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# Crisis Management at Western Kentucky University

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*Western Kentucky University*

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# **Crisis Management at Western Kentucky University**

by

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A thesis for Western Kentucky University's

Honors Program

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## **Abstract**

To assist universities in developing effective crisis-management systems, this thesis provides a general overview of crisis-management procedures and guidelines that are applicable to various types of organizations, including institutions for higher education. An analysis of Western Kentucky University's crisis-management plan is incorporated, as well. The plan's strengths and weaknesses are examined. Finally, the thesis includes recommendations, based on innovations at other Kentucky universities, that Western might adopt for use in its own crisis-management system.

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## Foreword

*“While not all crises can be foreseen, let alone prevented, all of them can be managed far more effectively if we understand and practice the best of what is humanly possible”*

*(Mitroff, 2001, p. 5)*

When dealing with crisis situations, universities should utilize basic crisis-management procedures and guidelines with emphasis on a well-written, regularly updated and practiced manual that includes vital information and strategies necessary to managing a crisis effectively. The methods for dealing with crises are essentially the same for all types of organizations; however, there have been changes throughout the years. This is especially applicable to the importance placed on the crisis-management plan. The following example illustrates this development.

An NCAA game played by Western Kentucky University ended in victory for the university and a civil disturbance by 500 Western students. The celebration had gotten out of hand, and students were blocking a bridge. Traffic was stopped, and students were climbing upon an 18-wheel truck. Dero Downing, Western Kentucky University president from 1969 to 1979, explained how the university administrators dealt with the crisis. “We had a group of people who were not hesitant to grab somebody by the nape of the neck and tell them they were out of order” (2002).

According to Downing, Western did not have a written manual describing how crises should be resolved. However, he also made clear that the administrators did not “just fly by the seat” of their pants. They had a non-written plan to bring together experienced educators who knew how to deal with crises. “They were knowledgeable enough to handle most emergency situations,” Downing said. Additionally, Western did not have a mass warning system at that time, nor did it have an advanced call network. Yet, the employees “. . . had a sensitivity to the importance of safety and security on campus” (Downing, 2002). At the first sound of sirens, Downing was out of bed calling Public Safety, trying to determine if the situation was on campus; if so, he immediately contacted employees who could resolve the emergency. He attributed Western’s past crisis-management successes to the involvement of faculty, administrators, and school officials.

Today, WKU does have a written plan describing its crisis-management system. With so many legal implications and a growing number of crisis possibilities, administrators at Western have found it important to have a written document that protects the university’s interests as well as human lives. Moreover, Western has grown since the presidency of Dero Downing. The crisis-management system at WKU has evolved through the years and is presently undergoing revision. The same is true for universities throughout the nation; and as our country faces new threats, and a growing number of people attend college, the importance of an efficient crisis-management system multiplies.

## **Crisis Management Overview**

A crisis can be described as an immediate and unexpected occurrence that affects a company so severely that it threatens its ability to remain solvent (Jiminez, 2001, p. 54). It is also characterized by a high degree of public and media scrutiny. Accidents happen, competition closes in, an angry former employee creates a hostage situation, or management makes one or a series of fatal mistakes. Then it becomes evident that crisis management is the only remedy for these situations.

“Real crisis management is embedded firmly in the company’s corporate culture and can best be described as reputation management, that is, a point of view that prevents a crisis from happening or minimizing its consequences because responsible action is taken by the affected company” (Jiminez, 2001, p. 54). Management and public relations (PR) must work hand-in-hand to accomplish this goal. Moreover, in the realm of crisis management, one struggles to stay afloat or drown, and there is little room for mistakes. An organization must quickly grasp the situation and use crisis management immediately or be overcome by the tide of public opinion.

Higher-education facilities must also learn to use the same basic tools that for-profit organizations utilize in crisis management to effectively prevent and respond to a crisis. They must develop the management capabilities to handle problem situations prior to the crisis level



and design a detailed plan to respond to actual crises with speed, tact, and an understanding of the media and target audience. However, to reach ultimate efficiency, the plan must be readily available, adaptable in diverse crises, and practiced before an emergency develops; all those who are to participate should know their roles and how to fulfill them.

### Prevention

Prevention is the key to active crisis management. It is the most productive level at which a company or university can operate. According to the Institute for Crisis Management (ICM) in Louisville, “only 23% of business crises are ‘no-warning’ or ‘sudden’ calamities. . . . The majority of business crises, the Institute found, began as smoldering ones, small and internal problems that someone knew about but did nothing to address” (Strozniak, 2001, p. 11). For instance, ICM conducted an analysis in which “75% of crises resulted from inappropriate action or inaction by top management” (Strozniak). It is possible that a large portion of these dilemmas sprang specifically from mismanagement of change. The situations may have deteriorated slowly, yet management did not control the flow of change within the institution. Nevertheless, with careful consideration, controlling change is possible.

“Change can be guided, and the pace of it can be quickened or slowed; to influence change, [one] must anticipate events and move to dominate them” (Meyers, 1986, p. 203). To direct change, managers must turn to strategic planning. It requires more than simply responding to situations; managers should closely govern those things within their power to control while projecting the outcome. If the prognosis is grim, management should quickly evaluate and employ the game plan most likely to correct the situation. Slow change is

considered *evolution* and is healthy for an existing structure. It is fast, unanticipated change that necessitates a crisis manager (Meyers) and circumstances become a public-relations issue.

