



Arctic Development
Library

***Crisis Management Within A Political
Environment***

Type of Study: Reference Material

Date of Report: 1995

Author: Canada - Supply Services

Catalogue Number: 9-5-301

1-5-301

Crisis

MANAGEMENT...
WITHIN A
POLITICAL
ENVIRONMENT

MODULE What is Crisis Management?

1

...page 3

MODULE Stages of a Crisis

2

...page 11

MODULE Step-by-Step Guide

3

...page 17

MODULE Crisis Communications

4

...page 29

MODULE Putting it all Together

5

...page 41

This is a production of the

**Crisis Management Division
Environmental Emergencies Branch
Environment Canada**

in partnership with

Environment Canada
National Programs Directorate
Pollution Prevention Directorate
Canadian Wildlife Service
Atmospheric Environment Service
Corporate Administration

Canadian Coast Guard
Rescue & Environmental Response Directorate

Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Habitat Management & Sustainable Development

Public Works and Government Services Canada
Emergency Preparedness Group

Canadian Heritage
National Parks Directorate

Available in Canada through your local
bookseller or by mail from the National
Bookstore, 110 King Street West, Toronto,
Ontario, Canada M5X 1C6

Publication No. 22-150/1-95
ISBN 0-150-15000-1

Produced by
Stonehaven Productions Inc.
1310 Larivière Street
Montreal, Quebec H2L 1 M8
(514) 527-2131

© Minister of Supply and Services, Canada 1995

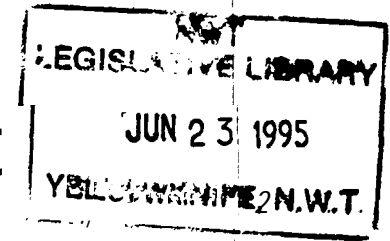
Canada





Within a Political Environment

A self-learning program for federal public service managers.



OBJECTIVE:

This program is intended as an introduction to the emerging field of crisis management. It was produced to help public service managers develop the basic tools and techniques needed to effectively manage crises within a political environment.

The objective of the program is to clarify both the practices and the terminology used in crisis management, and to provide practical guidelines for developing, and activating, crises management plans.

The program combines video and print components; you are encouraged to move from one to the other at your own pace, as time permits.

Throughout the program, you will hear from other senior public service managers who have (to varying degrees) "survived" crises. They will share their experiences with you.

THE COMPONENTS:

There are two... this manual and the videocassette packaged with it. The video is 62 minutes long. It's divided into five modules, which correspond to the five modules in this manual.

Although each component may be used on its own, they are designed to work together. You'll reap the greatest benefit from the program if you move from the video to the manual as suggested below.

CONTENTS:

- **Module 1** presents the concept of *crisis management*, defining it within a political context. It differentiates the three levels of response - emergency response, emergency management and crisis management - and introduces the idea that crises must be planned for.
- **Module 2** examines the life-cycle of a crisis. The Confidence/Control Model, an analytic tool for recognizing and understanding the stages of a crisis, is presented and discussed.
- **Module 3** is a step-by-step guide to crisis management planning. It outlines practical steps to be taken in preparing for and responding to crises.
- **Module 4** covers the complex subject of crisis communications . . . from developing a crisis communications plan, to working with the media.
- **Module 5** brings everything together in a simulated crisis scenario designed to challenge the viewer, and reinforce the principles learned in the first four Modules.

USING THIS PROGRAM:

- STEP 1** ➔ We suggest you start by watching Module 1 of the video, which is 10:09 minutes long. Then, stop the tape and read through Module 1 of this manual, which supports the video.
- STEP 2** ➔ Then go onto Module 2. Again, we suggest that you watch the video before reading the manual. Module 2 of the video is 8:44 minutes long.
- STEP 3** ➔ **Modules 3 and 4 are a little different.** You should read through the manual sections before screening the video. Module 3 of the video is 8:43 minutes long; Module 4 is 13:19 minutes long.
- STEP 4** ➔ The last module is video-driven. A dramatic re-creation of a crisis gives a flavour of how the various components of crisis management and crisis communications come together in the pressure-cooker atmosphere of "the real thing". This final video Module is 21:22 minutes long, and is meant to reinforce the principles learned in the earlier Modules; you may want to screen it a day or two after the others. The print component of Module 5 is intended as reference, and a reminder of the steps involved in managing a crisis. It is presented as a transcript of the video module.

What is Crisis Management?

Many of you may also be asking yourselves “.. and why should I care?” Crises happen all the time. They’re part of life in any large organization, and managing them is part of your job.

What you may be missing out on are the best tools to do that job. When you work through a crisis on an ad-hoc basis, you run unnecessary risks. For instance, if you don’t recognize the stages of a crisis, you may wait too long to act. Without setting up and testing relationships, you may run afoul of other departments or governments. You may lose time getting approvals, or establishing the policies necessary to do the job- time during which operational issues are rapidly unfolding and the media are coming at you with tough questions. If your communications effort isn’t well-organized, the public may get mixed messages, The list goes on.

You may be thinking that with policy and products to deliver, this is not the time to bring in some new management tool. You’re not alone. Most organizations which now have crisis management plans didn’t embark on them until they were shaken by a major event.

The thing to remember is that *crises are inevitable*. And while the word *crisis* conjures up thoughts of natural and human-made disasters, of lives lost and property damaged, most public service managers have to deal with crises that relate more closely to their every-day area of responsibility, eg. the delivery of programs, the application of regulations, and the interpretation of policy. Crisis management is an integral part of every manager’s responsibility. Any department, or any branch of a department, may find itself in a crisis management role.

Fortunately, like any other management challenge, crises *can* be *planned* for, at least in the sense that certain procedures can be agreed upon in advance, and activated once a crisis hits.

This first module lays the groundwork for the concepts and techniques set out in the following four segments. It offers a definition of crisis management within a political context, and looks at three levels of response: emergency response, emergency management, and crisis management. In it, you'll also hear from several senior government managers who've managed or participated in major Canadian crises.

"In government,

an event becomes a crisis when the media, Parliament or a credible or powerful interest group identifies it as such. It may not pose a threat to human life, but it must somehow challenge the public's sense of appropriateness, values, safety, or the integrity of the government."

... Privy Council Office

EMERGENCY RESPONSE, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Many of you have gone through emergency management or media relations training. You may believe you're ready for any crisis headed your way. What you're really equipped for is an emergency.

There are actually three levels of response activity:

- Emergency response;
- Emergency management, and;
- Crisis management.

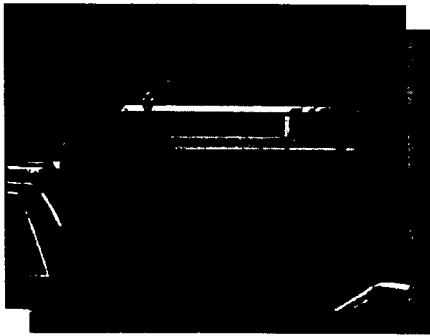
These are not simply escalations in seriousness or liability. Crisis management is a distinct state of operations, aimed at solving a clearly defined problem,

Consider a jail-break, for instance. Granted, there's violence, there's damage, there's a loss of control. But because escapes are expected within the prison system and can be planned for, a jail-break is usually considered an emergency event. On the other hand, if the incident reveals some major flaw in policy or practice, then it has the potential to become a crisis.

Some of you may not agree with that distinction. But remember, we're looking at crisis management/n *a political* context. Scores of people are equipped to deal with events that threaten human life or the environment.

A crisis challenges the public's sense of values, safety, and - most importantly- the integrity of government. Crisis management calls for exceptional information management and inter-agency relations. And crisis resolution means maintaining or restoring the public's confidence in government's *control* of an event.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE:



The Bus, 1989

Terrorist holds a busload of hostages on Parliament Hill.

Epidemic, 1991

A deadly strain of meningococcal virus hits Eastern Canada, killing 50% of its victims.



Derailment, 1992

A chemical spill forces the townspeople of Oakville, Manitoba, to flee their homes over Christmas.



Dramatic as these events were, they were all handled at the emergency response level. Emergency response deals with the immediate problem.

Using the above examples, that means capturing the terrorist, vaccinating potential victims, and cleaning up the spill... actions dealing primarily with the technical, scientific and logistical responses required to solve the problem. Normally, events that can be handled by emergency response actions alone have a short timeframe and are not cluttered with complicated institutional or political consequences.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:

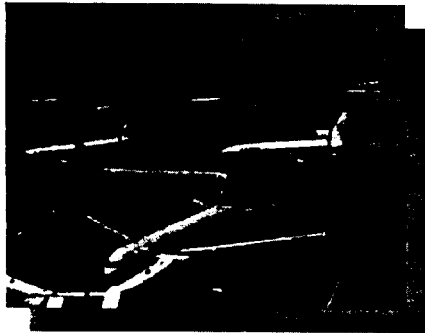
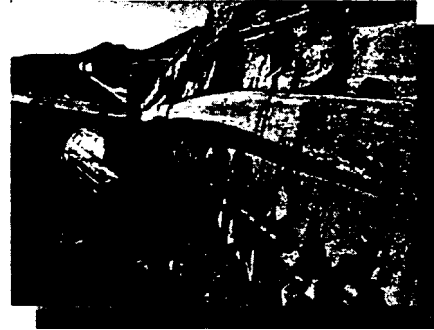


Tenyo Maru, 1992

Foreign ships collide, spilling oil in the North Pacific and endangering Canadian and U.S. coastlines .

Los Angeles, 1994

Devastating earthquake leaves thousands homeless.



Lester B. Pearson

International Airport, 1994

Ruptured fuel line cripples Canada's largest airport.



All three of these were emergencies, and so, required emergency response actions to deal with the problem at hand. But... they also required management intervention at a more complex level. The questions that may arise here are: who's in charge?, who'll pay?, and who's at fault? These are the consequences of a problem, and call for exceptional *emergency management*.

The shipping accident, for example, raised questions of international liability . . . The earthquake required large-scale relief efforts, reconstruction, and compensation. . . And the airport incident involved several private contractors on federal land-again, who's in charge?, who'll pay?, who's at fault?... and, is there any long term liability?

CRISIS MANAGEMENT:



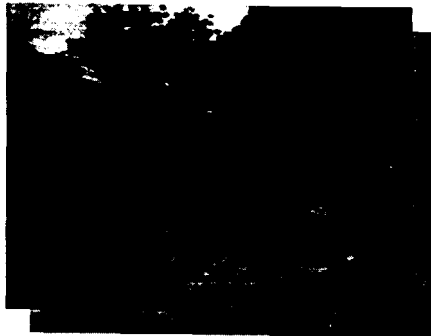
Chilean Grapes, 1989

Chilean radicals threaten to poison fruit shipped to North America.

