

CRISIS Plan for DISTRICT 5790

Statement of Adoption:

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Revision History
Version 1.0

Version 1.0 This is the initial version dated January 4, 2011 produced by a District 5790 Crisis Committee made up of PR Chair Doug Newsom, DG Paul Lucas, DGE Sharron Miles, PRID Don Mebus, AG David Boyll, Disaster Chair Clint Ishmael.

Crisis Plan for Rotary District 5790

Overview and Background

This is a crisis plan specifically for this District, and the first call in a crisis should be to the DG's office.

Although Rotary International has a Media Crisis Handbook [515-EN—(507)], it seems prudent for a district the size of 5790 and covering such a large area to have a plan with more specific directions. Many crises do not get the attention of news media, but that is highly unlikely with the technology available.

When news media are involved, and, in fact, may initiate the crisis, it is comforting to know that Rotary Public Relations and Media Relations staff members are available to assist in helping to develop an initial position statement and give last minute media coaching. (Contact 847.866.3245 or 847.866.3237.)

The problem with long-distance help in today's 24/7 instant global communications is that a crisis calls for immediate action.

What's at risk? In the District's situation, it is probably in these areas:

- special events—safety, crowd management, food & beverages
- communication—libel, slander, invasion of privacy—including photographs, copyright violations for content, slogans, illustrations, logos, trademarks and such.
- youths— transportation of, accusations of improper conduct, photographs of
- food—handling/serving
- international projects—including culture and laws of the country including health protection, injury or death evacuation, etc.

- contracts
- financial accountability and transparency
- protection of use of Rotary name and emblems
- response to local disasters
- lawsuits that might be filed against clubs.

[Rotary Guidelines for these and many others are available with annual updates to Districts and Clubs from Risk Management (insurance@rotary.org).]

Pre-Crisis Planning

Crisis Plan Guidelines should include:

1) Notification of crisis or potential:

District Governor and Communication Officer; Club President and Communication Officer to reach members; others determined by crisis situation such as emergency respondents, victims, etc.

Spokesperson(s) at the District Level, at the Club Level

2) Development of message statement, strategy: consistency being critical

3) Awareness of changing aspects of news media and consequences:

- A single news medium's reporter—using lights, camera, microphone—often gathers information and illustrations to edit and develop stories for many outlets such as the medium's website as well as to distribute different versions through traditional print and broadcast media (legacy media);

- a term “mashed up” or “mashed media” means the ability to integrate and remix all types of digital content—data, audio and illustrations from any web source such bloggers, social media or any others;
- citizen journalists, not trained as reporters or editors, are often the first to capture and put online visual, audio and text from the site of a crisis.

4) Knowledge of when additional Financial, Legal and Risk Management counsel is needed.

5) Electronic storage of digital photos in high density resolution (300dpi) of all district officers and club presidents—identified head shots of subjects in business attire and bios (250 words) with contact information.

Pre-Crisis Planning Points to Remember

Step One

Appoint a crisis response/management team, members with these areas of expertise:

- a. District insurance coverage information, and risk assessment experience.
- b. District disaster plan knowledge and experience—local as well as projects at home and abroad. (Not all crises result in physical disasters, but that always is possible.)
- c. Legal experience especially in areas of privacy, copyright, personal injury and youth supervision.
- d. Financial knowledge of the district and also expenditures that may be paid to others inside and outside the district.

- e. Public relations expertise in planning, executing and evaluating as well as media training

These areas cover public welfare, fiduciary, legal and social responsibility.

Step Two

- Meet with the team initially to go over areas of concern in different types of crisis and relationship to clubs in district.
- Designate District Governor for primary notification and a second in command, DG Elect.
- Prepare a handbook for each of the team members to which they may add supplementary information as needed. Be aware that the handbook may be made public so at least copyright it.

When a Potential for a Crisis or a Crisis Occurs:

In Rotary, it is likely that one of two kinds of events will occur:

- 1) One that is contained within the organization only.
- 2) One that occurs on property being used by Rotarians.

Potential Crises allow for notification of the Crisis Response Management Team.

The first decision is what to say and when. The Crisis Response Team has time to consider their options. It is better to be upfront with something if there is anticipation that it is likely to be

disclosed. If the potential crisis is especially significant, a determination should be made of whether or not Rotary International needs to be advised. That is probably a very exceptional situation, and most likely something of international impact.

[If the situation is likely to grow beyond the expertise of the district team, get others from Rotary with public relations experience to help. Remembering that all of these are volunteers with regular jobs to do, it may be advisable to call on a local public relations firm for help. Since timing is critical, it is best to have some contacts in mind through the Rotary PR members as soon as an event is anticipated.]

As the crisis develops, two decisions have to be made by the Crisis Management Team: 1) selecting a manager— someone in charge of the situation and 2) designating a public relations person to handle the communication aspects. These two have to work together as partners.

If an immediate alert within Rotary is necessary, you need to have the mobile numbers of at least two people with access to members' mobile numbers and email addresses. Sending a text message is quicker and most likely to command immediate attention. In many crisis situations, though, the first loss is power, so be sure to have back-up plans. Never depend entirely on having access to stored information. Always have hard copy of all critical information available. (This does involve periodic updating with new, dated, information in hard copy.)

Nonprofit organizations without a local executive management structure have a serious problem responding to a flood of inquiries from multiple sources. Plan for that.

