to share information and coordinate efforts. Your designated working location should be equipped with a television, radio, computer, Internet and email access, fax machine, and a telephone with multiple lines. Hold briefings outdoors or in a location with pleasant lighting. If the event is positive for your organization (i.e., assisting in disaster relief efforts), have the spokesperson interviewed against a backdrop of your logo or people wearing your logo (i.e., Pathfinders). If the event is negative, do not use nor allow your logo to be used as a backdrop.

V. STAGES OF A CRISIS

There are several phases of a crisis — before the crisis, during the crisis, and after the crisis. Here is a summary of what to do during each stage:

Before the Crisis

A crisis is unpredictable, but not unexpected. There are trigger events, indicators that something is wrong, and situations or settings that should put you on alert. Unless you are experiencing a crisis situation, you are perpetually in this phase:

- Plan for crisis and prepare suggested materials
- Watch for warning sign and take the concerns expressed by others seriously
- Stay on top of developing situations, don't brush them off
- Designate and train a crisis management team and a spokesperson
- Establish reliable communication vehicles (email list, speed fax)

During the Crisis

Chaos, confusion, fear, and lack of control all characterize the initial crisis situation. This is the time to take action and work to establish control of the situation (read additional details on pages 12 and 13):

- Determine the level of crisis, what actions to take, and how to respond
- Seek counsel and determine when to speak and when to be silent
- Manage the crisis by following established guidelines, cooperating with authorities, and keeping relevant target audiences informed
- Don't allow the crisis to spiral out of control or continue indefinitely
- Determine the crisis climax and begin to move the organization toward normal operations

After the Crisis

Things are calming down and getting back to normal; people are grieving and moving on. Now is the time to turn the grieving into a healing and learning phase:

- Evaluate actions and procedures to determine what worked well or did not
- Debrief with crisis management team, employees, authorities, and consultants
- Prepare report/case study for administrators
- Update crisis plan and replenish crisis kit

VI. WHEN CRISIS OCCURS . . . ACTION STEPS

Here is a basic guideline of what needs to be done the moment you become aware of a crisis. The first four steps may occur simultaneously and interchangeably, but all eight steps are important and should be followed:

Step 1 - Gather the facts:

- Who, what, when, where, why, how?
- Contact information for those involved

Step 2 - Alert and convene crisis management team:

- Brief the team
- Determine the type of crisis (internal or external) by asking “Who cares?”
- Determine the level of crisis (involves your organization only, involves conference or union, involves local or national community)
- Decide if you need legal counsel, risk management, pastoral counsel, or to alert the authorities or health official, etc.
- Identify which target audiences (internal and external) you’ll need to brief
- Determine who should brief which target audiences (i.e., the police or hospital physicians may brief the media, while you may brief parents, students, employees, and church members)
- Make a list of what you can and cannot say (i.e., you may release facts but not names)
- Choose a spokesperson appropriate to the level of crisis and the specification situation

Step 3 - Draft a statement that includes:

- The facts and pertinent information
- What you’re doing about it
- Incorporate the four crisis message points (see box)
- Organizational message points that are relevant to the situation
- What the Adventist Church has voted about this type of incident or crisis (i.e., statements on various issues, etc.)
- Identify sources of information (contact person, phone number, website)

Crisis Management Points - What to Say Immediately

Express Concern— of shock or sadness at the news

Assure Cooperation— with authorities and officials

Promise Updates — to keep concerned audiences informed

Provide Contacts — to direct inquirers to your official spokesperson

Step 4 – Consult with the Central Jamaica Conference communication director and other administrators (such as the president, legal counsel, or the education superintendent) as needed:

- Tell them what happened and what you're doing about it
- Share the statement
- Identify the official spokesperson
- Discuss next steps

Step 5 – Brief your immediate staff and key support people:

- Tell them what happened and what you're doing about it
- Distribute the official statement
- Identify the official spokesperson
- Ask the staff to support your efforts to end this crisis and review how they should respond to inquiries
- Promise to update them throughout the situation
- Answer questions

Step 6 – Release statement to identified target audiences:

- Answer all inquiries
- Stay on top of the details • Provide periodic updates

The “No Comment” Comment

Saying “no comment” makes you sound like you're hiding something (AKA, admitting guilt). If you're not the designated spokesperson for the crisis, it's best to forward the inquirer the statement and promise to have someone who is knowledgeable about the situation return their call shortly or before the deadline.