Tainted Fuel, 1989

The Globe & Mail reports Environment Canada is turning a blind eye to contaminated fuel imports.

Fuel laced with toxic wastes sold in lucrative scam



Somalia, 1993

Canadian soldiers are charged with torturing and killing a Somali teenager.



These are *crises*, They may not seem as dramatic as some of the emergencies we looked at, but they all generated questions about the effectiveness or integrity of the government to manage... Why isn't the Canadian food system safe? Can't I expect my government to ensure that my food products are free from wilfull contamination? Why isn't Environment Canada acting to protect us? Is my government allowing clandestine waste disposal companies to dump lethal chemical ingredients into the air I breathe? How could the Canadian Forces allow such atrocities?

Questions like these generate their own kind of drama, and place exceptional demands on those who must manage the issues surrounding the problem.

SURVIVOR INSIGHTS

Crisis survivors provide insights...

⁶⁶ *A crisis is a situation where something has gone wrong, evidently, where the stakes are high, where the time to deal with the problem is limited, and the options are few. So one has to bring to bear a great deal of ingenuity to bring it back to business as usual. "*

Dr. Peter Meyboom, DM - Fisheries and Oceans Canada
... during the *Star-Kist* incident

“ *You're often dealing with perceptions, unfounded accusations, misinformation, or information suddenly coming out that you had not dealt with before. It's a whole different skill set and a whole different group of people that need to deal with that kind of thing. And frequently, of course, it involves the political level fairly quickly. That's makes it, in my view, very much of a crisis.*”

Eleanor Kulin, Communications Director - Environment Canada
... during the *Hagersville* and *Tainted Fuel* incidents

U *What does one do with thousands of tons of food produce? How is it disposed of? Can it be reinspected? What happens at the border? Reinvolved a great many agencies, both federal and provincial... "*

Dr. Berl Liston, ADM - Health Canada
... during the *Chilean Grape* incident

As you can tell from those comments, no single framework can prepare you for everything. Still, a crisis management plan will help defuse most events. It will also build the reflexes necessary to respond to others as quickly as possible. We'll discuss crisis management planning in detail in Module 3.

RECAP

For now, a quick recap...

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| ● EMERGENCYRESPONSE | deals with the <i>problem</i> . |
| . EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT | deals with the <i>consequences</i> of the problem. |
| ● CRISIS MANAGEMENT | deals with the <i>issues</i> surrounding the problem; issues that <u>don't</u> always start as emergencies... where the integrity of the government to manage has become the focal point. |

Or, to put it another way...

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| ● EMERGENCY RESPONSE | deals with the problem of <i>what</i> went wrong and <i>how</i> to solve it. |
| ● EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT | deals with the question of <i>who</i> did it, when it occurred and <i>where</i> it happened. |
| ● CRISIS MANAGEMENT | deals with the issue of <i>why</i> it happened. |

. Dealing with crises is an integral part of every manager's responsibility.
Your department's credibility - and your own - hangs in the balance. ▶

- Although crises are unpredictable, they are inevitable, and so...
- Crisis can- and must - be planned for.

MODULE

2

The Stages of a Crisis

In public administration, a crisis occurs when public confidence is lost because:

- Government is seen to be acting in a way that is too oppressive, self-serving, discriminatory, or short-sighted, or
- Government is seen not to be acting at all.

With loss of confidence comes public criticism and loss of control.

But how do you know when an incident warrants the shift into crisis mode? After all, making that call means mobilizing a lot of people and resources. Also, at what point do you shift back to normal operations, giving up the resource and administrative short-cuts that go with a well planned, solid crisis management program?

Recognizing the stages of a crisis will help you manage most incidents better, and will help you avoid some crises altogether. While Module 1 dealt with activities - emergency response, emergency management and crisis management - Module 2 looks at the crisis environment. Every department's crisis environment will be different, but this overview of the attitudes, questions and influences that distinguish each stage can serve as a starting point for your own crisis management efforts.

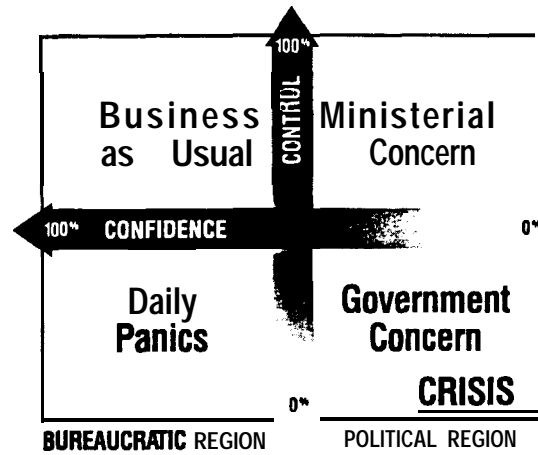
THE STAGES OF A CRISIS

CONFIDENCE AND CONTROL

The life-cycle of a crisis revolves around the relationship between an organization's *control* over an event and the public's *confidence* that the organization can sustain the control. This module will provide you with a useful analytical tool, called the Confidence and Control model, for clarifying that relationship.

The Confidence and Control Model, developed by Dr. Peter Meyboom, former Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, places events on a grid. The axes of the grid represent the level of confidence and control, and range from zero to 100%. The four quadrants represent four stages (quadrants) of activity, or, in our words, four environments.

The model will give you a framework in which to judge the severity of particular emergencies or developments. It will help in your study of past crises, thereby providing another assessment tool. And finally, it can help you anticipate the next stage of an incipient crisis, and plan management and communications strategies accordingly.



QUADRANT 1

For now, let's look more closely at the four stages or quadrants. The first quadrant, **Business as Usual**, will be different for everyone. For some, business as usual may be program administration. For others, it's emergency response. In a given year, there may be 20,000 chemical releases in Canada, a thousand avalanches, and hundreds of tough questions on a given program area during Question Period. In virtually all these cases, there is a response strategy: the spill is cleaned up, avalanche damage is repaired and people are rescued, and sound answers are prepared and delivered.

At this stage, control is a given. Natural disasters and political manoeuvres are predictable, at least in a broad sense. As such they can be prepared for and controlled. Public confidence doesn't enter the equation, because people either hear very little about the problem, or they hear that it's been resolved.

QUADRANT 2

Daily Panics are more complex. Take the same examples and carry them a step further: perhaps a spill involving the evacuation of a town... an avalanche with fatalities... or a surprise political attack on a sensitive program area. These events are harder to control; the consequences are more serious; and more resources are brought into play.

But most organizations consider daily panics a part of life, and prepare for them accordingly. At this stage, the public confidence dimension isn't affected too adversely either. There may be a few ripples among government-watchers, but there's generally no long-term damage.

' THE STAGES OF A CRISIS

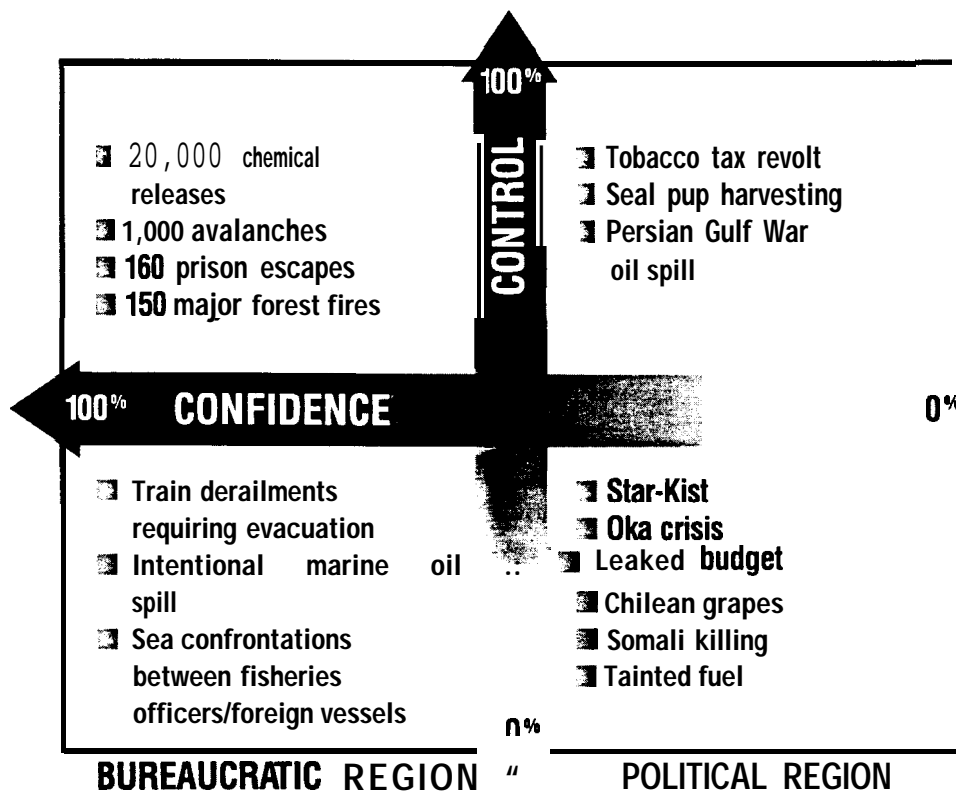
QUADRANT 3 In the third stage - **Ministerial Concern** - the situation escalates. With issues like pesticides on fruit or contaminated soil, public confidence can bottom out even when the problem is under technical control. The Minister's ability to manage the issue becomes the focal point.

QUADRANT 4 Finally, there are events that fall under the heading **Government Concern, or Crisis**. Within a political context, this is a broad group: notable Canadian crises include the St-Basile warehouse fire, the 1989 budget leak, and the Somali killing. Each became a crisis for different reasons, but they all shared certain characteristics: they were unexpected incidents which unraveled at great speed. Their scope, duration or policy implications made them hard to control, and they involved the public's confidence in government's ability to control events as a whole.

At this level, it's no longer a question of resolving the problem, or managing the associated consequences. A crisis can strike at the most basic assumptions of good government, and the question most likely to be asked of government is "How could you let this happen?" The government's ability to manage becomes the focal point.

To revisit the terms used in Module 1 for a moment, a department can be involved in emergency response or emergency management in any of the four stages discussed here. Crisis management might seem to come into play only in the government concern stage. In fact, a good crisis management program operates at some level all the time.

Here are a few examples of events that might fit into each of the four stages or dimensions of a crisis. Which events in your department might fit into each of them?



