

CRISIS READY: A GUIDE FOR PUBLIC LEADERS

Prepared By:

CrisisRisk Services



**LGRMS
RISK CONTROL
ACCG | GMA**





You are going to have a crisis tomorrow. Are you ready? How do you know? Are you sure?

The public entity sector has experienced an increase in crisis events. Yet most people don't think about a crisis event until it occurs. We saw in the Texas floods this summer how quickly events can escalate, and how the impacts are tragic and personal. Along with natural disasters, violence has become a concern nationally.

However, it is not always the underlying situation that causes the crisis event; rather it may be the way public officials respond and communicate about what occurred. Crisis is defined by a loss of control.[™] Many public officials are not equipped to manage "business unusual."

When facing issues that create upheaval, government leadership looks for experienced-based assistance to help restore control. Let's learn the lingo for crisis management.

Topics Covered

- 01. Protecting Critical Assets**
- 02. Understanding Critical Events**
- 03. Human Impacts and Coordination**
- 04. Crisis Communications**
- 05. Managing a Crisis**
- 06. Key Takeaways**
- 07. Resources and Access**



01

Protecting Critical Assets

Protecting critical assets is the responsibility of every government organization. Critical assets include:

- People
- Brand and reputation
- Finances
- Key relationships
- Physical infrastructure

Threats

A threat is any person or thing that has the potential to harm one of those critical assets.

Emergencies

An emergency is a situation or event that requires an immediate life-safety response to prevent harm to critical assets.

Critical Events

A critical event is when the damage anticipated by a threat occurs, resulting in harm to your critical assets.

”

All public officials should be ready to face a crisis event.



02

Understanding Critical Events

A critical event is when the damage anticipated by a threat occurs, resulting in harm to your critical assets. Examples include:

- A tornado causes damage to property.
- A disgruntled employee shoots his boss.
- A bad actor holds your computer system for ransom.
- A police officer uses excessive force.
- A child is sexually abused.
- Fraud is perpetrated.

A critical event is “business unusual” for leadership. Critical events are complex, strategic, emotional events, defined by severity of harm and a wide array of interested people with varying—and often competing—agendas and roles. Assessing the strategic impacts that such an event will have on stakeholders is critical.

Crisis management services are needed 24x7x365 to guide you along the way. How people respond in the first seconds and minutes after a critical event will make the difference between an emergency, a crisis and consequences that can last forever.

A critical event can evolve to a crisis. A crisis is a state of being, characterized by:

- 1) Loss of control; and
- 2) Extensive negative stakeholder impact and reaction.

A crisis

- Is unpredictable.
- Thrives on lack of structure.
- Creates intense scrutiny of brand and reputation.
- Escalates consequences rapidly.
- Causes command and control to be lost.
- Allows hostile agents to be present.
- Forces leadership into a reactionary mode.

Human Impacts and Coordination

The #1 priority in crisis response is people. Human impact includes the stresses, negative emotions and tensions that critical events create for people. In the aftermath of a critical event, victims and other stakeholders require immediate support to mitigate impacts.

The Crisis ABCs™

How do you know when an event will become a crisis? While crisis events have varying causes and intensities, they have two things in common:

1. They elicit negative emotional reactions from people such as **ANGER**, **BLAME** and **CONCERN**.
2. Those reactions are extensive.



Reactions and Extent

Utilize the Crisis ABCs™ to consider whether an Event or Circumstance is or has potential to become a crisis.

Are people **ANGRY**? ♦ Is **BLAME** being cast? ♦ Are people **CONCERNED**?

Events/Circumstances that cause these **REACTIONS** tend to have a greater risk of becoming a Crisis.

Evaluate the **EXTENT** for **ANGER**, **BLAME**, and **CONCERN**. The more people it reaches, the faster the news spreads; and the more significant the setting, the more likely to become a Crisis.

