CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT for Communications Professionals

PRE-PLANNING
- Make a list of your audiences ahead of time. Break them into internal and external. How you respond to each will be different.
- Work with district leadership to secure buy-in on plan in advance of crisis.
- Consider having scripts prepared that only need name/location updates.
- Consider using prepared holding statements before putting out misinformation in order to communicate as quickly as possible.
- Activate your “dark” website page with updated information.
- Have a recorded message Caller ID number for alerts to aid with the return calls following a Black Board or School Messenger robocall. (*We have activated our alert system. For additional information, please refer to our district website and social media accounts.*)
- Have a firm framework procedure in place regarding the reporting and internal communication flow when a crisis occurs - emphasize time sensitivity.
- Back-up plan for down communication.
- Campuses/Departments have designated roles.
- Make sure everyone understands their roles.

DURING THE CRISIS/EVENT
- Understand the circumstances; define the problem.
- Create a brief summary for yourself and your team that details just the facts that can be used for all communications (Staff, Parents, Media, Board, Staff answering calls, etc.)
- Remember the three things people want to see from an organization in a crisis: authority, information and empathy.
- Coordinate with police, fire and emergency personnel to release accurate information.
- Own what you own, remember to address the response and what your district is doing.
- Remember to seek updates from your subject-matter experts every hour to keep community updated.
- Communicate to your audiences (Employees & Board, Parents, Media) and keep the news media informed, as needed. (Media may follow your social media accounts to gather information and details.) Utilize your crisis communication team roster, key communicator lists and media contact sheets.
- Anticipate needs: clerical support to answer phones. Utilize other staff members to monitor social media. Note trends, topics that may need to be addressed once things slow down.
- Note all incoming calls, including a media log.
- Identify press conference sites away from crisis location.
- Remind team members of their assigned roles.
- Expect chaos. Expect the unexpected. Stay calm.

AFTER THE CRISIS/EVENT
- Provide a timetable for future plans when possible.
- Debrief after to better prepare for the future.
- Have a recorded message Caller ID number for alerts to aid with the return calls following a Black Board or School Messenger robocall.
- Consider a universal statement or email letter so that you can save time not having to create a media statement vs. parent letter, etc.
- Don’t make promises/policy in crisis mode. Stay true to what makes your district special.

Remember that TSPRA members come first. If you need anything: help, support, someone to lend an ear, someone to lend a hand, your TSPRA colleagues and friends are ready to help! Call the TSPRA Office at (512) 474-9107.