THE STAGES OF A CRISIS

THE COMMUNICATIONS CHARACTERISTICS AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

While natural disasters or emergencies can certainly strike fear into people's hearts, there are often other forces of non-confidence that act as catalysts and push an incident into crisis proportions. The most basic is an aggrieved party making its case public, with or without the help of elected representatives, and with or without the help of lobbies and special interest groups.

It's important to remember that while the media are instrumental in accelerating or decelerating a crisis, they are simply instruments. The real sources of conflict are the people who intentionally or not, pass misinformation to the media:

- The aggrieved party telling a story that mixes facts, opinions and sentiments;
- The elected representative telling the same story second-hand;
- Lobby and special interest groups telling only part of the story.

Once initial reports come in, other voices often join in and cloud the debate:

- Politicians and administrators whose judgement is being questioned;
- The local expert (or "the one-eyed man in the land of the blind");
- The true expert, quoted out of context;
- Media freaks.

Concentrating on media outlets or on one of the players just mentioned can be counter-productive. It's much more important - and effective - to get accurate messages out, and to at least give the impression that your organization is in control.

The grid below shows some of the communications signposts that may accompany each stage of a crisis. Clearly, each event will differ - there are crises in which there is no news coverage - but the point to remember is that damaging attention isn't limited to what shows up on the 6 o'clock news.



THE STAGES OF A CRISIS

THE DYNAMICS OF A CRISIS

You can also plot the dynamics of a crisis on a confidence-and-control grid. Take Star-Kist, for example. Former Deputy Minister for Fisheries and Oceans, Dr. Peter Meyboom, the crisis manager during this episode, describes the way it unfolded:

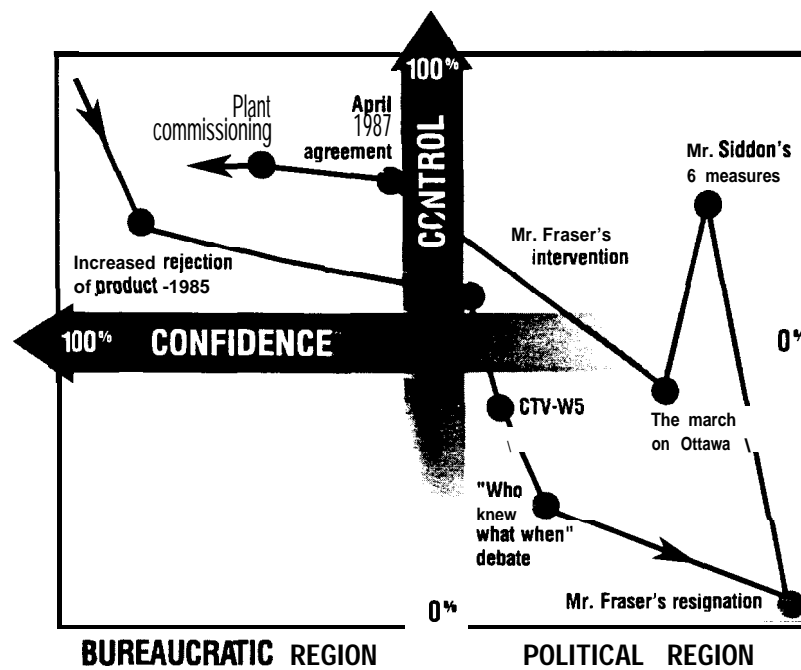
“In the summer of '85, federal Fisheries inspectors were rejecting increasing quantities of canned tuna from Star-Kist's plant at St. Andrews, New Brunswick. The company made submissions to the newly appointed Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, contending that the testing method - based on smell- was unscientific, and that Star-Kist had been treated unfairly. The new Minister instructed that any detained Star-Kist product be released. ”

66 CTV's W5 became aware of this decision, and aired a program that left Canadians with the impression that unhealthy product had been permitted on the market. In the ensuing Parliamentary debate, public confidence in the Minister and the government's control reached such a low point that the Minister decided to resign in October 1985. ”

“The next Minister announced measures aimed at regaining both control and public confidence. These included recall of all Star-Kist tuna for further inspection, a review of testing procedures, and a review of Star-Kist's manufacturing practices. Star-Kist decided to suspend all operations at St. Andrews. ”

66 In March 1987, when the unemployment insurance of the Star-Kist workers ran out, the crisis returned briefly to Parliament Hill, when unemployed workers marched on Ottawa. In April 1987, the government reached an agreement with the owners of Star-Kist about the necessary improvements at the St. Andrews plant and a new inspection protocol. In August 1987, the plant at St. Andrews was re-opened. ”

DYNAMICS OF THE STAR-KIST EPISODE



THE STAGES OF A CRISIS

THE HUMAN DIMENSION OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- Every crisis starts with the natural human reactions of denial, anger and or fear;
- How the organization handles these emotions determines how the organization deals with the crisis itself;
- The fight or flight syndrome can only be overcome by internal trust;
- With internal mistrust, the stage is set for recrimination, panic and collapse;
- When the climax arrives, the prevailing attitudes should be deliberation, consensus and confidence. The emphasis should be on understanding, on explaining the facts, and on re-directing events.

POST-CRISIS MANAGEMENT

- Rebuild and recover
- Re-establish public confidence
- Repair intergovernmental relations
- Prevent the development of a chronic crisis

One final note: In many cases, your organization will emerge from a crisis noticeably changed. Survival is not a necessary condition of crisis management, but the elements that most often fall by the wayside were, you'll find, probably counter-productive to begin with. If you're well-prepared, even a major crisis may see your group emerge more effective and better-equipped than ever.

The next module - a step-by-step guide to crisis management planning - can help you and your organization make sure that happens.

MODULE
3

Step-by-Step Guide to Crisis Management Planning

This module is intended to guide you through the development of a crisis management plan. It outlines seven basic planning stages to be considered in setting out your plan and identifies seven actions your crisis management team could take once a crisis has been declared. Depending on how fast the crisis rolls out, some of these activities will have to happen at the same time.

This section of the manual has been designed partly as a quick reference; the seven planning steps are grouped on a single page, with details on each step listed on the following pages. The same goes for the seven crisis management actions.

The video complement to this segment is designed to prompt ideas. For instance, are there past crises in your department which may not leap to mind, but which could provide you with valuable historical perspective? When it comes to developing a media plan, what kind of media outlets could you consider?



Unlike the two previous segments, we encourage you to go through the print module first, and then watch the video. Both should serve as a reference for you and your colleagues.

PREPARING FOR A CRISIS

1 ANTICIPATE PROBLEMS

- Conduct an audit
- Assess liabilities
- Weigh worst cases
- Find historical similarities
- Identify technical experts

2 DESIGN THE PLAN

- Define crises
- Hierarchical structures
- Policies and procedures
- Crises facilities
- Obligations

3 FORM THE TEAM

- Organize
- Assign tasks
- Train
- Authorize

4 IDENTIFY PARTNERS

- Make arrangements
- Plan integration
- Formalize
- Work with other players
- Think multi-jurisdictional

5 MEDIA PLAN

- Set policy
- Designate a spokesperson
- Identify media
- Prepare Qs&As
- Set up facilities
- Train

6 ESTABLISH SYSTEMS






- Facilities and equipment
- support
- Back-up
- Test systems

7 EXERCISE THE PLAN






- Plan drills
- Include partners
- Include media
- Test all systems
- Debrief

PREPARING FOR A CRISIS

1. ANTICIPATE PROBLEMS

-  **Conduct an audit** of your organization's liabilities, particularly any with the potential to achieve political or institutional interest.
-  **Assess** your liabilities: which events have the most potential to become crises? Have your colleagues agree to the ranking and final placement of potential events on your liabilities list.
-  Since you can't be expected to **plan** for every possible event, **weigh the worst cases** and limit your concern to, say, the ten highest risks.
-  Provide your department with **historic examples** of similar events your organization has faced. This will provide focus and awareness of the importance of the impact of such events occurring.
-  **Identify technical experts** who will be able to assist your organization if particular events occur. Make the roles and responsibilities of those experts clear.

2. DESIGN THE PLAN

-  **Define a crisis** for the people in your organization. It's important for everyone involved to understand the difference between a normal mode of operations, an emergency mode of operations, and a crisis mode of operations.
-  Develop the **hierarchical elements** of your crisis management structure, particularly those that link regional to headquarters operations. Who will be in charge? For example, who would authorize crisis management operations and the mechanisms involved to move the management of an event from a regional to an HQ operation?
-  **Administrative policy and procedural changes** will be required to accommodate fast, effective decision-making during the management of a crisis. Prepare the way for those.
-  What **facilities** will be used to house the crisis management team, and isolate them from "non-crisis" demands? Remember that telecommunications will become of prime importance as the crisis management team collects, confirms and shares issue-related information. You'll also need to plan for back-up equipment and operational support personnel (for the crisis management operation itself, and to take on regular duties).
-  What about your obligations and responsibilities? Does your staff have a clear and concise understanding of the organization's legislative responsibilities and its interdepartmental and/or intergovernmental obligations? Those obligations need to be understood and documented well before any crisis is declared.

PREPARING FOR A CRISIS

3. FORM THE TEAM








- ▶ Determine the **expertise required** on the crisis management team, and which skills will be needed on a full-time basis, and which ones in a part-time advisory capacity.
- ▶ Formalize the job outlines for each member and make sure everyone understands his or her role and responsibilities. Name a position to the team... not a person, Make sure each team member organizes a back-up in case of absence, or in the event that more than one team has to be assembled.
- ▶ Discuss the **roles and responsibilities** with all team members so no area is missed, and so everyone understands the inter-relatedness of the different roles.
- ▶ Choose more **than one** designated spokesperson and more than one crisis coordinator, Having several candidates trained and available will allow your ADM to choose the most suitable person for a given event.
- ▶ Develop standardized **training** for the crisis management team and the team's technical advisors.
- ▶ Give team members the authority they'll need to get the job done, and get pre-approval for any administrative procedures that have to be adjusted for the management of crisis events,

4. IDENTIFY PARTNERS





- ▶ **What** interdepartmental **partners** will you call on for assistance and support during a crisis?
- ▶ Do they know what's expected of them? Have key players in these organizations been apprised of your crisis management program? Have informal contacts been established with them?
- ▶ Are you aware of your department's **obligations** to government during a crisis?
- ▶ Establish **links with the Privy Council Office** - Government Operations and Communications Secretariats.
- ▶ Make sure your crisis management plan and its associated arrangements integrate with the plans and arrangements of your partners.
- ▶ Formalize your arrangements. Make sure you're fully aware of the extent of your **multi-jurisdictional** legislative and regulatory limitations and obligations; international, provincial, municipal, etc. You won't have time to do it once the crisis hits.

