



WRITING YOUR CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

STEP 1 - ESTABLISH CRISIS COMMUNICATION TEAM & ROLES

It's not enough to have names and phone numbers of people who you could call on in a time of crisis. You do need that, of course, but the members of this team need to be 100% on board with pre-assigned, very clear duties and well-defined roles far in advance of any crisis.

Your team members should:

- Be experienced CAP officers who have CAP's best interest at heart.
- Be willing to undergo training and planning for their individual role.
- Be proactive, self-starters who can be trusted to jump into motion quickly, confidently and competently when they are needed.

Your roles should:

- Be very specific and non-overlapping.
- Reflect the types of crisis scenarios your local unit, Wing or Region may experience.
- Leave no doubt as to who is in charge of what part of a crisis plan in action.



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- 1) Brainstorm with the members of your local unit, Wing or Region. Are there any obvious people who should be on your team? Anyone with prior PR or crisis management experience? Anyone already well known and/or well respected in your community? Recruit them to be on your team. List members below.*
- 2) Think through all the various roles that need to be filled on your team, and make a list. Consider the following examples: (These are only suggestions. Develop the team that best suits you and your particular local unit, Wing or Region.)*
 - Spokesperson (usually PAO)*
 - Assistant to spokesperson*
 - Command or media center coordinator*
 - Community groups/support liaison*
 - Government/Military liaison*
 - Phone bank workers*
 - Media coverage collector*
 - Scenario planner*
 - Press release & speech writer*
 - Team training coordinator*
- 3) Write a brief paragraph below each of your defined roles further explaining what the person in that role will be responsible for and to whom he/she will answer.*
- 4) Put the people listed out in number 1 together with the roles listed in number 2. Make a master list that has the person's name, contact information, role and description all in one place.*

This list becomes part one of your Crisis Communication Plan.



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STEP 2 - SECURE POSSIBLE LOCATIONS FOR COMMAND/MEDIA CENTER

You may be surprised at the massive influx of personnel, media, phone calls, requests and demands that follow a crisis. You will need a central location to use for coordinating all the people and projects that will be convening in your area. You can use this center as a place to hold press briefings, receive updates and/or as a mission base.

Your command center location should be:

- Available with little-to-no notice.
- Already equipped with Internet connections, telephone lines and other appropriate technology.
- As centrally located as possible in your city.



- 1) Choose at least 2 possible sites for a command/media center.*
- 2) Obtain letters of permission/access from those who normally oversee or use the location stating that the room can be used by your local unit, Wing or Region in the event of a crisis. Be sure these letters include specific information and processes for obtaining entry, setting up hotlines, etc.*
- 3) Maintain communication with your contacts at the location throughout the year so that when a crisis occurs, everyone already knows each other and what to do.*

The list of potential command/media centers, the letters of permission/access and contact information for each site becomes part two of your Crisis Communication Plan.

Your Crisis Communication Plan now has the following sections:

- 1) Crisis Communication Team Contact & Role List
- 2) Command/Media Center Locations



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STEP 3 - MAINTAIN UP-TO-DATE CONTACT INFORMATION

Aside from having your team, their roles and their contact information in place, it is also imperative that you have a current list of home, work and cell numbers for key officials within CAP and other appropriate parties.

Your contact list should:

- Be up to date at all times.
- Be available in printed and electronic formats.
- Already be distributed to key personnel before any crisis occurs.
- Include your local unit, Wing or Region crisis communication team and other local, regional and national CAP officials.
- Include local, state and national emergency and community service personnel.
- Include local media contacts.
- Include command/media center contacts.
- Always have a date label for when it was last updated.
- Always be labeled //FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY// due to the sensitive nature of the information. Be sure to warn users not to distribute it beyond the crisis communication team!



- 1) Assign a specific member of your crisis communication team to be in charge of the official contact list.*
- 2) Organize your list by category (team, CAP officials, emergency officials, community service organizations, media, possible command centers, etc.)*
- 3) Be sure to include the pre-assigned roles beside each member of your crisis communication team's contact information.*
- 4) Give printed contact directories to each member of your crisis communication team.*
- 5) Update your list quarterly and other times as appropriate. Double check contact name and information at least quarterly so that when something happens, you are certain you have the correct person at each agency or media outlet.*

The finished contact list, organized by category, becomes part three of your Crisis Communication Plan.

Your Crisis Communication Plan now has the following sections:

- 1) Crisis Communication Team Contact & Role List
- 2) Command/Media Center Locations
- 3) Complete Crisis Contact List



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STEP 4 - ANTICIPATE CRISIS SCENARIOS

You and your team should work together to identify potential crises for your local unit, Wing or Region. See Section III of the CAP Public Affairs Crisis Policy for more information about types of crises and ideas for potential scenarios. Think through your potentials carefully and write out at least three that might affect your area. Be sure to include at least one sudden, unpredictable crisis and one smoldering crisis as outlined in the CAP Public Affairs Crisis Policy.

