



Crisis Communications Checklist

How to Respond when Disaster Strikes

Some crises are relatively predictable, like annual hurricane season or the risk of wildfires during the heat of the summer. Communities at risk of these disasters typically have well established plans in place to promote public safety and alert residents ahead of time. However, many crises aren't predictable and can catch even the most organized government agencies off guard. Earthquakes, chemical spills, train derailments, infrastructure failures such as bridge collapses, and local disease outbreaks all spring to mind. In these cases, having a detailed plan isn't always an option.

That's why we've created quick-reference checklist to help you keep your community safe, informed, and away from dangerous areas when a crisis strikes.

Assess

Take stock of the situation. What are the facts? Where is the most immediate risk to public safety? How can you disseminate information quickly and clearly?

Use Resources

Take advantage of existing resources, such as emergency alerts. Send a clear and concise message to all mobile phones within the affected and surrounding area in order to reach the widest possible audience with critical, time-sensitive information.

Consider

In an unexpected crisis, timing is critical. Are there areas of town that were hardest hit and should be avoided? Are disaster response crews on the way? Is there an evacuation order in effect? Are there any skills or supplies – such as first aid, bottled water, or blankets – needed on the scene? Consider the immediate information that people in affected or at-risk areas should know, and start there.

Communicate

Designate staff members who will communicate with first-responders, community outreach teams, or public health experts (depending on the specific circumstances), as well as staff who will communicate with members of the public.

Be Flexible

Emergencies require agility, problem solving skills, and quick thinking in order to respond effectively. Remember, no two crisis situations are ever the same. Responses won't be either.

Regroup and Refine

Once the immediate danger has passed, connect with your team and other key stakeholders to discuss what worked well, where improvements could be made, and how to apply these lessons to the next crisis.

Remember

As a government worker, you are dedicated to serving your community. Often, that means doing the best you can with the information and tools you have available. While you can't predict every possible crisis scenario, you can learn from past experiences and continue to educate yourself to respond to future incidents. For a more thorough guide that can help you plan for the next crisis, download our [Communications During Crisis ebook](#) today.