' PREPARING FOR A CRISIS

5. MEDIA PLAN

- 
Familiarize yourself with your department's crisis communications strategy and its associated media relations policy.
- 
Define the hierarchical **links** between regional and HQ offices, especially as they relate to information destined for the public.
- 
 Establish the role and responsibilities of the **designated spokesperson**, and make sure everyone understands the designated spokesperson principle: only one person talks on an issue for the department. This does not exclude other spokespersons near a site, for example, from talking to the media. However, the messages delivered must be later in time than those delivered by the designated spokesperson, and they need to carry the same message and tone.
- 
 Develop an **inventory** of TV, radio and print media for your geographic and/or program area.
- 
 Build a series of **backgrounders** ON any particularly sensitive topics within your area. Where established policy is concerned, prepare pre-approved position **statements**.
- 
 Make sure your **facilities** can accommodate the needs of the media, particularly if you are the lead agency.
- 
 Develop a media relation **training** plan for anyone involved with the crisis management team. Spokespersons require regular on-camera training and should be familiar with telephone and radio interviewing techniques.

6. ESTABLISH SYSTEMS

- 
 Arrange for crisis centre **facilities** that can accommodate the crisis management team and its communications or other equipment.
- 
 Most communications equipment may seem obvious, but it's often overlooked in the heat of the moment. Arrange for fax machines and lines (incoming and outgoing), 1-800 numbers, cellular phone capability, computer networks, large-capacity conference call networks, telephone line-load control, word processing equipment, recording equipment, etc. Establish back-ups for equipment and facilities . . . don't forget to test them.
- 
 In addition to regular work-day support staff, you may have to make personnel arrangements on a 24-hour, 7-day basis. The most important support assistant to the crisis management team is the '**scribe**'. This person logs every action of the team during the management of the event.
- 
 All systems, facilities and support staff should be **tested** regularly.

PREPARING FOR A CRISIS

7. EXERCISE THE PLAN

- ▶ Crisis management plans normally include **exercising** the whole plan. Exercises may range from simple table-top drills to full-blown crisis scenario simulations. Whatever form they take, include your key partners and, where possible, your media community.
- ▶ A crisis management program needs **senior management involvement** and approval to be effective, not least when it comes to drills. What credibility can you expect from colleagues and partners in the simulation of a departmental crisis if the most senior managers delegate their role-playing to junior staff? Adjust the exercise to suit their availability, within reason. Once senior staff recognize the potential career-limiting opportunities that crises often present, they'll probably be more receptive to participating in these practice and learning simulations.
- ▶ **After** the exercise, hold a **debriefing** session to determine what worked and what didn't. These sessions are valuable tools in **fine-tuning** the crisis management plan, and **assessing the roles** and responsibilities of key players during real events. Some people simply do not work well in a compressed time frame decision-making environment. This is the time to find out.

ACTIONS DURING A CRISIS

1 ASSESS SITUATION

- Gather information
- Confirm facts
- Determine key actions
- Switch on plan
- Lead agency

2 EXECUTE PLAN

- Form team
- Define crisis event
- Stay ahead
- Be flexible
- Remain calm
- Resources

3 CONTAIN CRISIS

- Get help
- Reduce danger
- Obtain control
- Maintain control
- Be recognized

4 PREPARE FOR MEDIA

- Activate media plan
- Mobilize spokespersons
- National and interdepartmental coordination

5 RESPOND TO MEDIA

- Fact sheets
- Show concern
- Reassure control
- Don't speculate
- Concise and calm

6 AFTER THE CRISIS

- Assess situation
- Keep communicating
- Correct plans
- Evaluate handling
- Changes to plan
- Record of event

7 POST-MORTEM

- Evaluate management of event
- Learn from experience
- Hold debriefing
- Recommend changes

ACTIONS DURING A CRISIS

1. ASSESS THE SITUATION

- ▶ As an event approaches crisis proportions, there will be no shortage of information and, most of the time, there will be conflict between the sources. Determine the credibility of the sources and **confirm the facts**.
- ▶ Determine the **significance** of the problem and recognize the dangers and opportunities that the event may provide. Crisis management may be reactive in many ways, but effective management is a collection of anticipatory measures. Reliable information is needed to develop these measures.
- ▶ **Decide** whether to **switch** on the **crisis management plan**. Remember that once a crisis is declared, the political, institutional and public interest in the incident will almost certainly increase. You have to assess this dimension.
- ▶ Is your organization clearly the **lead agency**, as **outlined** in the various legislative or inter-departmental arrangements? If there is any doubt, consult the Privy Council Office - Government Operations. If you're simply supporting a lead agency, it's seldom necessary to execute your organization's crisis management plan.
- ▶ **Be aware** of the many **responsibilities and obligations** an organization inherits once it's identified as the government's lead agency for an incident.

2. EXECUTE THE PLAN

- ▶ **Assemble the team**. Make sure each member is able to meet his or her commitments to the crisis management team. If not, replace them. **Make them aware of the working hours** expected of them. **And remind team members that a crisis management team is not a democracy**; the purpose of the team is **not** to manage the event by committee, but to **provide** resource support and advice to the National Crisis Coordinator (NCC), charged with the management of the event.
- ▶ Clearly **define the crisis event** and make sure the team agrees with the definition: it will be critical in keeping the players focused.
- ▶ **prearrange** information-sharing with colleagues in other departments or interest groups. **Reliable, timely information** sources will allow you to stay ahead of events and address the related institutional issues as they arise.
- ▶ Often though, events don't unfold as expected. **Remain calm and be flexible** in your actions. Bring all your resources to bear on the incident. In times like these, everyone in government is on your side; use them and the resources they represent.

' ACTIONS DURING A CRISIS

3. CONTAIN THE CRISIS

- ▶ Heroes don't make good crisis managers. Post-mortem results from a wide range of public- and private-sector crises show that one of the main causes of an emergency becoming a full-blown crisis is that the first line manager tries to solve the problem alone, rather than seeking help. Some traditional managers see requesting assistance as a failure on their part. In fact, not seeking specialized assistance in the case of an escalating event is a failure.
- ▶ Contain the crisis by **reducing the danger to people and the environment.** During a crisis, 'zero risk' is the only acceptable risk.
- ▶ **Be seen to be in control...** at least of the message. The public must be confident that the organization is in control and that control is sustainable.

4. PREPARE FOR THE MEDIA

- ▶ The communications advisor will **predict the anticipated media interest** of the event. Based on those recommendations, decide whether full or partial activation of the media plan is necessary.
- ▶ **Select and brief the designated spokesperson.** Inform the regional and/or secondary spokesperson of the lines of authority for the development and delivery of event-related messages, A single approval sources is optimal. Clearly establish the rules for delivering event-related messages by support organizations.
- ▶ As a **lead agency**, you are responsible for the coordination and delivery of the government's message. As a **support agency**, you're responsible for developing your organization's angle on the government's message, and providing it to the lead agency. All individual departmental messages on a crisis event require approval by the lead agency.
- ▶ Communications advisors have to **anticipate the medias' needs**, and prepare the organization to **provide for those needs.** For example, position statements, presslines, news conferences and presentations by the designated spokesperson at both private and communal interview sessions.

ACTIONS DURING A CRISIS

5. RESPOND TO THE MEDIA

- ▶ Be **prepared**. Every message has to be polished and delivered in a **confident and concise manner**. **Never speculate**. Only items that can be backed up with facts should be discussed with or released to the media. Those position statements and **backgrounders** that took so much effort to produce and approve when the organization wasn't in a full-blown crisis will become very useful at this time.
- ▶ Continually strive to **reassure** the media and the public that your organization is in control of the event.
- ▶ Communications advisors have to **keep abreast of media developments** as the event unfolds. What angles are the media covering? Do the stories and coverage correspond nationally to the regional media position? If not, why not? Is the story worth tracking on all fronts? How many pages per day does the story get?
- ▶ What do public opinion polls tell you about the **confidence and control** dimension of your organization's management of the event? Remember, if the public is **100%** confident that the organization is in **100%** control of an issue... there's no crisis.
- ▶ During this phase of responding to the media, don't forget your **internal communications responsibilities**. A member of the crisis management team should be assigned this responsibility.
- ▶ Try to **keep your staff informed** of the important aspects of the management effort. They'll need to know who the designated spokesperson and the national crisis coordinator are, and how they can forward enquiries to them. If your own people feel the organization is in **control** of the event, the job will go that much more smoothly.

6. AFTER THE CRISIS

- ▶ **Switching off a crisis** is as important as formally declaring one. It tells others that you consider the **depoliticization** of the event to be complete, and that the issue no longer requires specialized management attention.
- ▶ Although the issue may now be of less concern to the organization, it's important to **maintain contact** with the media (and partner agencies).
- ▶ If yours is the lead agency, you might want to **produce a summary** of the federal actions taken during the crisis - it can serve as a record for your organization, and sent to the PCO, it can also serve as a record for others.
- ▶ The crisis management team should **evaluate its handling** of the event. If problems arose during the management of the crisis, this is the time to recommend changes to the plan.

