

Crisis Management Tips

These tips focus on response to an emergency by your organization when you are its leader. How do you know you have an emergency? Do you have a major problem? Is no one telling you how to do your job? Is everyone looking toward you for a magic solution? If so, rest assured you may be dealing with an emergency.

Tip 1

Don't make the emergency worse. Not making the situation worse may be the best you can do. Don't let people take foolish chances and become part of the problem.

Tip 2

Control the information flow. Generally, there is too much information, rather than too little. Reliable filters must be established. Equally important is the formulation of a plan to pass information to others quickly. Others need to have an overview of what you are doing in order to support the logistics efforts needed to bring in additional resources.

Tip 3

Delegate! You can't possibly deal with everything, so try to identify coherent aspects of the problem to give to someone else. Insist on feedback, including a review and summary of actions taken and results.

Tip 4

Refuse to be drawn into trivia. Many people will constantly demand that you personally deal with mundane problems. Don't do it! Keep your focus on major issues and refuse to deal with smaller issues.

Tip 5

Be sensitive to other people. You may feel you're dealing with all that one person can handle and that everyone should understand your problems, state of mind, and fatigue and act accordingly. Some people will, but some won't. Also, rivalries on staffs will surface and people will act irrationally. Be prepared to deal with these facts of human nature and don't let them frustrate you.

Tip 6

Insist that subordinates get adequate rest. Many won't otherwise, and you will be left with people who perform poorly because of exhaustion. This rule also applies to yourself.

Tip 7

Bring organizations and people together often to disseminate information and exchange views. People and organizations react negatively or irrationally when there is a dearth of information. Counter this by scheduled meetings. Here and in everyday management, insist on economy of communications.

Tip 8

In the face of uncertainty, remember to select the option that leaves the greatest freedom for subsequent actions. You won't have enough information available in many cases to be comfortable with your decision. Face the need for possible future reversals and act to minimize their impact.

Tip 9

Remember accountability. Litigation may follow! Keep a good audit trail of actions, conditions, and decisions to facilitate your defense should it be necessary. Establish from the outset a systematic effort to gather and store data to assist you in the future.

Tip 10

Do not let individuals or organizations abdicate their responsibilities. Insist they carry out their responsibilities.

Tip 11

Establish relationships with other organizations and determine their capabilities, limitations, and lines of communications well in advance. A time of crisis is not time to get to know people.

Tip 12

Critically re-examine assumptions. Here and in everyday management, most of our decisions are based on assumptions. Some of these are in the forefront of our thought processes — many are not. Critical reviews and updates of all assumptions going into the decision making process are vital.

Tip 13

Return to normal operations as soon as possible. In the meantime, appoint a responsible staff officer whose only job is to supervise normal day to day operations.

Assigning clear roles

In developing a crisis plan, the first step is to assign specific roles to individual staff members which they will take on if an emergency occurs. Personnel should be designated

- to go to the hospital or emergency medical site where injured students have been taken.
- to answer the telephones.
- to inform administrators about the emergency and how it is being dealt with.
- to work with the media.
- to oversee transportation needs.
- to assist in identifying students and adults who may be injured.
- to review students and personnel records and to notify parents and spouses.

Administrators should describe in writing what needs to be done and who is responsible for each task.

Also keep on hand a list of who has keys and a floor plan that shows room numbers and the locations of windows, doors, storerooms, restrooms, and offices.

Crisis Management

External		
Threat	Action	Site Plan
Disturbance on school ground	Keep students inside.	
	Delay dismissal.	
	Go to designated areas.	
	Stay out of hallways.	
Intruder on school grounds with weapon	Keep students inside.	
	Delay dismissal.	
	Go to designated areas.	
	Stay out of hallways.	
Shots fired at students on grounds □ Civil Defense earthquake, air crash □ Civil Defense/weather	Drop to the ground.	
	Crawl to building.	
	Get students outside away from buildings.	
Internal		
Threat	Action	Site Plan
Unauthorized individual(s) in building	Give crisis signal.	
	Notify staff to remain in room – no admittance to halls.	
	Student Coordinator goes to office to help	
Intruder in the building with weapon	Give crisis signal.	
	Notify staff to remain in rooms – no admittance to halls.	
	Student Coordinator goes to office to help.	
Student/adult with disruption or assaultive behavior	Give crisis signal.	
	Notify staff.	
	Student & Teacher Coordinator go to office.	
	Evacuate some sections.	
Hostage situation	Give crisis signal.	
	Notify staff.	
	Student & Teacher Coordinator go to office.	
	Evacuate some sections.	
Bomb threat	Evacuate building only as directed by police.	
	Fire alarm may activate bomb. Use intercom or green folder signal.	
	Extended time out of building (cold weather) – make arrangements with close, large facility to house students.	
Explosion	Fire drill to get students out of building.	
	Extended time out of building (cold weather) – make arrangements with close, large facility to house students.	