From a public-relations standpoint, crises can be anticipated and moderated, as well. “The earlier the intervention, the less pain and disruption there will be” (Meyers, 1986, p. 206). This should become the motto of all public relations practitioners as they strive to regulate public opinion, which is easier to maneuver before negative perceptions become stagnant beliefs. Communication must be carefully monitored and assessed as positive or detrimental to the organization’s reputation. Then, it is vital to quickly distribute correct internal and external information during a crisis. Tact and truth should be the general theme of all news releases and interviews; and the goal is to be perceived as open and responsible rather than shifty and disreputable.

In the context of crises, early intervention is absolutely crucial to success, as are several additional stages as shown in *Exhibit A-1* (Meyers).

*Exhibit A-1*

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**Steps of a well-managed crisis**

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<i>Stage</i>	<i>Sequence</i>
Pre-crisis:	Evidence→Acknowledgment→Resolve
Crisis:	Climax→Assessment→Direction
Post-crisis:	Rebuilding→Recovery→Reform

---

Once evidence of a potential crisis emerges, it is essential that the problem immediately be acknowledged and the situation resolved. Robin Cohn, author of *The PR Crisis Bible*, advised: “You stop what you’re doing and fix it. Although it may be expensive it certainly will be a lot

less costly than a full-blown crisis” (Strozniak, 2001, p 12). If the problem reaches the climax, crisis managers must assess the damage, devise a plan of action, and strive in that direction. Finally, there is a period of rebuilding the organization’s public image, recovery from the crisis, and reform of those elements which contributed to the situation. Nevertheless, the most effective crisis managers never allow issues to extend past the first stage.

The importance of this intervention can be illustrated by the Continental Illinois Bank crisis of 1984. The bank failed because a crisis was mismanaged in several ways, including poorly controlled change, inaction to prevent the crisis, and failure to listen to an employee. The bank chairman, Roger Anderson, advocated aggressive growth in 1976, but the bank was not prepared for such rapid change. Management did not set up an inner support system for the expansion; the result was an unstable infrastructure. Also, one bank officer warned top managers to use caution in dealing with Penn Square Bank. However, they denied that anything was wrong. Continental continued in their dealings with Penn Square, which later suffered from heavy losses.

By 1984, Anderson was let go from the chief executive position. Continental attempted to persuade foreign investors to “hold firm,” but the message backfired. Investors withdrew as quickly as they could, and the FDIC had to save the bank. “The federal agency assumed control of 80 percent of the bank’s stock, replaced top management, and replaced most of the board of directors. Nonperformance and then denial had led to a crisis, and radical change was the ultimate result” (Meyers, 1986, p. 26). Had the situation been dealt with properly during the pre-crisis stage, it might not have developed into a crisis. Yet, managers did not pay attention to the

warning signs. Perhaps if they had listened to the counsel presented by an employee, they would not have undergone such damage.

Early-warning signs can allow organizations to anticipate problems and resolve them *before* they actually become crises. In order for managers to initiate monitoring for early-warning signs, they must

1. Drop the “kill the messenger mentality”
2. Establish a reward system to *encourage* reports of early-warning signs
3. Invest in “crisis centers” that evaluate information, looking for crisis indicators
4. Perform complete crisis audits of all company systems (Strozniak, 2001, p. 12)

In this equation, it is the responsibility of the organization’s management and public relations department to monitor internal communications to assure that employees feel comfortable reporting problem issues. As facilitators of internal and external communications, it is not the PR department’s role to act upon situations which are essentially managerial concerns, but to ensure that employees are able to come forth with information that may affect the company’s operations. For instance:

“One way to shift positional power to the lower levels is to introduce the Silver Bullet Challenge, which provides every employee guaranteed access to anyone in management, including the chief executive, whenever he or she feels the need to take a problem all the way to the top” (Jones, 2001, p. 9). Issue each employee a ‘silver bullet’ (or some other token). They can use that token to gain direct access to someone anywhere in the chain of command. This is simply one strategy the public relations department can utilize to empower each employee. To undertake such a campaign would certainly require the permission of management.

Nonetheless, it is unlikely that employees would frivolously toss away their one opportunity to be heard by any person of their choice. It would, however, allow them to freely voice major concerns that could be crises in the making.

Disclosure of information during a crisis to outside sources, such as the media, also falls under the stewardship of public relations. Yet, once the information reaches management, it is their duty to assess and deal with the problem, as well as develop a rewards program, invest in a crisis center, and ensure that crisis audits are performed. “The first steps in crisis management are to determine (1) how likely you are to run suddenly into deep trouble, and (2) how well prepared you are to deal with it” (Meyers, 1986, p. 217). This generally entails a crisis audit that measures susceptibility to problem situations. Audits should expose the kinds of crises the organization is likely to face and rank them in their order of concern. The organization can begin planning for the immediate problems and then prepare for the less problematic issues. Furthermore, audits measure the capability of the organization to deal with trouble. Normally, it should answer three very general questions:

1. To what extent can your organization *detect* a crisis at an early stage?
2. How well will it *manage* a crisis if one occurs?
3. To what degree will the organization *benefit* from a crisis after it has passed?