ACTIONS DURING A CRISIS

7. POST MORTEM

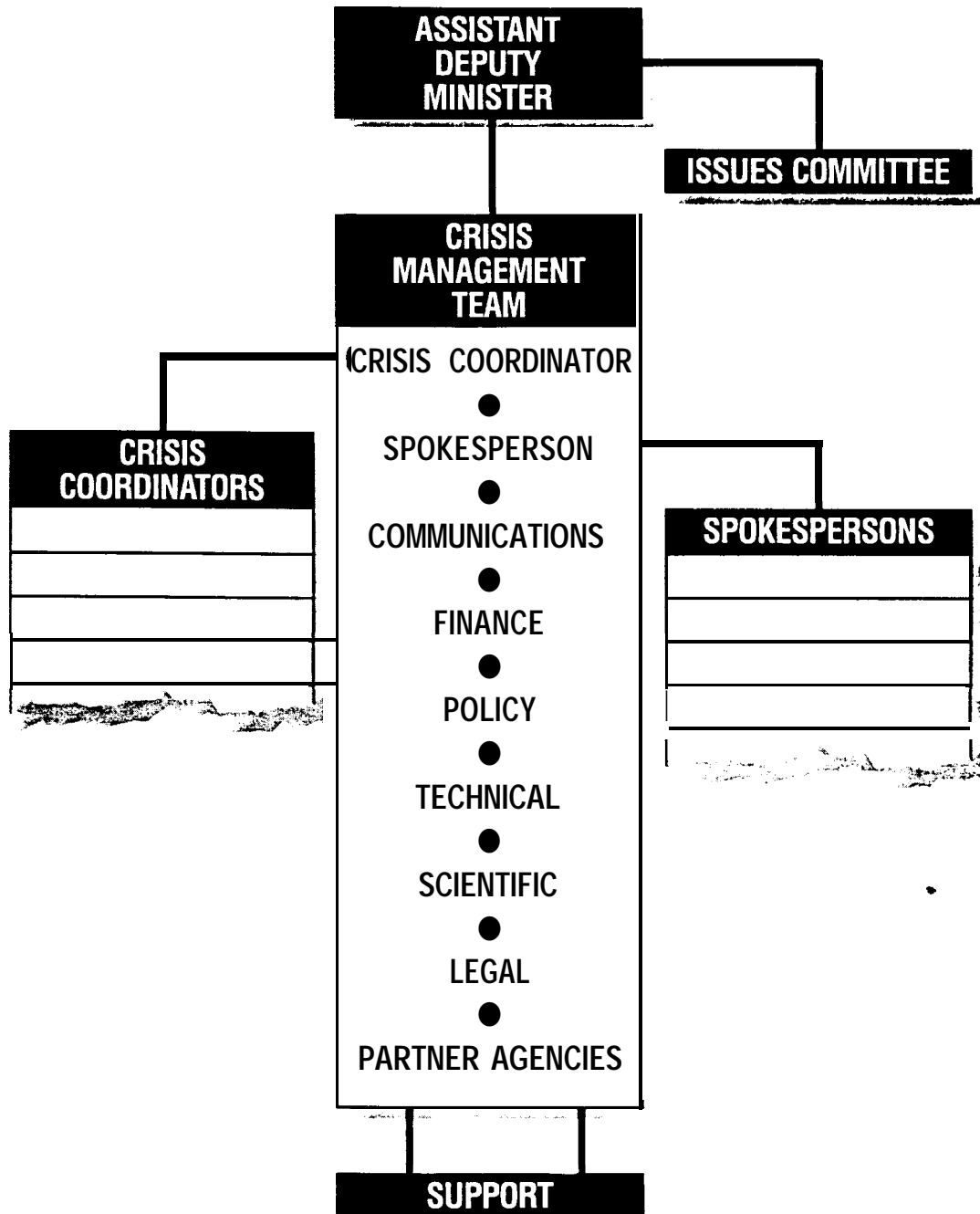
- ||| * **Determine the level of post mortem** that should be conducted for a particular event. You could be looking at a cursory evaluation of the management of the event, or at a complete cause-and-effect review.

- |||➡ No matter what level of review is required, experienced crisis managers recommend hiring **outside experts** to perform such reviews.

- |||➡ Determine the **goal of the post-mortem**. Is it to analyze your organization's management of the event, of the messages, or of interdepartmental cooperation . . . or is it to investigate the cause of the incident, its effects on the community, and to recommend legislative or regulatory adjustments to limit such incidents from re-occurring?

- |||➡ **Include your partner organizations** in such reviews. They're often good sources of information. Pay particular attention to the lack or limits of interagency cooperative arrangements during an event. There will almost always be room for improvement in those areas.

CRISIS ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE



Crisis Communications

Crisis communications - interactions with the audiences affected by a crisis- pervades every aspect of crisis management. Getting the right message out fast is essential to defusing an incident, building public confidence, and maintaining your department's credibility.

Many people believe that crisis communications is mostly about "handling the media". Nothing could be farther from the truth. Media relations is just one component of crisis communications. To manage crisis communications well, you need to know how to manage information, you need to know what strategies a crisis communications plan should involve, and you need to know how to mobilize government machinery to support your efforts. This module is intended to explain these things, and to serve as a guide for your own crisis communications plans and activities.

Crisis communications has two main goals:

- To manage information about a crisis so it's a stabilizing force;
- To depoliticize the crisis; in this context, by making sure communication about the crisis doesn't become an issue in itself.



'There was no planning for crisis communication. Nobody knew what to do. As soon as the thing came off the rails, there was an absolute panic.'

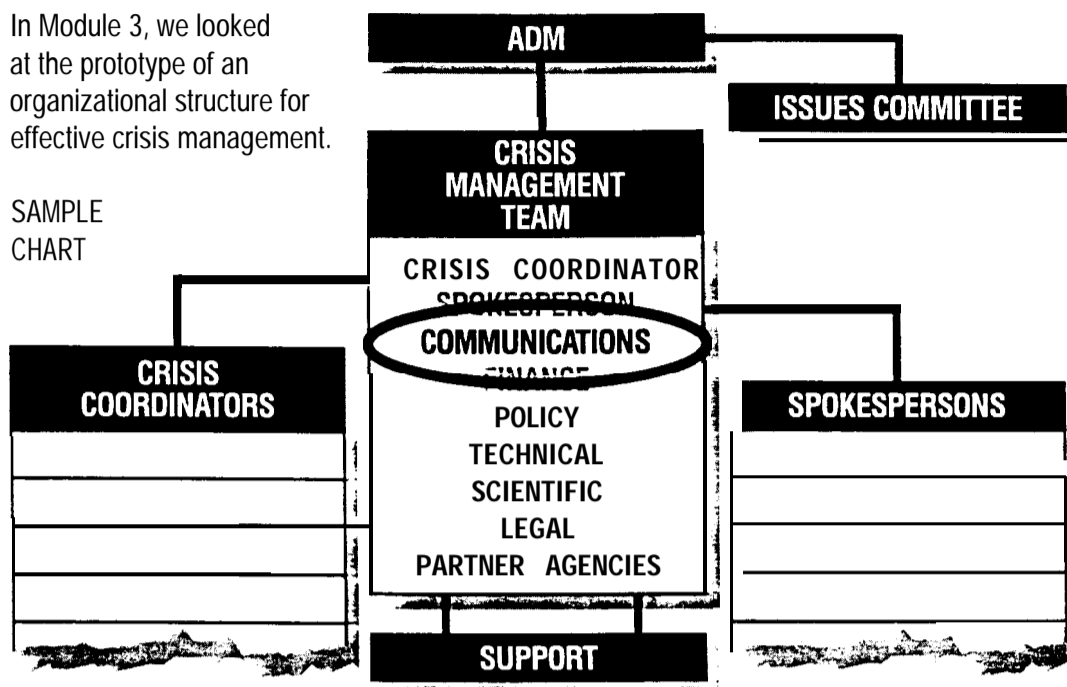
“We had a designated spokesperson, all prepared, well briefed. But nobody had ascertained whether or not this individual could speak French colloquially. As it happened, his French was kind of shaky, he got in front of the press, he was misquoted, and the whole thing blew up in our faces.”

“Many of our people didn't understand the lead agency situation. There was just no coordination as to just how we were going to be able to get the proper things out... it was total chaos.”

HOW CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS FITS INTO CRISIS MANAGEMENT

In Module 3, we looked at the prototype of an organizational structure for effective crisis management.

SAMPLE CHART



CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Like other functions on the team, communications is represented by one advisor. He or she is responsible for planning the communications strategy and for supervising the flow of information to your various publics and the media, as well as internally or to other departments or levels of government which may be involved. The advisor is supported by a trained communications team, responsible for providing, receiving and analyzing information. A typical crisis communications team could include specialists with the following responsibilities:

- Communications advisor to crisis management team;
- Media relations;
- Media tracking, analysis and public opinion;
- Designated spokesperson support;
- Public information/consultations;
- Briefings support;
- Policy and position development.

It is this crisis communications team that satisfies your public's communications needs, crafts messages for Ministers and your public, supports the designated spokesperson, handles media analysis, and so on. The better prepared your team is, the faster you can start to stabilize and depoliticize the crisis.

To summarize, the role of the Crisis Communications team is to:

- Provide
- Receive INFORMATION
- Analyze }

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

The scope of most crises means that communications can become complex and unusually loaded with implications for your department. Keeping on top of things can be next to impossible without some kind of guideline. This is where a *Crisis Communications Plan* comes in; it will give you the strategic and tactical guidance you need before, during and after a crisis. Your crisis communications plan should parallel and support the overall crisis management plan. It should be developed with the crisis management team, and agreed to by all major players.

A well-developed crisis communications plan should:

- Define response strategies that can be implemented when a crisis occurs;
- Assign crisis communications resources and responsibilities;
- Outline techniques for defining target audiences and messages; and
- Enable crisis communications managers to launch public information and media relations campaigns during a crisis.

Crisis communications will be most effective if every major level of your department develops its own plan, tied in to the departmental plan. A department-wide commitment to crisis communications planning means all potential crisis participants will have the same terms of reference, and the same reflexes.

The four typical elements of crisis communications planning

A good crisis communications plan is built around four basic elements:

- ① Strategy;
- ② Audiences;
- ③ Designated spokespersons (the message);
- ④ Media relations.

1 STRATEGY:

When a crisis hits, time compresses. You may have only a few hours -or less -to respond to a deluge of requests for the government's position, for more information, for answers about what's being done.

- ➔ Your public's perception of the government's control of the situation (remember Module 2?) will hinge on communication. You need to be proactive and fast. That means compressing approval stages and cutting through normal procedural red tape,
- ➔ Strategic planning involves anticipation. Begin by "forecasting" potential crises. Information can be gathered from technical and scientific experts, regional personnel, operations and communications managers, parliamentary sources, interest groups, the news media, polls, and available literature. Your crisis communications plan should include a list of crises you might potentially face (this will be a dynamic process . . . as unanticipated crises hit, add them to the list).

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

- ➔ Then take a look at past crises and how they were handled. Here, your sources include situation reports, crisis audits and **post-mortems**, historical studies, liability assessments, and the production of “worst-case” scenarios. Incorporate the experience garnered from the management of past crises into your plan, and update as new experience warrants.
- ➔ Your crisis communications plan should clearly set out your organization’s policies, procedures and obligations. It should also outline a hierarchical reporting framework, with sign-off authority stated, keeping in mind the necessity for speeding up the flow of approvals and information.
- ➔ The plan should specifically describe the crisis communications team. Review the expertise available, identify key roles and assign responsibilities. As much as possible, you should identify the specific individuals who will be fulfilling these roles, and provide contact numbers where they can be reached. Backup personnel should also be identified. You will need extra bodies; arrange for the mechanisms to bring them in.
- ➔ Your crisis communications plan should recognize and “institutionalize” the principle of the *designated spokesperson*; you should identify primary and alternate spokespersons and make sure they are onboard and available, with relevant contact information (the designated spokesperson principle is discussed in greater detail below).
- ➔ **Your partners- your strategic alliances- are critical.** Governmental and non-governmental partners are your allies. You should have a resource network in place and identified in your plan. Each Region and Service should identify its potential crisis communications partners and integrate them into the planning process.
- ➔ On a practical note, make sure your plan covers “infrastructure”: the equipment and facilities you’ll need, such as telephones, fax lines, a media briefing room, necessary support and back-up systems, etc. Be realistic in estimating what will be required, and **pre-plan** so you won’t be caught without resources.
- ➔ Make sure your plan includes media monitoring and public opinion tracking. Analyzing public opinion and the media’s reporting of a crisis helps assess the effectiveness of your communications efforts, and aids in strategic positioning and the development of new communications products.
- ➔ Finally, don’t rest on your laurels . . . test your plan. Establish a training program to ensure that managers are qualified to perform their duties during a crisis. Then, conduct drills to test your crisis communications system. Exercises should be conducted across multiple Regions and Services, and senior crisis communications managers should share the results of the exercises. Establish performance standards and targets based on the exercises, or revise the plan as necessary.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

2 AUDIENCES:

Knowing your audiences is critical. The media will almost always be one of them, but it's certainly not the only one, and it may not even be the most important. You should identify all potential audiences in your crisis communications plan. These might include the general public, lobby or special interest groups, scientific communities, the technical press, and so on. Set up networks and develop contact lists now- so you won't be floundering when a crisis hits. Prepare for their anticipated information needs so that you can be proactive rather than reactive in opening up communications channels.

