Crisis Communications For the Spokesperson Cheat Sheet

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DO

▪ Pre-identify an individual or team that will be responsible for crisis communications. Seek out training so they understand the responsibilities associated with the receipt, compilation, and dissemination of communications.
▪ Exercise judgment and due diligence when selecting a spokesperson. You need a good communicator who is clear and well spoken; an individual that can deliver a message with authority and credibility. Ideally someone in the organization who has established a level of trust among stakeholders. In many cases this will be someone in a leadership position.
▪ Educate personnel so they are aware who is authorized and designated to speak on behalf of the organization, or to the media during a crisis.
▪ Incorporate crisis communication into Emergency Preparedness plans and practice drafting and delivering communications during drills.
▪ Pre-plan and draft 'holding messages' for possible instances resulting from known or identified risks (e.g., a service interruption due to inclement weather or power failure) that can be adapted at time of crisis.
▪ Be honest and transparent. Keep trust front and foremost in communications.
▪ Express sympathy and empathize in a genuine manner.
▪ Give credit and express gratitude when appropriate.
▪ Keep communications concise and as brief as possible. Stick to the facts.
▪ Invest time to craft the right message for the audience, using the most appropriate communication channel and media format.
▪ Be diligent when it comes to content. Research and validate sources of information.
▪ Proof communications. Check the facts and ensure you are sharing the most current information.
▪ Make sure the content or key messages of different communications are aligned with each other.
▪ Draft responses to anticipated questions for Q&A. If you do not know the answer to something, say so.

DON'T

▪ Don't avoid the media, but rather manage communications in a timely manner and in a controlled briefing environment.
▪ Don't lie or soften the message.
▪ Don't allude to or speculate as to motives or causes for incident.
▪ Don't accept liability prematurely or without legal counsel.
▪ Don't point the finger or assign blame.
▪ Don't promise resolution, as it may not be possible.
▪ Don't 'wing it'.
▪ Don't try to "spin" an answer, it will unravel and could have greater negative consequences.
▪ Don't allow information overflow or provide more details than is necessary.
▪ Don't respond to questions from reporters outside of formal, scheduled briefings.
▪ Don't underestimate the power of public opinion.
▪ Don't release the names or circumstances surrounding injuries or casualties.
▪ Don't prioritize the company's monetary damage over the well-being and safety of human lives.
▪ Don't estimate the monetary impact of any damage.

Remember

TELL THE TRUTH
TELL IT FIRST
TELL IT OFTEN
TRAIN YOUR COMMUNICATORS

Source: https://www.readyrating.org/Resource-Center/All-Resources/crisis-communications-dos-dont-for-the-spokesperson
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Published 15th November, 2018.
Last updated 15th November, 2018.

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