

# CRISIS—first statement guidelines for the organization's first public statement

## **Use a single pre-designated spokesman**

Whether it is an in-house PR department spokesman, a hired PR firm, or the organization's president, someone with good communication skills should be the sole voice for damage control to ensure clarity and consistency. Someone who is cool, calm, collected and articulate.

## **What is currently known**

Concisely state what you can confirm at this time:

- The crisis event that occurred (a brief description)
- The approximate time of the day the event occurred

## **Availability of full details not currently available**

Briefly state that full details of the event cannot be provided at this moment as the event is being assessed/investigated

## **What is being done**

The event/situation is being assessed or investigated (and any additional explanation or elaboration).

## **Assurances**

- Of commitment/goal to safety, security of everyone, restoration of services, operations
- Of commitment to providing the most accurate information as quickly as possible as soon as it is available

## **Optional details and confirmations**

State any confirmation of damages or additional information of the crisis event:

- Any knowledge of injuries or fatalities
- Any knowledge of physical, property damage or related complications, interruptions of services, operations

## **Answers to tough questions**

Have a script of answers to anticipated questions, even if you have no real answers: the key is to be apologetic, take responsibility, show sincerity, genuine concern, even embarrassment and "We don't have that information at this time, but we will inform the public as soon as we know."

## **Open arms to media**

Invite media to stay in touch with the organization for further details and confirmation of most accurate facts as they are available. Go beyond that by contacting media with new information as it develops.

## **Next briefing**

State that another briefing will be conducted as soon as possible or at an already established specific time.

SEE TEMPLATE ON NEXT PAGE

# CRISIS—first statement

## The organization's first public statement should read as follows:

This is what we can confirm at this time:

At approximately \_\_\_\_\_ this morning/afternoon/evening, we experienced:

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At this point we cannot provide you with the full details because members of our team are continuing to assess the situation. Our primary goal(s) is/are to ensure (the safety of everyone), (the security of the facility), (restoration of services)

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and to provide the most accurate information we can as quickly as possible.

(Optional) We can confirm that (damage has occurred to) or (additional information about the crisis event):

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We have requested assistance from:

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We can confirm \_\_\_\_\_ person(s) have been injured.

At this time there is/are \_\_\_\_\_ known fatality(ies).

We ask members of the media to stay in touch with us to confirm all facts so the public is assured of the most accurate information we can provide. We will conduct another briefing as soon as possible to provide you with more information.

**In the meantime, please bear with us.**

## CRISIS—very brief first news release

A (what happened)\_\_\_\_\_ at (location)\_\_\_\_\_  
involving (who, what)\_\_\_\_\_ occurred today at (time)\_\_.  
The incident is under investigation and more information is forthcoming.

Optional: add a definitive time for the next news conference or release  
of information (new details on the event).