- ➔ Of particular importance is your internal audience and your partner organizations. Governmental and non-governmental partners can be valuable allies. During a crisis, partners can direct joint communications activities at mutual target audiences. Pay particular attention to their concerns and agendas. Above all, make sure they're consulted, kept informed and included in the crisis management process. Again, if you've established networks before the crisis hits, this process will be much easier.
- ➔ A key role of the crisis communications team is preparing government positions, as well as the Qs&As for Question Period. Ministers and other politicians are often your most immediate audience. It's your responsibility to understand what they expect.
- ➔ Finally, a word about an internal audience often overlooked - your own staff. When a crisis hits, there's a tendency to hunker down. Don't leave your own staff out of the loop -to do so is to encourage speculation and rumours. Make sure they are kept informed so that they can support the crisis management effort and contribute to the stabilization of the event.
- ➔ To summarize:
 - Identify all potential audiences- internal and external;
 - Analyze their anticipated information requirements;
 - Develop contact lists and networks so you can be proactive, not reactive;
 - Keep your own staff informed.

3 THE DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSON:

Under the direction of the crisis management team leader, the designated spokesperson is responsible for:

- Providing any verbal information to the media and the public; and
- Briefing senior departmental management, including the Minister.

The principle:

- ➔ The concept of the designated spokesperson is absolutely critical to crisis communications. Bluntly put, the person you put out front can make or break you. Their actions and reactions in informing the news media will largely define both the content and the context of news coverage, and so, the public's perception of your organization. Using only designated spokespersons ensures that a consistent message is being delivered to your external audiences. For this reason, only designated spokespersons should speak to the media during a crisis.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

➔ Because of their pivotal role, designated spokespersons have to have a thorough understanding of departmental policies, parliamentary processes, and the overall machinery of government. They must be informed and recognize the limits of their authority. They must be careful to respond to the media without damaging either their own credibility or the integrity of the department.

➔ Generally, there should be more than one designated spokesperson appointed. One person cannot be expected to handle all of the workload that an ongoing crisis will engender. Each crisis management team should pick several spokespersons in advance, and make sure they have access to training and crisis simulations soon after they're named. The designated spokesperson reports to either the Regional or Headquarters crisis management team leader, depending on the level of the event.

Qualifications

➔ What does it take to be a designated spokesperson? First, in the context of this course, they must be fluent in both official languages. If they're not, appoint alternates who are fluent in the other official language.

➔ Your designated spokespersons should possess the qualifications necessary to speak with authority and to provide background for the many reporters who won't understand the underlying elements of the story. They should understand that being a designated spokesperson means giving up personal and professional privacy for the duration of the crisis. They will become public figures, inexorably linked by the media with the news event itself. For this reason, nobody should be forced to take the job.

➔ A designated spokesperson must remain unflappable in a pressure-packed media environment. They must be able to communicate precisely and clearly, answering any question - no matter how inane - in a calm, lucid, interesting manner. They should come across as confident, relaxed and sincere about what they are saying. A good designated spokesperson is consistently truthful and open - and ideally, has a sense of humour.

Role:

➔ Being a spokesperson goes way beyond media contact; your designated spokesperson connects you to your public. By speaking for the participants in a crisis, the spokesperson frees them to focus on managing the crisis.

➔ Your designated spokesperson is part of your crisis management team. He or she must be aware of important or sensitive issues - both within the crisis and beyond, in your larger policy and program areas. One of your spokesperson's essential functions is to weigh the potential impact of the crisis management team's decisions on the perceptions of your publics.

➔ The spokesperson is responsible for maintaining a level of disclosure that is acceptable to both sides. This can be tough in the face of constant media questioning. To combat this, many spokespersons use a "mantra" - a pre-planned response used to deflect questions they don't want to answer. The mantra must, of course, be developed in consultation with the crisis management and crisis communications teams.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

➔ Designated spokespersons also have to know as much as possible about the coverage of a crisis so they can correct errors and inaccuracies in reporting, and anticipate what reporters are likely to ask during question-and-answer sessions. If a story is not accurate, they must set the record straight, without naming the offending news organization.

“More than anything else, the designated spokesperson has to have your trust. Is he respected by other members of your crisis management team, so he can take the actions he believes appropriate in responding to the media? If you don't have confidence in the person who would be your designated spokesperson, you'd better make a change.”

...**Robert Irvine, President,**
Institute for Crisis Management, Louisville (Kentucky)

4 MEDIA RELATIONS:

People often get the impression that crisis communications revolves around media relations... often referred to as “handling the media”.

➔ First, let's get one thing straight - media relations is not about “handling” the media; it's about working with the media. In the pressure-cooker environment of a crisis, your relationship with the media, your ability to respond quickly and effectively to their requests, will directly affect the way the story gets reported and consequently, the way your various publics form their perceptions about how the crisis is being managed.

➔ Entire books have been written about effective media relations; a complete discussion of the subject is outside the scope of this course. What follows are some guidelines to help you prepare for, and navigate, this complex subject area.

Establish a network

➔ Before you get started, do an inventory of the media community. Develop a media contact list, with phone and fax numbers, for all news organizations likely to cover the event. When a crisis hits, you need to be able to contact key media people quickly; if they already know you, the process will be more effective. Update the list continually.

Media requirements:

➔ Think about what the media want. Reporters are trained to ask: Who, What, Where, When, Why and How. Try to anticipate the least-expected as well as the most-expected questions. Remember, the media are not the real audience . . . the public is. Consider how the media will present the interview to the public.

These are some of the questions reporters ask

- What happened? Where? When?
- Are there any injuries or deaths? How many and to whom?
- Don't you have mechanisms in place to prevent this sort of situation?
- What actions are you taking to control the situation?
- How much money is this going to cost? And who'll pay?
- Has this happened elsewhere or before? Why weren't you ready?

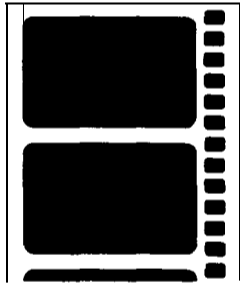
CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

...and so on. You can - and should - anticipate all possible questions you will be facing, and prepare answers in conjunction with your designated spokespersons.

Working with the media:

- ➔ **Be available.** Reporters have deadlines. They need to be able to get to your communications staff frequently and fast, at all hours of the day or night, in order to satisfy national or world-wide time deadlines. You may have to arrange for 24-hour rotating phone duty among your communications team to satisfy the media's requirements. Media facilities should be chosen to provide the media with easy access and technical support. Lead and support agencies should agree upon who will provide the facilities.
- ➔ **Be proactive.** Don't wait for the media to come to you if you have information which can contribute to the stabilization and depoliticization of the crisis. You're likely to get more favorable consideration if you go out of your way to help them. Never speculate. If you don't have all the facts, say so.
- ➔ **Stay on the record.** The term "off the record" means different things to different people. Going off the record is dangerous because you have no idea how the reporter will use the information. To quote Robert Irvine...
- ➔ *"No matter what you call being an anonymous source, it's dangerous and invariably will cause harm to somebody or the organization... because, people don't go 'off the record' if they have something positive to say to a reporter."*

Understand that reporters are trained to be skeptical. The questions they ask are legitimate, and it is the responsibility of the crisis communications team and the designated spokesperson to be truthful and consistent in answering them.




"When it comes time to explain, say, a disaster at sea, I'd go to the pub/it servant to ask what happened... where, when, and how. I'd go to the politician to ask why, and what's going to be done about it."


...**Kirk LaPointe,**
Ottawa Bureau Chief. Canadian Press


CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING


Delivering the message:


You have an array of communication tools at your disposal; all play a part in delivering your message.


-  **Presslines:** Presslines present the department's position on a developing crisis and are the first official response statement. Before going out, they must be checked for:
 - factual accuracy, by the national crisis management team program specialist, as appropriate;
 - style, message and departmental positioning, by the crisis management team Communications Advisor; and
 - government position, by the Privy Council Office (Communications Secretariat).

-  **News releases** These are fully elaborated official statements that present new developments. They need to be written in journalistic style to facilitate their use by the media. News releases can be written by communications teams at all levels, but Regional releases should be forwarded to the crisis management team Headquarters for input. News releases need to be approved by the crisis management team, the Director-General, Communications, and the Minister's office, prior to release.

-  **Press conferences** Press conferences permit designated spokespersons to deliver the same message to all the media at the same time. The decision to hold a press conference should be made in conjunction with the crisis management team. Representatives of both the Regional and Headquarters crisis communications teams should assist with press conferences.

-  **Media interviews:** Interviews can be requested by the media, or suggested by the crisis communications team. They're useful tools for damage and rumour control. They also help build media support, and give crisis management teams opportunities to provide leadership in the media's handling of the crisis.

-  **Media kits:** Media kits include news releases, backgrounders, fact sheets, and speeches packaged for use by the media. They are distributed at press conferences and interviews and list key contacts on the crisis communications team. Media kits, press conference material, and other material can be repackaged for use during on-site tours and for responding to special information requests. Stock footage and other visual aids may be added from other sources.

-  One last note about crisis communications . . . all members of crisis communications teams should have media relations and public information training. There are currently several courses available through various departments. Contact the office of the Director-General, Communications, of your department to find out what's available in your area.

RESPONDING TO A CRISIS

STEP 1 Assess the situation; define communications problems and goals:

- Gather information:
 - Record information requests from media, public and OGDs;
 - Identify potential hazards and response requirements;
 - Analyze possible communications vulnerabilities;
 - Review information and fill information gaps;
 - Confirm facts;
- Define the crisis event;
- Alert those who need to know;
- Activate and adjust communications plan;
- Determine key actions;
- Review communications capabilities and define additional needs.