(Meyers, 1986, p. 219)

#### *Ability to Detect a Crisis at Stage One*

Generally, there are five things that are essential to analyze within this section of an audit. First, are early warning sensors in place? As stated previously, it is necessary to detect

problems early. Second, are crisis responsibilities clear? Everyone should know his/her role in dealing with a crisis. Third, is management open to surprise and criticism? If managers are not open, the organization could run into serious trouble when employees come to them with issues; their pride cannot be allowed to jeopardize the organization's well-being. Fourth, does bad news travel upward easily in the company? Again, we need to implement the aforementioned strategies to facilitate upward communication: drop the "kill the messenger mentality" and establish an awards system. Finally, are there enough mature and talented people to withstand the sting of exposed failure? All representatives should be carefully selected. If they can not calmly cope with the heat of a media grilling, they should not hold that responsibility (Meyers, 1986, p. 221).

### *Managing a Crisis When It Hits*

More questions must also be answered when analyzing the organization's ability to perform in the heat of battle. If the answers are negative, the organization may have tremendous difficulty remaining solvent in a crisis. First, has a **crisis team** been selected and trained? This is a group of people who will focus their efforts specifically on the crisis to successfully pull the organization through as unscathed as possible. Second, is the organization design flexible and open? A tree bends in a harsh wind, or snaps from the force. **Flexibility** will allow necessary mobility for employees to work on the crisis team while others maintain their previous duties. Third, are **resources** marshaled to cope with adversity? If materials, information, and human resources are not collected or located before the crisis, it may be impossible to scrounge for them during an intense situation. Fourth, is **outside help** lined up and available on short notice?

The organization will need to call in experts in some situations. Finally, are instructions and assignments clear, current, and rehearsed? **A detailed plan** will profit the organization very little if no one knows what to do or the plan is obsolete.

### *Benefiting From a Crisis*

The last section of the audit concerns Stage Three of a well-managed crisis (see *Exhibit A-1*). In the aftermath of the problem, the organization should look toward rebuilding, recovery, and reform. Therefore, does change happen easily in the organization? If not, more problems will arise. A crisis demands change within; these changes must be made or the organization will face the same problems in the future. Also, a crisis can be a wonderful catalyst of improvement. It forces an organization to break out of stagnancy. Institutions should take advantage of the opportunity a crisis presents. If a crisis cannot be taken as such, improvements must be made immediately to enable the organization to embrace change. Finally, is the organization capable of accepting new ways? Again, if the answer is negative, the organization is already facing a major issue that should be addressed immediately (Meyers, 1986, p. 221).

### Preparation

After the audit is performed and the organization's strengths and weakness have been assessed, it is time to begin preparation for crises. Of course, management and PR can use prevention techniques to deter problem situations before they get worse, but these people need to be prepared in the event that a crisis does occur. "When [a company doesn't] put in the infrastructure to handle issues such as crisis management, a company sets its own demise," said

Ian Mitroff, founder of the Center for Crisis Management at the University of Southern California (Strozniak, 2001, p. 12). It is much better to make decisions before a crisis, since they are apt to be more rational than those made in the middle of an emergency. Also, it is important to remember that prep time before a crisis will shorten the duration of the emergency, thus saving time, money, and manpower (Jiminez, 2001, p. 54).

The importance of an established infrastructure cannot be overly stressed. “A company that is prepared for a crisis can emerge from a situation in a position of strength. A company that isn’t can suffer lasting damage” (Jiminez, 2001, p. 55). *List A-2* displays several ways to build this infrastructure.

*List A-2*

- 7 Ways to Prepare for a Crisis:
1. Make sure one executive is responsible for crisis-management planning.
  2. Establish a **crisis-management team** within the organization.
  3. Conduct a vulnerabilities analysis.
  4. Prepare worst-case scenarios for the **five highest-priority crises** that could occur. Develop plans to prevent or manage them.
  5. Develop **fact sheets** or background information about procedures.
  6. Provide a 24-hour-a-day **response system**.
  7. Obtain the involvement and counsel of **key advisers** outside of your organization, including those in the practices of law and crisis management.
- (Caponigro, 2001, p. 30)

These seven steps will aid an organization in developing the groundwork from which to handle a crisis. Basic information is collected, experts are located, and the highest priority crises are planned for. Moreover, it is important to set up a 24-hour response system. In the event of a



crisis, an organization might be flooded with calls from the media and public who have questions and concerns.

Crisis Teams are another integral element of the crisis infrastructure. “The right people, properly trained, must be in a good position to manage a crisis when it hits” (Meyers, 1986, p. 221). Gerald C. Meyers and John Holusha, authors of *When It Hits the Fan: Managing the Nine Crises of Business*, explain in their book who the “right” people would be:

The teams should be composed of people who are especially suited to getting the job done. They should have frequent contact, be in close proximity, and work well together.

Each member should be prepared to forgo his normal routine and outside interests during a crisis. And all should be very well compensated for performing ‘combat duty.’ (1986)

Furthermore, each member should be chosen for a specific talent that would benefit the group in a particular area.

