



CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSIBILITIES

The superintendent or designee should make a judgment call on whether or not he/she belongs at the site of the incident. Clearly, in the case of life-threatening situations, the district’s lead authority should get to the site or location designated for decision-making and support.

<p><u>On-Site/Incident--Lead Person</u></p> <p><u>Key Responsibilities</u></p> <p>TIPS:</p> <p>Let the lead agency speak to the issue, i.e. fire or police.</p> <p>You speak to district’s situation.</p> <p>Connect with the parents and community.</p>
<p>Establish contact with emergency services.</p>
<p>Assist in establishing a command center for emergency services.</p>
<p>Set up parent-student reunion site. Staff this site (1) so that parents feel they have access to information and (2) to monitor misinformation and rumors. Pass this information to the communications point person at the district so it can be cleared up. TIP: Media will gather in this location to capture images and comments. Keep your ear to the ground; be the source of news/information to the media.</p>
<p>Notify district lead with (1) parent/student reunion location information, (2) emergency services on site, (3) status of situation, (4) media on site, so district lead can monitor media.</p>
<p>Establish area for media and establish yourself as the contact for district information.</p>
<p>Inform media about: (1) student/minor privacy obligations and FERPA responsibilities, (2) media contact, (3) frequency of district updates.</p>
<p>Defer to lead agencies, fire, police, etc. as the source of information on the incident.</p>
<p>Provide regular updates to district lead so information disseminated is timely and accurate. Establish frequency of update calls, e.g. every 15 minutes.</p>

<p><u>District Office--Lead Person</u></p> <p><u>Key Responsibilities</u></p> <p>TIPS:</p> <p>Become the source of news.</p> <p>Get the facts out.</p> <p>Regularly update information, even if you must report "no status change."</p> <p>Time and date stamp all messages to clarify currency of information.</p> <p>Use the media to disseminate confirmed information.</p>
<p>Set a phone line that must stay open. Give the number to on-site lead.</p>
<p>Gather and verify facts from on-site lead and lead agencies.</p>
<p>Secure writer(s).</p> <p>Secure translation services, if necessary.</p> <p>Have legal counsel on hold in case messages require review.</p>
<p>Prepare to notify/update district to: (1) prioritize contact list (2) prepare situation statement/fact sheet (3) determine best method for contacting key people/audiences, e.g. calls, email, Twitter, etc.</p> <p>TIPS:</p> <p>Immediately inform Board members, cabinet, all site administrators, office managers, as these people are most frequently confronted with parent/public questions. Media may go to Board Members' homes for comments.</p> <p>Remind people to direct all calls to the district office and check key district resources for news updates.</p>
<p>Media:</p> <p>Monitor the media, or assign this task. Correct misinformation.</p> <p>Make note of all media calls, including contact names, media services and phone numbers.</p>
<p>Set online news alert on incident. Monitor media. Call and correct media, if necessary.</p>
<p>When appropriate, begin preparing communications for next school day, i.e. information to parents, site administrator, office staff, teachers, etc. Consider providing messages for site to use with parents and media.</p>

SAMPLE LETTER

Sample language for Back to School Night announcements, school and district newsletters, district handbook, website and registration.

Parents:

Student and campus safety is of paramount importance to everyone in the XX District. We take all possible precautions to help ensure that our campuses are safe, secure and provide a peaceful learning environment.

However, we all know that unfortunate and unplanned events can occur. In the case of an emergency, we are prepared to provide to our students, staff, parents and school community timely, accurate and honest information.

As you know, information moves fast in the electronic age. One inaccurate email, text message or tweet can spark rumors, create unnecessary panic or make a real emergency much worse.

In the case of an emergency, we ask that you remember to look for accurate information from the district. We will deliver messages over these services:

- Website/Social Media. The district's website has an "Emergency Alert" page. Our web address is XX. We will issue updates using (list all resources to be used, including social media tools and district app if one is in place).
- Email. If you provide an email address to the district, we will contact you through an email message in an emergency.
- Phone Calls. We can reach parents at each school site and throughout the entire district through our All-Call message system. Please be sure to provide us the phone number that we should call in an emergency.
- Local Media. We will work closely with the local media to keep our community informed of the situation.

In an emergency, we ask that you do not contact the school's main line. For the sake of student safety, we must keep this line open for use by regional safety officials.

Also, if the nature of the situation warrants lockdown and students/staff are to shelter in place, we ask you not to call your child on his/her cell phone as the ring tone itself may create a dangerous situation.

For the sake of student and staff safety, we have planned for emergencies. We certainly hope that our planning is never put to use. But to help ensure campus safety and security, we have worked in cooperation with other agencies to prepare a full crisis preparedness and communications plan, and you have a role too: Please make sure that we have the best phone number and email address to reach you. These two simple pieces of information can be crucial.

Respectfully,
Superintendent

This is a summary only and not legal advice. We recommend that you consult with legal counsel to determine how this may apply to your specific facts and circumstances. F3 offers clients communications services when topics such as negotiations, employee matters and social media issues, capture community and media attention. For more information or assistance with communications planning, please contact the F3 Communications Department: (323) 330-6300.

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Tips for Conducting a Press Conference

When and Where

- When the volume of media inquiries become difficult to manage/address.
- When you want to be sure to set forth the organization's message and next steps.
- When you need the media to help disseminate key information, such as lock down reunion site, Red Cross emergency shelters, etc.
- Conduct away from school sites/employees and students, if possible.
- In a campus crisis situation, collaborate with the lead agency to establish the media location at the site.

Who and How

- Spokesperson or designee. Refer to Board policies.
- At a podium, where media can place microphones.
- No photos of students or organization images (logos) in background, if possible.
- Allow lead agencies to deliver their key points, for example law enforcement may offer comments and take questions regarding an investigation.
- Review other agency's comments in advance, to ensure that your messages do not conflict.
- In these situations, try to avoid standing at a podium flanked by police, as this image is lasting.

What

- Begin with a prepared statement.
- Provide the statement in writing to the media.
- Open by saying you have some information and then you will take questions.
- Do not plan to stand at the podium until all questions are asked and answered. Consider when you feel the essential points have been made, and then say, "I will take one more question."
- If you are going to provide frequent/regular media updates, then tell them when you will return with an update.
- Consider having a colleague tape the press conference.
- Conclude with "Thank you."
- Be prepared to offer the media one-on-one Q and A time following the press conference.
- Have a trusted translator available.

Tips for Developing Your Statement

- Tell the truth.
- Speak in simple language.
- Consider what you need to say and what your audience (parents, students and employees) needs to hear.
- Have legal counsel review the statement.
- Do not repeat words that you do not want to hear or read.
- Develop three key messages, based on what you need to say and what you want people to hear, and deliver these messages.
- Consider the obvious, most difficult questions and address these in your statement messages.

Tips for Q and A

- Practice transition lines that will help you connect with the question or theme and return to your message.
Example
 - Reporter's question: Can you confirm that the teacher knew about the hazing?
 - Response: (transition line) We share your desire to fully understand the situation, which is why (message) we are conducting an investigation....
- Do not speculate. It is okay to say, "I will not speculate, but I assure you when all the facts are in we will take the appropriate action to ensure...."
- Stay calm.
- Do not get angry.
- Be engaged, connected, concerned, confident and sincere.
- Remember, the reporters ask the questions, but you are speaking to your community. Use words that your community will understand; speak to parents and employees.

Statement or Press Release

- A press release says "I want your attention."
- A statement can be prepared and held so you're ready when/if you get calls.
- Use a statement for sensitive matters, such as death, injury or personnel themes.

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