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# GUIDELINES FOR CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

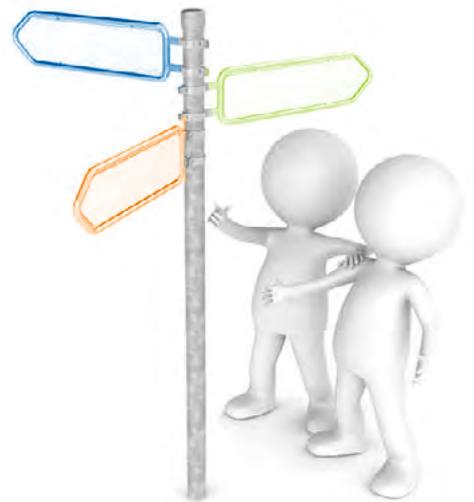
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# GUIDELINES FOR CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

On 26 June, a Workshop dedicated to crisis communications was organised by FORATOM Communications task Force. Participants focused on case studies from three different perspectives: an operator, a research centre and industry associations. Another session entitled: Learning from other industries featured insight and practical experience from the airline industry (Brussels Airlines) and a specialised consultancy (Resosens). As a deliverable from the Workshop, FORATOM published this booklet, which draws up a list of crisis communications guidelines and tips identified during the Workshop. It is not meant to be comprehensive, but is designed to be primarily a tool for nuclear communications professionals.



# DO'S TO BE PREPARED TO MANAGE A CRISIS



## MANAGEMENT

### *Crisis strategy*

- Positive image of the company based on stakeholder knowledge and regular information tools including to all media
- Gain public confidence thanks to a “social license to operate”
- Be connected with local and national authorities
- Create a crisis communications strategy manual
- Establish Communications strategy flowcharts
- Define the role-mission-function of each member of the crisis team
- Skills required in a crisis management team: CEO-engineering-HR-legal-finance-communications
- Have several crisis managers and spokespeople: both are full time jobs during a crisis
- Rewiew the crisis plan consistently with external people
- Do not underestimate people’s capacity to panic – not just the public, but people within the organization too

### *Crisis team*

- Credible and reliable management team during a crisis: 5-6 experts who already know each other
- Reliable communications director recognized as a member of the Executive Board
- Reliable daily connected communications officer
- Train spokespeople
- Define rights and duties for every spokesperson
- Make your employees aware of their role and credibility during a crisis (e.g. internal “ambassadors” active on social media)

## *Crisis training*

- Internal training (coordination training between corporate and local level): ideally once a month
- Local training coordination between sites and local authorities
- Safety training: twice/year
- Security training: twice/year
- External training planned with authorities
- Make sure key people are media-trained within a crisis context (crisis exercises)

## **ORGANIZATION**

### *Flowcharts*

#### Defining

- Crisis criteria and level of risk
- Legal requirements internal organization
- Quick decision-making process
- Social media guidelines for employees

### *Feedback*

- From nuclear associations
- From members
- From other industries
- From training sessions

### *3rd party endorsement*

- External experts involvement, like GP's
- Employees involvement seen as "ambassadors"
- Identify potential third party advocates

## **TOOLS**

### *Monitoring*

- Media
- Social media
- Local intelligence
- National intelligence
- EU intelligence
- Public opinion
- Weak signals
- Nuclear associations' information

## *Mapping*

- Internal stakeholder including Trade Unions, local elected employees
- External stakeholder including NGO's, local authorities, national authorities, nuclear associations

## *Arguments and sheets*

Facts and figures

- EU nuclear statements
- National statements
- Technical statements
- Social statements
- Environmental statements
- Economical statements
- Historical statements
- Radiation
- Nuclear accidents: TMI-Chernobyl-Fukushima

Q/A's in a few sentences

## *Templates*

- Internal communication
- External communication
- Press releases templates
- Black web sites