For instance, a crisis requires creativity in order for a company to develop solutions during an emergency. Situations can occur that had neither been prepared for, nor even considered. “The most creative senior executive in the company who can take pressure and will accept the assignment should be chosen for the group” (Meyers, 1986, p. 222). It is his/her duty to take on the role of innovator and initiate changes that could save the organization from dissolution. Then, the executive must help with rebuilding and reform. Inventive recommendations should lessen the possibility that a similar crisis could occur.

“Another member is the person who knows how the business really works” (Meyers).

Generally, this member should have wide experience and the best contacts throughout the organization because he/she will act as the primary source of intelligence. The more knowledge

the team has, the better equipped it will be to deal with an emergency. There will not be time to gather much information during a crisis; it is best to have someone there who already has the knowledge the situation requires, or the contacts to find out what is needed.

Then, the question arises as to who the leader of the team should be. Who should hold the reins? It is possible that the senior member of team should be the one in power, but this is not always feasible. However, the leader should be the member with authority and resources. His/her role will include serving as the “communications nexus” (Meyers, 1986, p. 223). All information will pass through this member as he/she acts as the central figure of the group. The leader is usually the CEO of a company or president of an organization/university, but a surrogate may be chosen in case this person is part of the problem.

Perspective, training, and expert opinion are the remaining factors essential to the crisis team. A team member from outside the organization would be ideal to lend perspective to the group. The best choice is a person not connected to the organization, but one who is familiar with it and has faced similar problems. Then, once the fourth member of the team is selected, the group must practice situations similar to those it will face. This will make the group more efficient when a crisis does occur. “Simulations will help a team learn how to recognize a crisis, what actions are appropriate, how to develop options, assess time, consider dimensions, and judge control” (Meyers, 1986, p. 224). The team should look into the problems similar organizations have faced or the organization’s own past experiences to judge which situations would be most advantageous to simulate.

Finally, team members should know that professionals are available to assist in crises that require additional expertise. The experts should be contacted in advance. This step will

increase the team's efficiency dramatically. "A word of caution: outside professionals come with their own biases" (Meyers, 1986, p. 225). It is advisable to obtain a second expert opinion. Contingency fees can also be used to ensure that the organization gets what it pays for. "Crisis consultants should be paid for results, not hours" (Meyers). This will help deter long hours with little results; a company should not tolerate bilking. Furthermore, if an expert does not measure up, that person should be let go.

It is important to set up crisis centers from which the team is to work in preparation of and during an emergency. The center should be a room specifically allotted to crisis management, equipped with telephones, computers, blackboards, and all of the information that might be needed. For instance, pictures of key people, telephone numbers of state congressmen, organization charts, maps and diagrams of buildings, and all contingency plans must permanently be on file at the center. The team should utilize the room for practice and all stages of a well-managed crisis (i.e. pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis).

The last step in preparation of a crisis is the development of a crisis-management plan based on different "what if" scenarios. Then the plan should be critiqued for each situation and the necessary adjustments made (Lewis, 2001, p. 4). "While preparing [a] plan, [a person] should include [the company's] mission statement. . . [one] should also include an organizational telephone contact list that enables key people to be called. And further, [the] plan should have duties and responsibilities that these key individuals will need to perform if called upon" (Jiminez, 2001, p. 55). *List A-3* exhibits four basic planning steps.

“... A crisis may not be preventable, but it is almost always manageable with sufficient advance planning” (Caponigro, 2001, p. 30). It is easy to forget the importance of developing a crisis-management plan before an emergency actually occurs. Nevertheless, those organizations that plan for emergencies can turn a bad situation into one that will produce beneficial change. They must simply recall that the best way to handle a crisis is to be prepared.

*List A-3*

**4 Things to Do While Planning:**  
1. Make an assessment of your operation and its potential issues or occurrences that could spark a crisis or generate media interest.  
2. Walk or view your company with a "media's eye view."  
3. Develop a crisis manual that is simple and easy to read.  
4. Train. (Jiminez, 2001, p. 55).

Proactive Response

Even after all the organization's preventative measures and preparation, its response to a crisis in progress can leave the public with a lasting perception of the organization. Perhaps one of the best examples of an effective response is that of Johnson & Johnson during the poisoned Tylenol crisis:

In 1982, seven people died from cyanide-laced Tylenol. Johnson & Johnson sprang into action with the largest recall (31 million bottles) and consumer protection campaign ever launched. Some people argue the J&J was slow to react. However, as a reporter covering events as they unfolded, I remember immediate action, total honesty and almost daily briefings from top management, including telephone conference calls for the media

with real-time Q&A, as well as up-to-the-minute information from a highly proactive PR department. (Lewis, 2001, p. 4)

J&J was correct in taking immediate action to recall all bottles that could have been tainted. Indeed, it was very expensive, but demonstrated to the public that J&J was willing to sacrifice profit for customer safety; the action was perceived as responsible. J&J also acted as if there were nothing to hide by holding frequent briefings and conference calls. The company did not deny what had happened or shrug off the blame. The employees simply did all that they could to inform their customers and help authorities uncover the circumstances. With J&J's cooperation, authorities quickly found the employee responsible for the poisoning, and the company regained much of the consumers' trust. The case is an excellent example from which an organization can base its crisis response.