ANGER

Outrageous, Offensive, Shameful, Beyond Belief, Unethical

SPREAD

The number of people who are aware or could become aware, reach

BLAME

Liability, Responsibility, Culpability, Unlawful, Intentional

SPEED

The increase in velocity or rate of consequences arising from the Circumstance

CONCERN

Panic, Alarm, Fear, Terror, Dread, Anxiety, Horror, Worry

SETTING

The platforms where communications are occurring and the credibility of those commenting

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

After a critical event, leadership must focus on communications. Crisis communication priorities are:

- Identification of stakeholders and their issues
- Engagement of stakeholders
- Scripted messaging
- Training the spokesperson
- Management of the media



Media in Peace Time

On a day-to-day basis, media covers many important issues and plays a role in:

- Shaping public opinion
- Promoting awareness of educational issues and programs
- Facilitating community engagement
- Highlighting successes and achievements of employees, residents and students



Media outlets can be your public relations partners. However, in the aftermath of an event that harms your critical assets, communications must shift from public relations to crisis communications to prevent further harm to your critical assets—people, brand, reputation, finances, etc. A government must communicate directly with stakeholders, and the media is just one means of disseminating this information.



MANAGING A CRISIS

How you manage a crisis determines how your community is able to move forward after the incident. In addition to developing messages, it is important to engage with your most important stakeholders during a crisis.

- Stakeholder groups require direct targeted information delivered through dedicated pre-identified distribution channels. Each stakeholder group will have questions and concerns, and they will differ.

- Much of what is learned initially in a critical event may prove to be wrong. Communications must be based upon fact. Better to be late with a message than wrong.
- While there will be limitations on what can be said about what occurred, specific individuals and actions taken, there is helpful information that can be provided, and should be provided.

There are four stages of crisis: **BEFORE, IMMINENT, DURING, and AFTER**. We have coordinated with CrisisRisk Strategies to provide support to our government entities. These include the tools services in areas listed below:



Conclusion and Key Takeaways

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM CRISIS EVENTS

- The world is constantly changing. So are the threats.
- Critical events don't take place at convenient times. You need to know how to prepare a response, regardless of when.
- Critical events in the workplace environment often result in a loss of employees and a loss of attraction of stakeholders.
- Immediate response and triage dramatically improve the outcomes.
- There are tools and services available for every time frame – **BEFORE, IMMINENT, DURING and AFTER** – that can make a difference in:
 - Prevention, response and recovery
 - Frequency and severity reduction
 - Resources that help people, if brought forward quickly, will mitigate harm to people, brand and reputation.
 - The immediate investigation and preservation of evidence is critical to the future defense.
 - Media management and crisis communications that address all critical stakeholders with the right messaging at the right time through the right medium are critical.
 - You can make a difference!

For inquiries, use of CrisisRisk Services, or assistance with managing a crisis, please reach out to Dan Beck at dbeck@lgrms.com.

RESOURCES AND ACCESS

LGRMS members are local governments and their employees in Georgia that participate in the Local Government Risk Management Services (LGRMS) program, which is a joint program of the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) and the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG). These resources are available to LGRMS members:

01. Certified CrisisCoordinator™ e-learning Training

- 12 courses will train designated government employees to Recognize emerging crisis warning signs and circumstances, Identify the actions that need to be taken to address them, and Alert leadership.
- Courses include learning objectives, animated case studies, interactive decision questions and quizzes.
- The training takes approximately 3.5 hours to complete the program.
- To become certified as a CrisisCoordinator, all courses and quizzes must be successfully completed.
- To register go to <http://crisiscoordinator.talentlms.com/> and click on SIGNUP on the upper right of the page to register and get started. For more information on this program, see below the communication we distribute earlier.

02. Virtual Crisis Response Advisor™ (VCRA™)

The **VCRA** is an automated tool to facilitate **DECISIONS, ACTIONS, and WORDS** needed in every crisis stage with control checklists, documents and issue-specific content.

The **VCRA** provides real-time detailed guidance to management to avoid loss of control **BEFORE** a crisis happens, to mitigate or prevent an **IMMINENT** crisis, to restore control **DURING** a crisis and to take appropriate actions **AFTER** a crisis to address recovery and impacts. Immediate guidance is provided after leadership answers just two short questions. In the **BEFORE** stage, this tool will help your organization create a Crisis Response Plan for any future event.

RESOURCES AND ACCESS

03. CRISIS ADVISORY SERVICES

The areas CrisisRisk may offer guidance on include:

- Crisis Communications
- Decision Making
- Legal/Investigation/Evidence Preservation – Attorney Client Privilege
- Psychological First Aid/Counseling
- Reputation and Brand Protection
- Social Media/Intelligence Monitoring
- Triaging Impacts and Stakeholder Needs
- Victim Support and Coordination

For inquiries, use of CrisisRisk services, or assistance with managing a crisis, please reach out to Dan Beck at dbeck@lgrms.com.



LGRMS
RISK CONTROL
ACCG | GMA