STEP 2 Form the communications team and assign responsibilities:

- Contact Regional/Service communications teams as appropriate to the level of crisis;
- Confirm the lead agency (the lead agency will present the government position; support agencies will present the OGD positions);
- Contact the designated spokespersons;
- Determine who will draft the event-specific communications plan;
- Delegate internal communications and decision-making roles;
- Identify support resources - policy and technical experts, strategic analysts, media relations experts, etc.;
- Contact OGD communications teams as appropriate.

STEP 3 Assess target audiences:

- Analyze information requests;
- List potential audiences;
- Distinguish audience types: directly/indirectly affected; potentially supportive / hostile;
- List groups according to audience type and identify their concerns and positions;
- Identify specific target audiences and rank them by importance;
- Review available public opinion research;
- Prepare target-audience contact lists.

STEP 4 Develop messages and vehicles:

- Develop and target overall themes and messages;
- Determine appropriate vehicles for delivering messages;
- Obtain OGD partner agreement on the messages and vehicles chosen;
- Obtain necessary approvals before releasing messages;
- In preparing themes and messages:
 - Clearly state the level of the emergency; avoid over- or understatement;
 - Don't assign blame; avoid positions that have legal implications;
 - Briefly and confidently explain as much of the situation as possible;

RESPONDING TO A CRISIS

- Let public and media interest determine the amount of information provided. Facilitate media activity if interest is high, but don't encourage media activity if interest is low;
- Consider the possible impacts of information being shared among audiences and that information may come from other sources;
- Be compassionate but not apologetic; do not lament the loss of pre-crisis conditions;
- Counsel prevention of future occurrences if appropriate;
- Acknowledge good work and effort;
- Don't dwell on past successes;
- Highlight future opportunities.

STEP 5 Respond to news media:

- Review response strategies . . . media and communications plans;
- Distribute **presslines**;
- Record and assist with media inquiries;
- Prepare media contact lists . . . consider local, national, and international media;
- Distribute news releases, fact sheets, **Qs&As**, and media kits;
- Prepare for media conferences and on-site interviews;
- Prepare and assist designated spokespersons;
- Rehearse to ensure spokespersons' knowledge, clarity, credibility, and quotability;
- Review spokespersons' itineraries;
- Attend and assist at spokesperson presentations, briefings, conference calls, interviews, etc.;
- Q** Follow upon all ministerial and media contacts and requests.

STEP 6 Review and adjust themes and messages:

- Analyze media coverage and public reaction;
- Check communications effectiveness, as perceived by partners in your and other departments;
- Review efforts against the original crisis assessment and its resulting event-specific communications plan;
- Refine and redevelop themes and messages if necessary.

STEP 7 Document and review:

- Record events;
- Evaluate communications team's performance;
- Compare results with communications partners;
- Determine the need for follow-up communications activities and products;
- Modify original response strategies and communications plans as necessary;
- Review contact lists;
- Thank all involved for their assistance.

CONCLUSION

Successful crisis communications are based on a combination of advance planning, training, common-sense procedures, and the ability to make sound judgments quickly in complex circumstances. The ability of your department's communications staff to combine these skills is vital to maintaining public accountability and to the smooth functioning of government during a crisis.

This module has been intended to assist departments to move towards the same level of crisis communications readiness. The points presented here have been meant to serve as a starting point for managers involved in crisis communications. Keep in mind that crisis communications managers should be: alert, clear, consistent, cooperative, factual, honest, impartial, proactive, timely, and visible.

Crisis communications is complex. There are multiple layers of organization to consider... sometimes masses of information- technical or political - to control and disseminate. And most of you already know how hard it can be to work with the media under this kind of pressure. But effective crisis communication is manageable.



And, if you're ready for it, how you communicate during a crisis can actually turn chaos into capital.

Putting it all Together

What follows is a transcript of the Module 5 video component of the program, in which a dramatic re-creation of a crisis shows how the components of crisis management and crisis communications come together in "real life",

We suggest that you watch the video first. This printed transcript is intended as a reference, and a reminder of the steps involved in managing a crisis, The story . . .

02:47 DAY ONE

...SOMEWHERE IN THE GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE

...a ship emerges from the darkness, moving slowly and quietly, its running lights dimmed. From its starboard side, crewmen begin dumping barrels into the water. ...unnoticed by the mystery ship, an inflatable boat speeds towards the site. Its crew are wearing "PlanetWatch" caps. As they manoeuvre close to the barrels, one crewmember begins videotaping the scene. The mystery ship disappears into the night.

06:00 DAY ONE

...A NEARBY CANADIAN COAST GUARD OPERATION CENTRE

...John Hopkins, the morning's Duty Officer, receives a call: ***"My name's Dave Martin, with the environmental group Planetwatch. I'd like to inform you that we've been out doing your job for you. We've just witnessed a vessel dumping toxic waste over the site of the Oilcor Eagle. We have video footage to prove it, and we're going to the media with it."***

...putting down the phone, John Hopkins immediately contacts his Regional Headquarters. It is decided that an on-site inspection is required, and officials from the Coast Guard and Environment Canada are dispatched to the site.

07:15 DAY ONE

...ON BOARD A COAST GUARD VESSEL

The inspection team is conferring with the ship's captain, as well as a diver who has returned from examining the site. They learn that about 100 barrels have been found, pretty much on top of the wreck of the *Oilcor Eagle*, an oil barge that sank, fully loaded, about 17 years before. Some of the barrels are quite rusty. All are marked in some way; either with a series of numbers, or with the stencil "Pickle Liquor". Preliminary tests of the barrels contents show that they contain an acidic solution of some sort.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

08:05 DAY ONE

... COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS, OTTAWA

... Jacques Savard, Director of the Coast Guard's Corporate Crisis Management Branch, takes an urgent call ...

EXERCISE #1

Jacques Savard has just been informed of the illegal dumping of toxic chemicals in Canadian waters. Initial investigation suggests that this may have been going on for some time. The environmental activist group Planetwatch has videotaped the dumping, and is going to the media with the tape.

What should he do next?

08:30 DAY ONE

... OTTAWA

Jacques Savard has arranged an immediate conference call because of the "crisis potential" of the situation. Participating in the call are the on-site people from the Laurentian Region of the Canadian Coast Guard, the Crisis Management Secretariat of the Privy Council Office, the Office of the Assistant Deputy Minister of Environment Canada, and Jacques' Corporate Crisis Management Branch, Canadian Coast Guard. Because of the proximity of the dump site to a provincial park, a wildlife reserve and a new federal marine park, it's decided that Provincial and National Parks colleagues, as well as Emergency Preparedness Canada, be informed. Apparently, local Atlantic media are already reporting the dumping. It seems likely that this will escalate.

The first order of the day is to determine the lead agency.

Clair Martin of the Privy Council Office makes a recommendation: ***"There are a lot of unanswered questions here. This is not a clear ship-source pollution incident. In my mind it should be treated as a mystery spill, and as a mystery spill, under existing agreements, I suggest to you all that Environment Canada take the federal lead on this, at least until the environmental hazards are determined and cleaned up."***

- Start taking action
- Gather information
- Inform other players
- Determine lead agency
- Confirm your role
- Switch on your plan

Environment Canada turns on its crisis management plan, and informs all the involved partners that it will be the lead agency. These partners include Health, Emergency Preparedness Canada, Canadian Parks Service/DIAND, and DND which will provide logistic support.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

11:00 DAY ONE

... ENVIRONMENT CANADA'S CRISIS OPERATIONS ROOM, HULL

...The ADM introduces PaulCuillerier as the National Crisis Coordinator and hands off the meeting to him. Paul introduces the team.

Assemble the team and assign responsibilities:

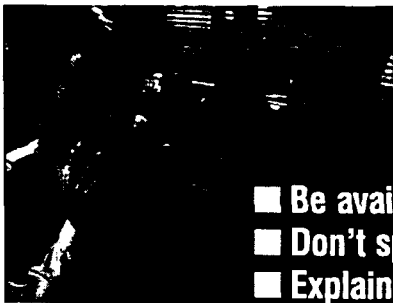
- Crisis Coordination
- Communications
- Spokesperson
- Legal
- Finance
- Science/technical
- Policy
- Scribe
- Partners:
 - Fisheries and Oceans
 - Canadian Coast Guard

EXERCISE #2:

The meeting is interrupted by a secretary with a message for Lynn Adams (the communications advisor). A CBC reporter is on the line, asking for confirmation of the dumping incident as well as the government's initial comments.

Should Lynn take the call?

And if she does, how should she handle it?



- Be available
- Don't speculate
- Explain the facts
- Assure control

Lynn takes the call. She acknowledges that the incident occurred and states what is known clearly and directly: a federal government response team is on-site assessing the situation. Data is coming in, and a complete statement will follow. She says she cannot comment without a more complete picture: "We'll **have a pressline out by 2:00pm** and a designated **spokesperson will be available by 5:00pm.**"

12:05 DAY ONE

... CRISIS OPERATIONS ROOM

The crisis management team is watching the noon news on TV.

. excerpt from news broadcast:

NEWS REPORTER: "...**according to Planetwatch, unscrupulous shipowners have been dumping toxic cargos here for some time.**"

PLANETWATCH REPRESENTATIVE: "The **federal** government has not been **enforcing its own regulations**. The **Oilcor Eagle** has been leaking oil **for over 17 years**, and **absolutely nothing's been done about it**. The government just **pretends that the problem isn't then?** **Meanwhile,** other people have been **coming in and dumping their toxic waste on top of it.**"

NEWS REPORTER: "...a **source in Environment Canada** has confirmed that a **federal emergency response team is at the site, evacuating the situation**. A statement is expected **later today**. We'll be following this story as it develops."

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Clearly, the situation is escalating. With only two hours to question period, it's critical that a series of Qs&As be prepared. Lynn Adams leaves the crisis management team meeting to spearhead the communications effort. Working with her crisis communications group, she prepares a pressline, and asks that it be distributed to all the partners for feedback and approval by 1pm.

Back in the crisis operations room, the team defines the crisis to be managed. Its task is to:

- Mobilize federal assets in order to:
- determine what occurred;
- clean up the dump site, and;
- recover lost confidence.

Additional information has come in. Reports from Environment Canada's on-site response team confirm that about 1/4 of the barrels are rusted and appear to be leaking. Since, in sea water, it takes about 15 years for rust to develop on these barrels, dumping may have been going on for some time (as PlanetWatch has alleged). Local health authorities are temporarily closing public beaches at the Provincial Park until more is known about the extent of the contamination and the risk to human health.