Kathleen Hessert of Communications Concepts explained that a crisis response incorporates three components: performance, image, and exposure (Woodruff, 2001, p. 23). Performance is how well an organization reacts when emergencies occur. Image is how an audience perceives the performance. Exposure is how much of that audience gets the message an organization intends. "Every crisis goes away. How you make it go away is critical," Hessert says. "Go for the quick bleed, not the slow hemorrhage" (Woodruff). Additionally, an organization faces three major challenges once a crisis happens. These consist of managing the crisis, communicating the organization's message on the crisis and resuming business.

Nevertheless, as shown in *Exhibit A-4*, there is a successful general approach for responding to a crisis at its climax. They are steps that management and public relations should

tackle together. Management must consider the business element of the situation, while public-relations personnel need to follow these steps from the stance of public perception.

Lessons from perception crises show that management should be in charge early and pinpoint the problem. Then, once a crisis arises, the chief executive should seek an

outsider's opinion on how his/her action should appear to the public. The expert helps put the two main inside views -- complete openness vs. self-serving disclosures -- into perspective and suggests a wiser course. Then, the PR department can act decisively to remedy the perception issue. This step includes sending the correct message to the public in a timely manner. "Getting out a proactive message serves a company in several ways. It creates an image that the company is the best source of information about itself and increases credibility within the media and the public" (Woodruff, 2001, p. 23).

Messages should also be chosen wisely before they are sent out through the media and other sources. Perception is reality. "Reality is what the public perceives to be true, and if the public grasps reality in a certain way, that is what it becomes" (Meyers, 1986, p. 64). Thus, the content of each message should be consistent with those previously sent and developed with the overall objective of the organization in mind. Access to media should be continuous, and reports given in a timely fashion. Nevertheless, PR personnel should not act without careful deliberation. "Having a plan in place is key here, because acting promptly should not be an

*Exhibit A-4*

<p><b><i>The General Approach</i></b> Handling most crises at the climax:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Take charge</li><li>2. Understand the circumstances</li><li>3. Define the problem</li><li>4. Rank the options</li><li>5. Move decisively</li><li>6. Eliminate the cause</li><li>7. Prevent recurrence</li></ol> <p>(Meyers, 2001, p. 257)</p>
--

excuse for acting incorrectly” (Woodruff, 2001, p. 23). Each message should be analyzed to assure that it will help, rather than harm, the organization’s image.

A major concept to remember is that image matters. For instance, a spokesperson for the organization must exude poise, honesty, charm, confidence and intelligence; he/she needs to be attractive and friendly. The public needs and wants someone they can trust to tell them what is going on. The right representative can tap into that emotion and, in essence, become the public’s advocate during the crisis. However, neither the spokesperson nor the organization’s response to the emergency should be chosen lightly.

For example, Richard J. Jacob -- the chairman of Dayco Corporation -- is a fun, extroverted, personable man. *Fortune Magazine* listed him as “one of the toughest bosses in the country” (Meyer, 1986, 51). However, Jacob avoided the media until a crisis occurred. He then “. . . insisted on treating the affair as an ordinary business loss, despite his being viewed by the public as a boss who lined his pockets from company coffers” (Meyer). Jacob was later found innocent of any wrongdoing, yet he did not confront the spreading rumors of insider-trading violations because his lawyers advised him to keep silent. Eventually, he did challenge these allegations by giving interviews to *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, but the damage was already done. Dayco and Jacob both suffered in public perception. Jacob said that “. . . he still bears the scars” (Meyer). Had he responded to the situation differently, with more emphasis on working through the media, perhaps the public would have viewed Jacob and Dayco more positively.

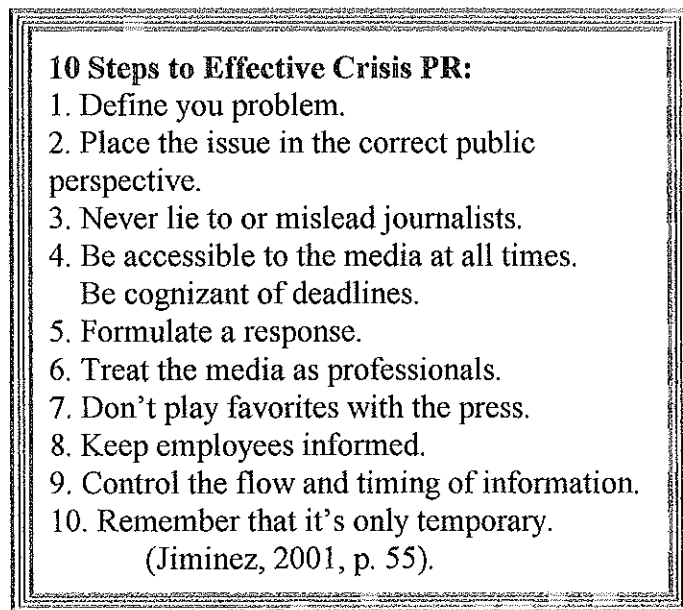
A crisis situation cannot be treated as an ordinary business affair. “If a good public image can go a long way toward promoting a business career, the reverse is also true. It can be

tremendously damaging for a company to have its reputation come under attack in the new media” (Meyers, 1986, p. 45). Information spreads with the speed of light because of technological advancements from which the press now benefits. Additionally, just one negative article in a high exposure newspaper will “set off fireworks in the executive suite” (Meyers).

