An Overview and Framework for Crisis Communication

BURTONTRENT
PUBLIC AFFAIRS LLC
A professional consulting corporation

An Overview and Framework for Crisis Communication

Since you are here, interested in best practices, you are ahead of 99% of your peers. The failure to adequately plan your communications strategy could spell the perceived difference between an unfortunate turn of events or a failure of leadership/preparedness.

Effective communication of basic yet important information your residents, taxpayers, employees, vendors, stock holders, media need to know to be kept informed and to plan for contingencies is your goal.

Contemplate the "what ifs"!!

An Overview and Framework for Crisis Communication

Basic outline of preparation steps

- Identifying key decision makers -- Go Team

- Establishing communications protocol*

- Inventory of community, law enforcement, shareholder and media contacts

- Designation of communications methodology and information repository

An Overview and Framework for Crisis Communication

Whether a local government or authority, family business or publicly owned multinational corporation, the methods are the same.

- *Identify* the key individuals in the decision making capacity (the "Go Team") who need to be involved. Assemble them and clearly define roles and responsibilities.

- *Establish* the "communications protocol" to ensure that there is a singular point of contact (and a backup) for the media and the public, as well as other officials (State or federal OEM personnel, FEMA, law enforcement). It must be established that no one other than the designated person(s) speak in the capacity of a representative of the municipality/company/association.

BURTON TRENT
PUBLIC AFFAIRS LLC
A professional consulting corporation

An Overview and Framework for Crisis Communication

Whether a local government or authority, family business or publicly owned multinational corporation, the methods are the same.

- *Inventory* all the potential communications vehicles available and advertise the municipality/company/association's use of these vehicles for information about a possible event. Social media, global connect telephone calls, website, and blast emails are all potential communications vehicles in use today.

- *Designate*, if necessary, a primary command center (and alternate location), telecommunications tools (hotline, website, social media) to use for the "Go Team" to coordinate information needed to make decisions and communicate to the various audiences.

An Overview and Framework for Crisis Communication

Once the communications protocol is established and all the methods of communication are identified, revisit the plan on regular intervals to ensure that the information and individuals are up to date.

Initiate contact with the media and important community leaders (clergy, association leadership, other elected officials, labor management, civic groups, etc.) to develop relationships if none exist. Engaging these individuals in the absence of an emergency event will establish credibility needed for when a real need exists.

Keep up to date contact information for these targeted audiences in the communications protocol. In fact, regularly test the methods that will be used.

An Overview and Framework for Crisis Communication

In the event of an emergency….

- What constitutes as an emergency is undefinable. What can be defined is what information is available and appropriate for sharing and if sharing is needed.

- Once it is determined the "event" is serious enough, and when preliminary information about an "event" is known, it is wise to share the very basic information quickly before misinformation begins to spread. The effects of misinformation can add to an already negative situation.

- Preliminary planning the basic communication protocols can help prevent misinformation, confusion and the appearance of less than competent leadership.

An Overview and Framework for Crisis Communication

In summary:

- Failure to plan is planning to fail.

- Open channels of communication demonstrate credibility, authority and leadership.

- Preventing the spread of misinformation is critical to maintaining control of the situation.

- Learn from other's mistakes...not your own!!

BURTON TRENT
PUBLIC AFFAIRS LLC
A professional consulting corporation

An Overview and Framework for Crisis Communication

Thank you for listening!