EXERCISE #3:

The government's environmental policy has been under attack recently, and this incident is likely to provoke questions in today's Question Period. Yet at this point, not very much is known about the situation.

What should the Government's initial position be?

14 : 12 DAY ONE

...QUESTION PERIOD, OTTAWA



EXCERPT FROM MP'S QUESTION: "Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of the Environment or the Minister of Transport comment about the allegations that chemicals **are** being dumped in Canadian waters, and that this has been going on for 15 years without Government action? Can either Minister assure the Canadian public that this government is acting?"

EXCERPT FROM THE MINISTER'S ANSWER: "Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Honourable Member that response teams from Environment Canada, the Coast Guard and the Department of National Defence have been at the site since early this morning. They have confirmed that there has been an illegal dumping, and that some contamination is present. I have directed them to conduct a full investigation, but at this time, it is too early to speculate about the allegation that this has been going on for 15 years. "

- Don't stonewall
- Acknowledge event occurred
- Explain further steps to be taken
- Assure confidence and control

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

15:50 DAY ONE

... CRISIS OPERATIONS ROOM, OTTAWA

The suspected ship *Maxima* has been traced to "Global Waste Management", an offshore company that specializes in the disposal of toxic waste. The company's record is shaky. It is alleged that it transports these waste products to dump sites in 3rd world countries. Global Waste Management's activities in Canada are limited. It does most of its business with American companies. Attempts are underway to identify and trace the company's clients in order to find out what the ship might have been carrying.

At Paul's request, Lynn provides an update on the media coverage to date:

LYNN: "**Radio stations in the Maritimes and in eastern Quebec are covering the story already. CBC Newsworld is carrying briefer reports, but it looks like the story will go national at 60 'clock.**"

PAUL: "**Are you preparing a response?**"

LYNN: "**We have a pressline and a statement being prepared right now, and of course, Daniel Couture, our designated spokesperson, will be interviewed on the 60 'clock news.**"

Daniel asks Lynn about the likely angle PlanetWatch will try to place on the situation.

LYNN: "**I've prepared a dossier on Planetwatch for you to consult. Planetwatch has been after G/06a/ Waste Management for some time... it's highly likely that they'll exaggerate to attract the greatest amount of media coverage.**"

In the meantime, the regional response group has reported back with cost estimates for the clean-up. Projected expenditures for site clean-up, testing, equipment and the establishment of an on-site laboratory capability are in the \$1 million range.

..Paul asks the finance advisor on the team to contact her colleagues at Treasury Board Secretariat to secure the funds as quickly as possible,

16:45 DAY ONE

... OTTAWA

Daniel Couture, the team's designated spokesperson, is about to give a TV interview.

EXERCISE #4:

Daniel Couture, a Director-General in the Environmental Protection Service, has been Environment Canada's designated spokesperson on several recent crises.

What are the attributes that make an ideal spokesperson?

EXCERPT FROM DANIEL'S INTERVIEW, FRENCH NEWS CHANNEL: "**Je peux assurer la population canadienne qu'il n'y a absolument aucun danger pour la santé des gens. Il y a très peu de matières. On a trouvé qu'un peu de matières qui ont été relâchées par les barils en question, mais à l'état de traces seulement.**"

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

EXCERPT FROM DANIEL'S INTERVIEW, ENGLISH NEWS CHANNEL: "*Canadian Armed Forces divers have been monitoring the wreck for the Coast Guard. We have footage of the wreck over many years, and there has never been a barrel there. / don't know where Planetwatch obtained its information. "*

The designated spokesperson should be:

- Bilingual;
- Senior enough to be credible;
- Knowledgeable about policy on related issues;
- Articulate, patient... and thick skinned!

CONTINUATION OF ENGLISH TV NEWS REPORT:

VOICE OF REPORTER: "*But despite the government's assurance that the situation is under control, the people who live near the dump site are still wom"ed. "*

A LOCAL MOTHER: "*My kids used to play on that beach... / mean, how do I know they haven't been exposed to some kind of fatal poison? Now, they've closed it. There had to have been something really wrong. Everybody's really wom"ed. "*

19:40 DAY ONE

... CRISIS OPERATIONS ROOM

David Thornton, the teams science advisor, reports on the contents of the barrels: "*Based on the Planetwatch video, it appears that there are two types of waste involved. In the new barrels there's a common industrial chemical known as "pickle liquor", which is ferric chloride dissolved in hydrochloric acid. The older barrels are marked with a number, "NA9389", which means the contents are acid/cad smelter dust. "*

Investigation into the source of the chemicals has revealed that the acid lead smelterdust found in the rusted barrels might have come from an abandoned industrial plant site in Ontario that was cleaned up last year. The company in charge of the cleanup hired Global Waste Management to dispose of the site contaminants.

Information has also come in from the RCMP, which has been assisting the team. Apparently, the Hamilton Harbour Commission has confirmed that the ship *Maxima* was loaded with over a hundred barrels of acid lead smelter dust on June 26th. Also on the ship's manifest were 26 barrels of ferric chloride, loaded legally from a disposal company in New York state.

Paul asks Lynn Adams for an update on the media coverage.

LYNN: "*Right now, interest in the incident is increasing moment by moment. There will be reports on tonight's national news shows from Radio-Canada, le Point and CBC Prime Time. Also, all the local news shows are reporting the story, with local Atlantic stations doing a lot of in-depth coverage. Tomorrow morning, the major networks have asked for a joint interview with a government representative as well as Planetwatch's spokesperson. "*

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

EXERCISE #5:

With the increasing media attention, communications has become critical. Now, new information regarding the potential source of part of the contaminants has come in.

On what should Lynn's communications team be focusing?

23:15 DAY ONE

... COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS ROOM, OTTAWA

...Lynn is working with her team to complete a revised pressline, and get feedback and approval from all partners as soon as possible, in order to make the morning news deadlines. ..she also goes over the key talking points for next morning's interview, so that Daniel will be prepared.

- Ensure partners' agreement
- Only release confirmed facts
- Anticipate likely questions
- Continually reassure control
- Prepare in advance
- Rehearse... rehearse... rehearse!



That evening, Daniel will go over all the anticipated questions, and rehearse his answers, working with a partner who can play "devil's advocate".

THE NEXT DAY

09:30 DAY TWO

...CRISIS OPERATIONS ROOM, OTTAWA

The whole crisis management team has assembled for an update and progress report. At the flip chart, Lynn Adams presents an analysis of the media coverage. "**As you can see, there's been a clear improvement in the coverage. / think it's just possible to say that we've turned the corner.**"

But despite the more positive tone of the coverage, there are bound to be more questions in the House that day. Lynn's team will focus on preparing a series of strong Qs&As, incorporating all the new information that's come in to ensure that the Minister is in a more favorable position.

.. she tells her team to focus on the fact that "**this is an isolated incident.**"



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

EXCERPT FROM EVENING NETWORK NEWS SHOW:

REPORTERS VOICE: "Today, **the Environment Minister confirmed that barrels of chemicals recovered from the Oilcor Eagle wreck site were dumped there two nights ago, and were not, as environmental watchdog group PlanetWatch had alleged, the result of a long-term program of illegal dumping over the Eagle site.**"

"The Environment Minister is convinced that this has been an isolated incident. Environment Canada, with the assistance of the Coast Guard and Canadian Forces divers, will complete the clean-up within 48 hours. The government will be working in co-operation with the appropriate judicial authorities to bring the owners of the waste management company to trial."



We're going to leave our hypothetical crisis here, with the situation pretty much under control. Take a moment to think about the crisis you just observed. As crises go, this scenario was fairly straightforward. But look at the number of groups involved in containing and depoliticizing it:



- #Canadian Coast Guard
- #Environment Canada
- ✓ Privy Council Office
- #Treasury Board Secretariat
- ✓ Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- #Heritage-Parks Canada
- #Health Canada
- ✓ Emergency Preparedness Canada
- #National Defence
- #Canadian Forces
- ✓ RCMP

plus a significant number of local, regional and provincial groups.

Even a technically and politically uncomplicated event can become a complex crisis management challenge. One you can prepare for, with an understanding of:

- **what a crisis is;**
- **the confidence and control steps that must be managed;**
- **solid crisis communications planning and, above all;**
- **a strong and tested crisis management plan.**

Crisis in the political environment can be tough challenges.

They are also *inevitable*.

But if you're well prepared, you will be able to turn chaos into capital.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Communicating in a Crisis A Guidebook for Handling the Public Affairs Aspects of an Emergency; Chevron Corporate Communications, 225 Bush Street, San Francisco, CA 94104, 1991.

Crisis Communications; International Association of Business Communicators, Suite 600, One Hallidie Plaza, San Francisco, CA 94102, 1991.

Crisis Management - A Casebook; Michael Charles & John Kim, Charles Thomas Publisher, 2600 S. First Street, Springfield, IL 62794, 1988, ISBN 0-398-05408-8.

Crisis Management in Government... Lessons Learned: a seminar slide package presented by Dr. Peter Meyboom, 1989. Copies available from Environment Canada, 351 St. Joseph Blvd., 17th Floor, Hull, Quebec KIA 0H3.

Crisis Management Planning Manual; Environment Canada, 351 St. Joseph Blvd., 17th Floor, Hull, Quebec KIA 0H3, 1991.

Crisis Management Primer; Environment Canada, 351 St. Joseph Blvd., 17th Floor, Hull, Quebec KIA 0H3, 1992.

Departmental Crisis Communications Planning Guidebook; Environment Canada, 351 St. Joseph Blvd., 17th Floor, Hull, Quebec K1A 0H3, 1993.

Guide for Crisis Management Planning; Environment Canada, 351 St. Joseph Blvd., 17th Floor, Hull, Quebec KIA 0H3, 1992.

Handbook of Effective Emergency and Crisis Management; Mayer Nudell & Norman Antokol, Lexington Books, Maxwell MacMillan Canada, 539 Collier MacMillan Dr., Cambridge, Ontario N1R 5W9, 1988, ISBN 0-669-24948-3.

On the Spot; Dow Corning Corporation, P.O. Box 1000, Plymouth, MI 48170, 1990.

States of Emergency; Patrick Lagadec, Butterworth-Heinemann, 7 Clegg Road, Markham, Ontario L6G 1A1, 1990, ISBN 0-7506-1124-3.

When It Hits the Fan; Gerald C. Meyers, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108, 1986, ISBN 0-04-440039-X.

When You Are the Headline; Robert B. Irvine, Institute for Crisis Management, Suite 200, 710 W. Main Street, Louisville, KY 40202, 1987, ISBN 0-87094-926-8.