Unfortunately, most negative media stories have at least a small basis in fact. Thus, even if all the details are incorrect, once an organization has been recognized as the bad guy, it takes a beating in the news. The situation is blown out of proportion as the media fights for new angles, which is why a hasty decision will have repercussions. Therefore, “. . . companies should monitor media covering the crisis so that they are able to react to any messages. This monitoring should include the Internet, often a prime source of rumors” (Woodruff, 2001, p. 23). PR teams must catch wrong information before the public has an opportunity to view it as fact, and reinforce their efforts with positive messages from the appropriate representative.

*List A-5* shows 10 steps that have proven to be a productive public relations strategy during a crisis, as well as any other time at which the organization needs press coverage. Several of the steps require in-house planning and organization. However, dealing with media is the principal concern for the PR team during a crisis

*List A-5*

- 
- 10 Steps to Effective Crisis PR:**
1. Define your problem.
  2. Place the issue in the correct public perspective.
  3. Never lie to or mislead journalists.
  4. Be accessible to the media at all times.  
Be cognizant of deadlines.
  5. Formulate a response.
  6. Treat the media as professionals.
  7. Don't play favorites with the press.
  8. Keep employees informed.
  9. Control the flow and timing of information.
  10. Remember that it's only temporary.
- (Jiminez, 2001, p. 55).



situation. If the media are not dealt with properly, the organization could face serious backlash. The PR team must avoid making enemies with journalists, who have real power during a crisis. Finally, it is just as important to keep in mind that the situation is merely temporary. A company must deal with it, move on, and rebuild.

### Dealing With the Media

“The reason that positive PR has such an affirmative effect on the consumer and, therefore, [the] company, is because it brings with it the coveted, tacit seal of approval by an ‘independent’ and ‘trusted’ source, the media” (Goldglantz, 2001, p. 20). This statement exemplifies the reason that dealing with the media is such a tremendous job for PR during a crisis. Once the organization is portrayed as having media acceptance and respect, it is seen as acceptable by the general public. Additionally, careful negotiation of the media system is especially crucial in an emergency.

There are several rules an organization must follow when dealing with the media in order to avoid a public thrashing. They are very simple, but each of them should be cautiously observed. First, think like a reporter. “Effective crisis communications means getting the facts straight and putting them in perspective, and fast” (Crisis Management 101, 2001, p. 22). This rule also includes a healthy respect for their deadlines. PR personnel should not inconvenience journalists by making them wait for a release too close to deadline.

Second, don't duck. “People will form opinions quickly about [the] crisis and how [the company] handle[s] it” (Crisis Management 101, 2001, p. 22). Even if PR personnel do not yet have all the answers, they can promise to get the facts to reporter as quickly as possible.

However, PR must then provide the details as soon as they are known. An organization cannot shut itself off from the media. “Adopting a bunker mentality is the quickest way to proclaim guilt” (Crisis Management). An organization should never fail to respond to a media inquiry and be as forthcoming as possible.

The third rule requires that an organization put the truth in perspective. The facts should be put into context of the situation. The media will discover the basic details of the crisis. However, they also want to know about the situation as a whole. This is an excellent opportunity to salvage the organization’s reputation if the circumstances were not caused by the organization but forces outside it. PR can explain everything the organization did to correct the problem. However, those dealing with the media should **never** lie. If anyone in the company compromises its competence or integrity; the media *will* find out.

Honesty is the best policy. “If [employees] lie, or give the appearance of lying by hedging. . . during a crisis, it will be remembered, and [the organization’s] credibility factor plummets to zero. [It] will not be given the benefit of the doubt -- [the organization] immediately become[s] guilty by association” (Lewis, 2001, p. 4). Furthermore, it is advisable to follow the last rule and keep cool. It may be difficult to do so during a media grilling, but everyone should be open, honest and cooperative to demonstrate that the organization is concerned and caring. It is the spokesperson’s demeanor that actually shapes public attitudes about the organization (Crisis Management 101, 2001, p. 22).

Finally, the public relations department must keep tabs on top management. During a crisis, they are under more stress than anyone else in the organization because they are the most well-known figures. The media tend to question them with more vehemence. Therefore, it is

critical to have one particular person with the right image who is willing to take the heat under a media grilling. This will usually save other top management from commenting. It is also easier for the PR team to keep tight reign over the image and communications of a single person as compared with several managers. For PR, this control is critical during a crisis because it is the best way to end the situation quickly and without extensive damage. The following best explains this concept:

Public perception crises have a particularly shattering effect on top management. The very visibility of the situation interferes with rational thought. It is bad enough to have a business problem and the internal turmoil that accompanies it, but it is much worse when reporters call with probing questions and the public seems to brand [the manager] as a loser or a crook. For those not accustomed to dealing with the press and the public, it can be a bitter experience. The challenge is to end the affair as quickly as possible and limit the damage. (Meyers, 1986, p. 55)

#### *PR vs. Corporate Advisors*

There is a common battle which occurs in every crisis when it is time to deal with the media. It is the battle between a PR department and corporate advisors. Normally, the public relations group will want to follow the previously mentioned rules and be open about the situation. However, corporate advisors are more interested in maintaining the appearance of innocence, no matter what they must say or not say. There are arguments for both viewpoints. Nevertheless, honesty will never cease to be the best policy.