Step 7 – Monitor and Manage the Crisis:

- Provide outlets for people to express grief or respond in positive ways (send cards hold a prayer service, provide counseling, provide daily briefings)
- Determine when the situation has reached a climax or is essentially over
- Work to return operations to normal and get employees back to work
- Don't allow internal individuals to exacerbate the situation
- Communicate with all target audiences regularly
- Keep an activity log (date, who you spoke to, and what was said)

Step 8 – Follow Up:

- Debrief with staff, handle concerns, and thank everyone for working together
- Develop a report/case study and debrief with crisis management team
- Make adjustments to your crisis plan

VII. TARGET AUDIENCES

There are two types of audiences you may need to communicate with during a crisis — internal and external. Here's a potential list to choose from — each crisis will determine which audiences to target:

Internal Audiences

- Pastors
- Church members
- Students and their families
- Alumni
- School principals and teachers
- Employees
- Board members
- Constituents
- Conference and Union administrators
- Risk Management
- Conference and Union attorneys
- Volunteers

External Audiences

- Law–Enforcement, Fire, and Emergency Officials
- Public Media
- Nearby businesses or schools
- Other religious organizations
- Community leaders/officials

Communication Methods

The type and level of crisis and your relationship with the various target audiences will determine how you communicate with each during crisis. Here are some appropriate methods:

- Statement
- Letter
- Email
- Website postings
- Press conference
- Interviews
- Article or special edition of newsletter
- Town Hall or Prayer Meetings
- Sermons or messages
- Personal phone calls
- Blogs/Social Media — Facebook/Twitter

VIII. MESSAGE POINTS

Relevant statements that you want to communicate about your organization should be developed, memorized, and shared genuinely and consistently. Here are several that can be adapted to specific situations:

Seventh-day Adventist Church

- The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a mainstream, Protestant denomination with 15,115,806 members worldwide..

Beliefs

- Seventh-day Adventists are Bible-believing Christians who base our faith, hope, and future in Jesus Christ.

School

- Our school (use the name) has been educating student in this community for more than ____ years. We will continue to provide quality educational services to this community in the years to come.
- The safety of our students is our highest priority, and we take seriously our responsibility to protect them every day. Every concern is taken seriously and investigated.
- These are good students. They work so hard in school, and the majority of the time they do great work. This was an unfortunate and rare situation, and we will work to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Church

- We are so proud to be a part of this community. Our church (use the name) has been here for more than ____ years, and our doors are always open to help the community.
- Children are the most valuable resource of our church society. We want to protect them in our schools, in our youth groups, and in all our ministries with children.
- Our hearts and prayers go out to all who have been hurt.
- Any time there is pain, we hurt as well, and we pray for God's healing to touch those in pain at this difficult time.

Healthcare

- Seventh-day Adventists value human life. We do not condone the taking of life, nor provide assistance in doing so. This was an isolated and unfortunate incident.

Accusations

- Sexual harassment is not tolerated (name of organization). We value our employees and have adopted a tough policy in regard to this issue. Each concern is taken seriously and investigated.
- We train leaders of children and youth to spot abuse and never to abuse children nor allow it.

Issues

- Domestic violence is a serious issue in America today. We offer counseling and sponsor numerous workshops to help people build strong marriages and healthy families. We'll continue to pray for this family and see them through this difficult time.

- You're right when you say we don't condone the practice of homosexuality. As Bible-believing Christians, we stand by our conviction to adhere to Bible principles. But that same Bible also calls us to love one another. Therefore, we also, without judging, uphold that principle.

