

Rochester Yacht Club
Crisis Communication Plan and Process

Author
Lois Breen
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RYC Crisis Communication Plan and Process

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RYC Crisis Communication Policy

Introduction

This crisis communication plan is a generic, basic crisis communication plan. It is intended to be used as a guide to select representatives, the process to follow and the documentation that must be made in a crisis. A crisis is any situation that threatens the integrity or reputation of the yacht club, usually brought on by adverse or negative media attention and where a yacht club representative will be required to make a public statement. The situation might be a legal dispute, theft, accident, fire or manmade disaster that could be attributed to the yacht club and may be a situation where in the eyes of the media or general public, the yacht club did not react to a situation in the appropriate manner. If handled correctly, the damage can be minimized.

The Crisis Communication Team Members

Choose representatives who may be called upon to contribute to a crisis communication team. The expectation is that this team will control adverse communications and provide accurate communication to the public.

Document possible crisis communication team members. The possible members will include all executive committee members, all directors, club manager, waterfront director, club attorney, junior sail director, board of directors, facilities chair person, yard master. This document must be updated annually at the time of the annual meeting where new executive committee members and board members are installed or in the event of a change of staff who is identified in the list.

Appendix A

Crisis Communication Team Training:

Each Crisis Communication Team member will review this document, the RYC Crisis Communication Plan and Process, and the following document annually as training.

“Crisis Communication Plan: A PR Blue Print by Sandra K. Clawson”.

<https://www.scribd.com/document/38837539/Crisis-Communication-Plan-a-PR-Blueprint>

Copies of these documents are available on the RYC server, the main club house and the white house office.

Additional optional training is available at <https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/training/basic/index.asp>

Application of the RYC Crisis Communication Process

Choose the Event Crisis Communication Team

Using **Appendix B** document the selected crisis Communication team, at the time of an event that requires crisis management. The team may consist of all commodores, board of directors, club manager, waterfront director, principal race officer, event chair person, club attorney, Jr. sail director, facilities chair person, yard master. Additional members might include anyone who has technical expertise associated with the incident or eye witnesses. The team may add or exclude from this list depending on the nature of the event however, the team should consist of at least 3 people and include an executive committee member.

Create a contact list for the crisis communication team members and include their name, phone number and the time they are active on the team.

Appendix C2

Crisis Communication Team Staff

The purpose of the Crisis Communication Team Staff, is to answer initial inquiries from anyone prior to the release of the first and subsequent official communications. Use **Appendix C1** to document the crisis Communication Team Staff activity. Only these people will be permitted answer inquiries that come into the club by phone, email, text or any other form of communication.

Determine what the message of the Crisis Communication Team Staff will be. For example, "Facts are still being gathered and a statement is being prepared. An announcement is expected by _____. If you would like to give me your name and number and I will call you back with the time and location of the announcement."

A contact log will be managed by the Crisis Communication Team Staff. The log should be established to record all contact from the media or other parties inquiring about the crisis. This will help to ensure that required callbacks are not overlooked. It will also assist in the post-crisis analysis.

The contact log should contain the following information:

Date, Time, Name of caller, Questions(s) asked, Telephone number, Person responsible for response, Additional follow-up needs.

The contact log can be recorded by whatever means the staff chooses.

Media Policies and Procedures

Use **Appendix C1** to document activity related to the media.

Select a place to be used as a media center. It should be some distance from the crisis communication team to ensure that media do not have access to the communications team. If there is a visual (a fire or rescue operation) don't make the media center in such a remote site that they can't see what is going

Establish rules for the media. Are escorts required or do they only have access to specific locations to work from? Identify escorts if necessary. Controlling the interview process is key to managing the crisis. All media should be treated equally. What is given to one (access, information) should be given to all. It is best to restrict all interviews to the primary spokesperson, back-up spokesperson or technical expert however reporters have the right to interview anyone they want to. "I'm not authorized to comment" is an appropriate response for people other than the spokesperson to provide when asked questions. Document the media center location and rules.

Designate a spokesperson

Defer to police, Fire Department or other official if possible, however, one individual should be designated as the primary spokesperson to represent the club to make official statements and answer media questions throughout the crisis. A backup to this person will also be selected. Choose individuals who will serve as technical experts or advisors to the spokesperson if necessary. These resources might include a financial expert, an engineer, anyone deemed necessary during a specific kind of crisis. Document the spokesperson/s for the event.

Appendix C2

Criteria for the spokesperson and backup spokesperson:

Comfortable in front of a TV camera and with reporters, skilled in handling media, skilled in directing responses to another topic, skilled in identifying key points, able to speak without using jargon, knowledgeable about the

club and the crisis at hand, able to establish credibility, able to project confidence, able to remain calm in stressful situations.

In addition to the designated spokesperson and backup, it is important to obtain the identity of spokespersons for other parties involved in the crisis; police, fire department, health officials, etc., so statements and contacts can be coordinated between the individuals and their organizations/interests when possible. Document the community spokesperson and their back up.

Appendix C2

Prepared Statements

Use **Appendix D** to document activity of the Crisis Communication Team.

Determine what the official statement/s of the Communications Team will be including appropriate positioning.