Openness in a crisis clears the air, and the fuss is over quickly. “Retreating behind a stone wall will only raise suspicions that more lurid misdeeds remain to be discovered” (Meyers, 1986, p. 46). Yet, tactful disclosure leaves nothing for the media to dig into. Once that happens, the situation is old news. The media might want updates from time to time, but the emergency has lost all novelty. However, there are those who do not comprehend this concept in their struggle to maintain innocence. They want to decline all comment to the media in order to save information for the courtroom or private negotiations. These advisors do not understand that they will do more harm than good. “Trying to minimize or hush up an event can do just the opposite, blowing it up to major proportions in the public’s mind. . .” (Meyers).

The Berkeley, California, Police Department learned this valuable lesson when, in the early morning hours of September 27, 1990, 33 people were held hostage by Merhad Dashti, a lone gunman in Henry’s Publick House and Grille (Television and Terrorism, 1990). Eight people were wounded and one student from the University of California, Berkeley, died. The siege ended when a police assault team stormed the bar and Dashti was killed. However, during the eight hours the hostage situation lasted, television stations were broadcasting live from the scene. The police attempted to give them a press conference, but the location of the update was away from the hostage site. Reporters did not want to leave the scene and continued to broadcast as the event unfolded. This endangered the lives of the students within the bar. The media helicopter disrupted radio communications in the police force, which made it difficult for officers to let each other know what actions they were taking. Also, Dashti had the television tuned to a news station and grew agitated when a news anchor described him negatively. The

reporters even broadcasted the police assault team as they prepared to enter the building, thereby warning Dashti of police action.

The police would have liked more cooperation from the media during the crisis, yet they did not explain the situation to reporters. The press conference should have been held closer to the scene, or additional personnel could have been contacted to disperse information. Reporters were simply giving information as the events unfolded without any editorial discretion from higher management. A majority of them did not understand how they were hindering police efforts. The Berkeley Police Department should have sought aid from nearby departments to deal with the sudden rush of reporters who needed information and guidelines. It is better to work *with* reporters in a mutually beneficial relationship than to expect them to “go away” with nothing.

There is not a single formula for dealing with crises. Several guidelines which would help minimize the negative effects of the situation on the organization should be followed. But, in truth, crisis management is really quite simple, and can be summed in a single statement: “There is no grade of ‘perfect’ in crisis management -- it is a matter of reducing pain and damage -- but the results are measurable in big dollar savings and protection of human resources” (Meyers, 1986, p. 206). Management and PR should solve the problem, correct the damage, and use what they have learned as the organization moves on into a new phase of its existence.

## **Western Kentucky University's Crisis-Management Plan**

An organization's crisis-management (CM) plan is *the* most essential tool a crisis manager can use to resolve an emergency situation successfully. During a crisis, there will be little time to collect data, assign responsibilities, and gather resources. Thus, the plan should contain all of the pertinent information necessary and protocols for different crisis scenarios the organization is most likely to face. As previously stated (Strozniak, 2001), "When [a company doesn't] put in the infrastructure to handle issues such as crisis management, a company sets its own demise." A plan acts as the cornerstone of this infrastructure. If one does not exist, an organization will stumble blindly through an emergency. "A company that is prepared for a crisis can emerge from a situation in a position of strength. A company that isn't can suffer lasting damage" (Jiminez, 2001, p. 55).

"Preparedness to cope with the effects of a crisis includes many diverse but interrelated elements, which must be woven into an integrated emergency management system involving all departments of the University, other public and support agencies, plus the individual citizen" (*Crisis*, 1994, p. 1). Western Kentucky University's CM plan was developed around this concept and the ideal that "[. . .] it is necessary to develop a plan based from within the existing departments using their expertise which operate routinely each day" (*Crisis*). An analysis of

Western's plan indicates that it is essentially well-constructed. It is codified in a manual incorporating university, community, state, and agency efforts in a comprehensive attempt to control crisis situations. Employees contributed to its composition by drafting sections on their topic of expertise. However, the university must make a few necessary changes in procedure and preparation in order to optimize the plan's effectiveness.

The plan addresses the five primary items crisis management entails -- people, equipment, facilities, money, and information. Included are names of personnel assigned to key crisis-management positions and their responsibilities. The plan also lists agencies and groups from which the university can gather additional manpower. Equipment needs incorporate any items necessary for communication, life saving, and property-management functions, while essential facilities consist of the Crisis Operations Center, or COC, and all emergency shelters.

Another element addressed is money, which must be available for all transportation and emergency resource purchases. Finally, information is key to the success of crisis management. Telephone numbers, maps, architectural designs, resource lists, shelter lists, and names of outside sources should be readily accessible in an emergency. The main body of Western's plan contains general information concerning these five primary elements, while the appendices delve further into specific information and policies.