IX. DO'S AND DON'TS OF EMERGENCY PUBLIC RELATIONS

Before an emergency, a basic list of appropriate actions and inappropriate actions should be spelled out for all to know and understand. Some of these include:

By All Means Do*

- Release only verified information
- Promptly alert press of relief and recover operations
- Escort the press everywhere on the emergency site
- Have a designated spokesperson
- Keep accurate records and logs of all inquiries and news coverage
- Try to find out and meet press deadlines
- Provide equal opportunities and facilitate for print and electronic media
- Have a clear idea of what can and cannot be released
- Carefully coordinate planning and implementation of public relations activities with other aspects of your emergency plan

By All Means Don't*

- Idly speculate on the causes of the emergency
- Speculate on the resumption of normal operations
- Speculate on the outside effects of the emergency
- Speculate on the dollar value of losses
- Interfere with the legitimate duties of news people
- Permit unauthorized spokespersons to comment to the media
- Attempt to cover up or purposely mislead the press • Place blame for the emergency

* Source: General Conference Office of Communication

Keep Adventists in the Loop

- Do include Adventists when considering how to communicate with your audiences
- Do develop communication methods that can be used to keep Adventists members informed with relevant news and information, especially when a crisis occurs
- Do communicate the Adventist angle of the story (i.e., Was there a member involved in the accident? Was a member accused of the crime? Was the victim a member?)
- Do respond to members who inquire about the crisis
- Do educate members about official views or statements on societal issues
- Do regard members as allies who can help spread your message points
- Don't underestimate the existence of the "Adventist grapevine"
- Don't attempt to hide any negative news or situation from members
- Don't believe anything is "off the record" or "for your information only"
- Don't send anything via email that you don't want forwarded or repeated



Seventh-day Adventists Church

INTERVIEW PREPARATION FORM

Name of Organization:

Crisis:

Questions We May Be Asked

Possible Answers

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	

WHAT TO SAY/WHAT NOT TO SAY FORM

What can you safely and legally say to your audiences regarding the crisis situation? Take notes as you discuss this with your crisis management team and legal consultants. Refer to it as you write the statement, give briefings, or do interviews.

What to Say	What Not to Say
<p data-bbox="256 653 358 680">Example</p> <ul data-bbox="217 737 561 1119" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="217 737 561 867">● A 15-year-old male camper drowned in the lake this morning. <li data-bbox="217 940 561 1119">● Authorities are still determining the time of death and other details related to the incident.	<ul data-bbox="889 737 1214 1339" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="889 737 1214 867">● Name – because he’s a minor and all the family hasn’t been notified. <li data-bbox="889 940 1214 1073">● Who is to blame – don’t publicly place blame on anyone. <li data-bbox="889 1213 1214 1339">● Personal opinions – don’t speculate on your suspicions, hearsay, or innuendo.

XII. DAILY LOG FORM



Seventh-day Adventists Church

Date:

Time:

Name:

Title:

Organization:

Telephone:

Fax:

Email:

Reason for call:

Source of information:

*Call (+) (-) (n):

Action Taken:

Message taken by:

NOTES:

*+= a positive call; - = a negative call; n= a neutral call



Seventh-day Adventists Church

Name of Organization:

Crisis Team Members:

Key Message Points:

Organizational Statistics:

Members:

Churches:

Schools:

ACS Centers:



Seventh-day Adventists Church

Crisis Communication Worksheet

Date:

What Happened:

Determine Type & Level of Crisis (Internal or External)

List Target Audience:

How We Reach Them:

Release Statement to the Following:

What Do We Say?

News (What Do We Know)

Assurance (Concern, Cooperation)

Message (What We Want Known)

Updates (Contact Person)



Seventh-day Adventists Church

DAILY LOG FORM

Date:

Time:

Name:

Title:

Organization:

Telephone:

Fax:

Email:

Reason for call:

Source of information:

*Call (+) (-) (n):

Action taken:

Message taken by:

NOTES:

*+= a positive call; -= a negative call; n= a neutral call



Seventh-day Adventists Church

ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTORY FORM

Name of Organization:

Crisis Team Members:

Key Message Points:

Organizational Statistics:

Members:

Churches:

Schools:

ACS Centers:



Seventh-day Adventists Church

INTERVIEW PREPARATION FORM

Name of Organization:

Crisis:

Questions We May Be Asked:

Possible Answers:

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

