



CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN CHECKLIST: STEPS TO EFFECTIVELY PLAN FOR AN EMERGENCY

For many, emergency communications can be a daunting concept. When we think of emergency communications, it's easy to think of chaos or an uncontrolled environment. But the truth is, it is possible to execute a strong communications plan in a crisis if the right foundation is laid ahead of time. The following checklist highlights some recommendations for developing and executing a well-rounded communications strategy in the face of any disaster scenario.



Perform a General Risk Assessment

- Identify the possible emergency scenarios that your organization could face.
- In the various emergency scenarios, identify which core business functions would be impacted.
- In the event that core business functions are impacted during an emergency, identify which people and resources will be needed to keep them operational.



Establish an Emergency Preparedness Team

- Team members should include at least one from each core business function.
- The team should be chaired by the primary spokesperson or point-of-contact who will be communicating during the crisis.
- Create an emergency contact list of team members, and keep it updated regularly.



Identify Channels for Internal and External Communications

- WEBSITE:** Your website is one the best places to immediately connect with your external audience. Be sure you have a process in place for updating the homepage (especially outside of regular work hours).
- EMAIL NOTIFICATION SYSTEM:** During a crisis, email is still a primary platform for communicating internally and externally. If you are using the [GovDelivery Communications Cloud](#), identify which topics and subscribers would make the most sense to communicate with during an emergency.
- TEXT MESSAGE OR MOBILE APP:** An effective and immediate way to connect with your audience in an emergency is via phone. Consider using the SMS feature in the GovDelivery Communications Cloud or an [Interactive Text Message platform](#) that allows you to communicate in real time.
- SOCIAL MEDIA:** Many organizations turn to social platforms to communicate information in an emergency. Identify which channels make the most sense and why.



Build a Media Relations Strategy

- Identify primary and secondary spokespeople, and make sure they have visibility and access to primary communications channels.
- Make sure spokespeople have training in emergency communications.
- Draft talking points for emergency scenarios to ensure consistent messaging across all platforms.
- Identify the primary media outlets your organization would connect with during an emergency and create necessary media lists.

Prepare Yourself (and Your Team)

- KNOW THAT THINGS WILL CHANGE:** No matter how detailed your communications plan is, know that you may need to pivot your messaging based on new developments.
- REPEAT THE CONSISTENCY MOTTO:** Ingrain the notion of consistency with your team from the beginning. Make sure that when you communicate, the same messages are posted across various channels.
- WORK WITH WHAT YOU'VE GOT:** As communicators, we're always looking for as much information as possible. But often during emergencies, details are scarce. You may need to focus on whatever information you have to hand and communicate something (however small) versus nothing.
- RUN A TEST:** Take some time to do a trial run of an emergency situation. Pick one of the scenarios you've identified, bring key stakeholders to the table, and run through it as though it were happening in real life. You may be surprised at what needs to be improved.

Would you like to learn more about how digital tools can help you connect with your audience during an emergency?

Contact us at info@granicus.com to learn more.