Examples of positioning are:

- Human error
- Unauthorized procedures
- Inadequate supervision
- Errors of judgement
- Inadequate standard operating procedures
- Mechanical failure

Things to think about:

- "Tell it all, tell it fast and tell the truth"
- Don't over reach and don't speculated.
- When a mistake has been made to admit it, do whatever is possible to re-establish credibility and confidence Protect the integrity and reputation of the club.
- Never try to lie, deny or hide involvement in the incident.
- Don't let the lawyers make the decisions

Communicate as soon as possible to control public perception. Your first news release should include at a minimum the who, what, when and where of the situation. If you do nothing more than show concern for those involved, you are on the right track. Be sensitive when releasing names of individuals involved. Have they given their permission to be identified? Have their families been notified? You must give only the facts that have been gathered from reliable sources and confirmed. Express concern and generate good will to secure member and employee confidence. Don't volunteer information unless it is a point the club wants to make. Don't talk off the record.

As the crisis progresses and new information and facts become available develop new prepared statements to be made by the spokesperson at the onset of any media interview, briefing or news conference.

These prepared statements also can be read over the telephone to reporters who call to request information but are not represented at news conferences or briefings. The statement can also be sent electronically or used on a social media platform.

Sample News Release

"A (what happened) at (location) involving (who) occurred today at (time). The incident is under investigation and more information is forthcoming."

You can include any other information that is known at the time and that you choose to release. You can include the time for the next news release. Document your media message and all subsequent messages.

Practicing Tough Questions

It is important that the spokesperson, backup and advisors spend time rehearsing prepared statements and answers to possible "tough" questions that might be asked. Similar rehearsals should be conducted prior to each subsequent media interview or briefing. It is also important to anticipate and practice new questions as the story evolves. These questions and answers should be for internal use only and not for distribution.

Collateral Materials

Information brochures or fact sheets are helpful in informing the reporters or anyone else seeking information. In some cases, it might be useful or necessary to create materials that explain how a system or procedure works and point out where a breakdown occurred. This will reduce the chance of a reporter interpreting the situation erroneously. If one is not already available a generic fact sheet could be created and made available. Always do what you can to make a complicated issue simple. If you provide a visual it will be exactly what you want to be seen and not what someone else finds or creates themselves.

Key Audiences

You may choose to tailor your message to the recipient. For example, a specific message might be created for members, employees, the community, government etc.

Speaker Presentations

Checklist of Do's and Don'ts

The Do's

- Use a full script with LARGE TYPE for easy reading.
- Leave wide margin for notes to yourself.
- Leave pages unstapled for easier handling at podium.
- Highlight and mark your script to guide your delivery.
- Practice: Read it aloud using a mirror or a sample audience
- If you are using any equipment be sure that you know how to use it and check it's operability in advance.

When you are speaking:

- Stand erect, speak distinctly, establish eye contact (or appear to do so) with audience from time to time.
- Stay within the allotted presentation time.

When you are answering questions:

- Remain confident, answer only the questions asked and do so succinctly and clearly.
- Remember that you do not have to know everything and "I will have to check that out and get back to you." Is an appropriate response.
- Avoid allowing one person to dominate the questions by moving on.

When you are finished with your presentation:

- Remain long enough to give individuals an opportunity to talk with you.
- See to it that arrangements are made for distributing information materials to the group, if requested/appropriate.

The Don'ts

When preparing to give a speech,

- Don't assume that you can "wing it".

When you are speaking

- Don't mumble, speak too loudly into the microphone, wander away from prepared text, tell an unprepared anecdote or joke, or speak longer than time allotted.

When you are answering questions,

- Don't become defensive or emotional, answer more than the question itself or allow one person to dominate the interview.

After the Incident

When the activity surrounding the incident is over review of the handling and the communication of the incident is to be done within one week. All team members and staff should be present. Document all thoughts on what went well and what did not. Keep all documentation made during the incident including notes made by the communications team and the communications team staff and the review session. Update the Crisis Communication Plan if necessary.

For additional tips and guidelines on media interviews, Broadcast Interviews and TV Talk Show Interviews see **Crisis Communication Plan: A PR Blue Print by Sandra K. Clawson Freeo**

Crisis Communication Team Members:

Commodore
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Vice Commodore
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Rear Commodore
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Past Commodore
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Director
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Director
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Director
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Director
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Director
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Director
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Club Manager
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Waterfront Director
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Club Attorney
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Jr Sail Director
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Facilities Chair Person
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Yard Master
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Other:
Title _____
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____
Title _____
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____
Title _____
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____
Title _____
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____
Title _____
Name _____ mobile _____ other _____

Application of the RYC Crisis Communication Process

In the event of an emergency refer to the RYC Crisis Communication Policy and complete the following steps:

- Contact the primary crisis communication team members from Appendix A and notify them of the situation. Document all participants of the communications team for this event.
Appendix C2
- Choose the spokesperson and their backup.
Appendix C2
- Notify all staff who might receive inquiries from outside the club (phone, email, text etc.) and inform them that they are not authorized to provide any information. "I'm not authorized to speak about the incident. The club will release information as soon as possible." is an appropriate response to inquiries.
- Choose the Crisis Communication Team Staff and document their names and the message they will be providing.
Appendix C1
- Choose the media center and document any rules that are established for the media.
Appendix C1
- Determine who the community crisis team (Fire, Police, etc.) members are.
Appendix C2
- Write a communications team statement to be released to the media.
Appendix D
- Update the communications team statement and rerelease as additional information is available.
Appendix D

Event Documentation

Media

Media Center Location _____

Rules for the media. (location, escorts required?)

Communication Team Staff:

Title: _____	Name: _____	Active time: _____
Title: _____	Name: _____	Active time: _____
Title: _____	Name: _____	Active time: _____
Title: _____	Name: _____	Active time: _____
Title: _____	Name: _____	Active time: _____

Communication Team Staff Preliminary Response to Inquiries, phone calls and in person inquiries

Message:

Additional or subsequent messages must be documented.