Depending on the type of crisis, such as at a Rotary event, you could be dealing with area emergency personnel from responders such as police, fire, ambulances and hospitals as well as media on site and online. Assign experienced members to help handle these to keep in touch with each other and with the public relations person in charge of the crisis so the message is consistent and records kept of who was told what and when.

Also, in the case of Rotary events, it is likely that you will be working with the management of the property where the event is being held. In that case, you need Rotary's crisis management representative and the crisis public relations person to be working closely with that property's management and public relations.

Rotary's job in a crisis is reputation management, and our 4-way test goes a long way. Transparency is important, but full and timely disclosure in some cases can create both legal and public opinion issues. Nevertheless, people who are not members of the media will be there with electronic devices of all sorts that can transmit sound and video instantly.

Monitoring and Responding is a Technological Consideration

Inquiries will come in from members, people who find out about the crisis, people affected by the crisis, or think they may be and news media—including bloggers, citizen journalists, talk show hosts, etc.

These inquiries may be electronic messages on any or all of the media, probably social media first. That is why the social media need to be monitored by the district in an ongoing basis.

Responding to all inquiries involving the crisis

1. Maintain close contact with all members of media (bloggers, social and legacy). More often than not they will be able to tell you things you don't already know. This helps stem the flow of false information.

2. Keep a log of all facts given out, with times they were released. This avoids duplication and conflicting reports, if new developments should change facts.

3. Do not release names especially of victims of injuries until you know for a fact that the families involved have been notified. Tell the inquirers that the name of the victim will be made available as soon as the next of kin has been told of the mishap. They won't be able to get it from health providers because of HIPPA.

4. When it is necessary to confirm a fact already generally known, be sure confirmation is limited only to definite information that will not change. For example, if firefighters carry a victim away in a body bag and a media reporter (credentialed or self-appointed) sees it, say only that one body has been recovered. Do not say that you "don't know how many are dead." Never speculate as to the cause of accidents, amount of damage, responsibility, and so on.

In other words, say no more than to confirm what is already known, and yet give the inquirer the assurance Rotary will give all the assistance it possibly can. As facts that won't be harmful become known, clear them and give them to inquirers, which is why to need to keep track of who called or sent a message. In dealing with victims, their families or adversaries, the tone of your response is as important, sometimes more, than the words.

Dealing with News Media During Physical Emergencies

In meetings with reporters at the scene of emergencies, several things should be remembered. The public is represented by news media, and news media have a recognized right to information that may vitally concern the community any victims, their friends and families. The best way to prevent the spread of false rumors and

misinformation is through issuance of factual information. At the same time, Rotary must guard its own interests and insist on relaying factual information only in an orderly, controlled manner.

Remember

1. Speed in reply to a query is all-important. All reporters have deadlines to meet, besides that observers will send them information if you don't.
2. Remain calm and objective. If reporters get snappy, chances are it's because they are under considerably more pressure at the moment than you. Try to cooperate to the extent possible.
3. If you don't know the answer, say you don't know, but will attempt to get it for the reporters. Do not speculate.
4. Eliminate obstacles wherever possible. Most reporters agree that the more obstacles they find in their way, the harder they will work to ferret out the real story—from any source possible. They will almost always use something they have uncovered.
5. Many reporters are handling the story for multi-media: online, print, radio, television and interactive (social) media. The reporter will determine which parts of the content collected (visual, audio, data) goes where and in what context.

Responding to a Crisis Points to Remember

Step One

- Gather as many facts as possible on the situation.
- Determine who needs to be told, what and when.
- Prepare a statement.
- Arrange for media monitoring to gather additional information.

- Arrange for handling responses to inquiries from all sources.

Step Two

- On-site coverage by traditional media and citizens with electronic equipment is going to occur. Be prepared to accommodate all.
- Maintain control of the information released, and, when you can, the conditions under which it is presented.
- If news conferences become necessary, give handouts of information and be sure it is posted on the District's website immediately. Watch background of the presentation, making it as neutral as possible.
- Remain calm and be cooperative. Don't make getting information an obstacle course. That makes coverage a challenge and you lose control.

Recovering from a Crisis

Assess the damage.

To Rotary's reputation, with each public involved.

Financial costs—direct and indirect, i.e. paid by insurance.

Hold a post-crisis meeting with the crisis team.

How could the crisis have been avoided?

What policies or practices might have caused or contributed to the crisis?

What policies or practices need to be put in place to prevent or arrest another similar crisis?

What went right, crisis plans/procedures that worked?

What went wrong, possible reasons?

How to adjust the crisis plan if necessary.

Survey research may be called for feedback on the view from different groups involved and those affected.

Prioritize goals to recover in all areas. Develop tactics and techniques for reaching those goals and plan for research to find out from the perspective of others of what worked and what didn't in the recovery process

Recovering from a Crisis Points to Remember

Step One

- Assess the damage.
- Evaluate the causes or contributing factors.
- Review the crisis plan and make changes where necessary.
- Change policies/procedures that might have been contributing factors to the crisis itself or to the handling of the crisis.
- Send a summary assessment to all clubs in the district.

Step Two

- Communicate changes to all involved in implementing the changes with explanations of why the changes are important.
- Plan for a presentation of crisis management at appropriate venues such as leadership preparation, meetings with club presidents, etc.