Your crisis scenarios should:

- Be as detailed as possible.
- Be relevant to your area of the country. (Is your locale subject to floods, wildfires, hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, etc.?)
- Include at least one natural disaster or other sudden scenario.
- Include a missing pilot or missing person scenario, as these are quite common and occasionally become national stories.
- Include at least one smoldering/ongoing/lingering crisis such as impropriety, fraud disclosures, etc.



- 1) Think through what type of natural disaster is most likely to affect your local unit, Wing or Region.*
- 2) Write a brief synopsis of events as if the natural disaster you chose has actually already occurred.*
- 3) Next, write a brief paragraph outlining a missing person or missing pilot search as if it is currently underway. Make your scenario as real and as big as possible.*
- 4) Finally, write out a brief narrative as if someone in your local unit, Wing or Region has caused a smoldering crisis. Obviously, you'll want to be careful to use fictional characters here.*

These crisis scenario paragraphs become part four of your Crisis Communication Plan.

Your Crisis Communication Plan now has the following sections:

- 1) Crisis Communication Team Contact & Role List
- 2) Command/Media Center Locations
- 3) Complete Crisis Contact List
- 4) Crisis Scenarios



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STEP 5 - DEVELOP ACTION PLANS FOR YOUR CRISIS SCENARIOS

Anticipating a crisis is only part of true preparedness. It's the careful planning for how to respond that will make the difference. Once you've listed out potential scenarios, it's time to develop an action plan for how to respond in each case.

Your crisis scenarios should:

- Correspond with each of your pre-determined crisis scenarios.
- Include gathering and double-checking the facts.
- Convene the crisis communication team as soon as possible.
- Establish the command/media center as soon as possible.
- Include applicable safety precautions for each situation. (Are you likely to lose electricity, water or phone service? Will people's lives be in danger as you respond?)
- Include pre-written press releases that can be easily adapted when/if the scenario comes to fruition.
- Include a timeline for response activities as appropriate to each scenario.



1) Revisit each of the potential crisis scenarios you outlined in step 4 and answer the following questions for each one:

- *Who is responsible for gathering the initial facts? Who will double-check the facts?*
- *Which of your potential command/media center options is most appropriate for this crisis scenario?*
- *What safety precautions should you consider in the event of such a crisis? Consider safety for all involved (i.e.: CAP personnel, community at large, media, etc.).*
- *What initial press releases will need to be developed so you can respond rapidly to this crisis? Who will write these?*
- *What are the best methods of communication for a situation like this?*
- *What will you do if you lose electricity, water or phone service?*
- *Is there an urgency of time in saving lives? Does one thing need to happen before something else, etc.?*

2) Use the answers to the questions above to formulate a plan of action under each of the scenarios you listed in step 4.

These action plans will be incorporated into step 4 of your Crisis Communication Plan.

Your Crisis Communication Plan now has the following sections:

- 1) Crisis Communication Team Contact & Role List
- 2) Command/Media Center Locations
- 3) Complete Crisis Contact List
- 4) Crisis Scenarios & Action Plans for Response



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STEP 6 - COMPILE A CRISIS KIT

You now have several lists compiled and locations secured. You have clear plans of action for potential crises as well as initial press releases that can be used in each situation. All these lists and resources will be invaluable if/when a crisis strikes. It is important to have them all together in one location at all times. You will also want to compile any other items you can identify that will be helpful or needed during a crisis. Remember, the better prepared you are ahead of time, the easier your job will be when a situation arises. Put all the resources you can in one place, clearly labeled “crisis kit.”

Your crisis kit should include:

- Crisis communication team contact/role list
- Potential command/media centers list
- Complete crisis contact list
- Printed out crisis scenarios & action plans for response
- Pre-written press releases that can be adapted as appropriate
- Complete local unit, Wing or Region member list
- CD with all of the above lists in electronic format
- Physical response necessities such as:
 - Several legal pads
 - Pens
 - Local, city and state maps
 - Press badges
 - Sheets of letterhead
 - Two-way radios
 - Weather gear
 - Laptop computer*
 - Cell phone*
 - GPS-enabled device for navigation*
 - Generator*

**Some items may be too big or costly to be stored for the sole purpose of a crisis kit. If these items are not physically included in the kit, then include specific directions and processes for obtaining them quickly when they are needed.*



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- 1) Assign a member of your crisis communication team to be in charge of maintaining the crisis kit.*
- 2) Review the list above and add any additional items you may need for your particular crisis scenarios.*
- 3) Collect all the items in your list and put them in a safe, secure, easily accessible and well-marked place. Make sure several different members of your team know where the kit is at all times.*
- 4) Compile a content list of items in your crisis kit.*
- 5) This content list becomes part five of your Crisis Communication Plan.*

This content list becomes part five of your Crisis Communication Plan.

Your Crisis Communication Plan is now complete. Simply cut and paste the following sections into one document for your local unit, Wing or Region:

- 1) Crisis Communication Team Contact & Role List
- 2) Command/Media Center Locations
- 3) Complete Crisis Contact List
- 4) Crisis Scenarios & Action Plans for Response
- 5) Crisis Kit Content List



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