## *Risk classification tools*

- Communication risk scale



# DO'S DURING A CRISIS

## MANAGEMENT

### *Skills*

- Keep calm
- Act as an expert
- Tell the truth and show it
- Be flexible
- Be credible
- Remain within your area of expertise
- Be transparent, even if you don't know what is going on
- Rely on communication experts who'll know how to react
- Take emotions into account
- Behave in exemplary manner
- Manage decision time thanks to the "conference clock" (time schedule for every communications moments)
- Manage time to think further and elaborate a strategy

### *Information*

- Should be given in less than one hour
- Try to be ahead of politicians
- Give simple information and explanation about technical and complex events
- Coordinate with public authorities : share communications strategy in order to deliver the same messages

Internally (facts and figures on a regular basis)

- Corporate governance
- "Ambassadors"
- All employees
- Employee's family in case of an emergency

Externally

- Local and national authorities
- Nuclear associations
- Proponents

## Communications

- Regular press releases
- Press conferences
- Social media
- Answer all media requests with the same arguments; don't give more information or importance to one of them

## ORGANIZATION

- Have a back office
- Have a separate room for crisis and media management
- Beware of time management and stick to ad-hoc meetings to share information
- Share your communications strategy with public authorities and nuclear associations
- Make engineers talk to local decision-makers to popularize technical information

## TOOLS

- Use existing tools: argument sheets, black webs, up-dated data bases
- Press monitoring
- Social media monitoring
- Pre-prepared fact sheets
- Pre-prepared Q/A's with specific questions
- Pre-prepared information mailing list
- Pre-prepared communications mailing list
- Use the crisis Com' manual

# DO'S AFTER A CRISIS



## MANAGEMENT FEEDBACK

### *Evaluate*

- Management skills and expertise
- Crisis management team
- Spokesmen
- Crisis strategy
- Information strategy
- Communication strategy and emergency communications plan

## ORGANIZATIONAL FEEDBACK

### *Evaluate*

- Internal coordination
- 3rd party endorsement effectiveness
- Internal ambassadors' effectiveness
- Weak signal's anticipation
- Training weaknesses

## TOOLS

### *Evaluate*

- Monitoring tools
- Internal stakeholder mapping
- External stakeholder mapping
- Information template
- Communication template
- Communication risk scale

### *Update*

- Facts and figures
- Q/A's

# PITFALLS



## MANAGEMENT

- Beware of information given to authorities
- Beware of the first wording used; crisis can be on delivering information
- Don't be unopened
- Don't be unprepared
- Don't speculate
- Don't be arrogant
- Don't be over confident: "when in doubt, fly out"
- Don't communicate in a hurry
- Don't forget trade unions in internal communications
- Don't be defensive all time
- Don't work alone; be active on professional networks
- Don't walk away from your values and responsibility
- Don't come along with negative messages
- Don't think the nuclear sector stands alone
- Don't pretend you know things better just because you're a scientist
- Don't forget to listen
- Don't forget to look at a global picture
- Don't forget empathy
- Don't forget any of your stakeholders

## ORGANIZATION

- Rethink the role of nuclear association in a communications crisis
- Rethink gathering of information and human resources in a communications crisis
- Rethink the coordination between nuclear associations
- Rethink the added value that could bring in nuclear associations during a crisis
- Added value for association members
- Don't be too innovative during the crisis

# COMMUNICATIONS KEY PRINCIPLES



To put in a nutshell, there is a series of key principles that communicators should stick to when confronted with a crisis. First of all managing a crisis requires a good preparation beforehand. A communicator should be prepared in advance to face the unexpected. To do so, regular crisis exercises should be carried out in order to practice as much as possible and to identify pitfalls.

A crisis communications strategy including the role of every staff member should be defined. Nuclear professionals also have to establish and maintain good relations with external stakeholders including local decision-makers and media in order to become a trusted source of information and create grassroots support for the company.

During a crisis, it is important not to under-estimate a situation and to remain open and transparent. It is also essential to inform external stakeholders as quickly as possible (within one hour) even if the only information available is that investigation is under way. Information has to be based on facts and be as accurate as possible while showing sympathy to victims if there are any and also being aware of any environmental impact. The messages also need to be tailored to the different target groups. Internal communications is crucial and employees have to be kept informed.



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