### People

Section II of Western's CM plan lists and identifies key players and describes their main responsibilities. For instance, the president of the university acts as the Crisis Management

Executive. He is responsible for “the basic policies which govern the campus emergency organization” (*Crisis*, 1994, p. 6). A Crisis Management Council comprised of several vice presidents, the Director of University Relations, University Counsel, and a Western professor advise the Executive on policy decisions during the crisis. The Vice President for Finance serves as the Crisis Management Director, coordinating and executing the plan. The manual goes into further detail concerning the CM Executive, Council, and Director by listing the specific tasks they must perform in order to fulfill their responsibilities. Finally, the Director of the Department of Public Safety functions as Operations Chief in charge of directing operations from the COC. COC support staff and extra manpower are also mentioned.

The positions of Executive, Council, Director, and Operations Chief comprise the crisis-management hierarchy. To maintain order, a policy-making body outside the operations sector is necessary to establish general goals and make pressing judgements. Those in operations must concentrate on performing the tasks that will stabilize the situation. The manpower available at a university makes such delegation of responsibility possible. At other companies or organizations, the decision-making body often has responsibilities beyond that function.

Section III of the plan lists the Crisis Operations Center staff, which is also the CM team in Western’s case. The CM team is based on a variation of the guidelines mentioned in the literature review; the team is designed to optimize the use of Western’s diverse and valuable human resources. Because the university is a very large and self-contained entity, Western must be prepared to manage crises in a rather independent manner. A well-formed team can facilitate this. Additionally, if a city-wide crisis develops, Western will be the central player providing shelter, food, and protection to Bowling Green citizens. The plan takes this obligation into



consideration. *Table B-1* displays the positions assigned to the CM team and the responsibilities of each team member.

*Table B-1: Crisis-Management Team*

<u>COC Staff:</u>	<u>Responsibilities:</u>
Operations Chief	<i>Directing COC operations and supervising field operations</i>
Public Information Officer	<i>Distributes information to the press, community, and concerned parents</i>
Medical Director	<i>Coordinates campus first aid and emergency medical operations, including aid from other medical facilities</i>
Resource Manager	<i>Tracks and records resource availability, use, and purchase</i>
Personnel Manager	<i>Assesses, assigns, and records available manpower</i>
Communications Manager	<i>Coordinates communication channels within the CM system</i>
Shelter Manager	<i>Supervises shelter use and coordinates with Red Cross</i>
Administrator of Facilities Management	<i>Supervises all plant and equipment operations (i.e. debris removal, construction, repairs, etc.)</i>
Volunteer Coordinator	<i>Coordinates volunteer manpower and outside agencies</i>
Communications Technician	<i>Provides technical support and maintenance for the communications equipment.</i>

All CM team members play a significant role in the containment and resolution of a crisis. They are responsible for four out of the five key elements every CM plan should address. The CM Director has authority over the fifth element -- money. Health is also a major concern. The students, faculty, and staff rely on the university for their bodily protection. Since Western has a health resource already available, it *should* be utilized in a crisis to stabilize the situation and safeguard the university's image. Although membership of the team does not follow the

specific guidelines applicable to other organizations, WKU's CM team is well-chosen based on the particular needs of an institute for higher education.

The people who fill these positions must also be carefully chosen. There are two types of positions filled in a crisis-management team -- Space positions and Face positions. Face positions are those that are chosen based on personality and appeal. Does the employee look good on camera? Can he/she seem trustworthy to other people? Space positions are chosen based on the daily duties an employee has in the organization. Does that person currently have the knowledge to efficiently do the tasks required?

All of the people on Western's team were determined according to Space positions. This is evident in the organizational chart attached as **Appendix A**. The employees assigned to CM team functions are leaders in departments that correspond to their crisis tasks. It is effective to use space positions because the employees have knowledge specifically in the area for which they have been selected. However, one position defies this general rule, that of university spokesperson. The role of spokesperson is a face position; Western should choose the highest-ranked employee who is most comfortable with the media and whom the public will perceive as trustworthy. During smaller crises, personnel from the Office of University Relations act as spokespeople for Western. Yet, the university president becomes the spokesperson in almost all major crises. Truthfully, the president might not be the best option, depending on that person's ability to deal with the media and reach the public.

Finally, the plan addresses possible sources for manpower. "The most effective response to a crisis or disaster will in many cases be a function of the efficient utilization of manpower" (*Crisis*, 1994, p. I-1). Federal, state, and local government agencies, as well as volunteer

organizations, are cited as possible sources for emergency manpower. Recruitment from these areas is the responsibility of the Volunteer coordinator. Annex I to the plan explains: "Once the extent of required manpower is established, students, employees, and outside volunteers will be recruited in priority order. Persons whose skills are determined to be incident critical, will be secured first as determined by the Crisis Management Director." However, it is advisable that this procedure be pre-organized and practiced. In a crisis there will be little time to train, and those people responsible for manpower must make quick decisions. It is best to have some previous idea of who to place in certain capacities and what tasks they should perform.

### Equipment

In any crisis situation, tools must be available to facilitate communication and minimize damage. Western's plan takes this into account; there are four members of the CM team responsible for equipment. The Communications Technician and Manager deal with the equipment necessary to facilitate information flow in an emergency. The Administrator of Facilities Management handles larger equipment and machinery, and the Resource Manager furnishes all supplies and equipment needed.

Many of the plan's annexes list the equipment supplies essential to the particular function it discusses. For example, manpower coordination necessitates computer equipment with access to all university data systems and a cellular telephone (*Crisis*, 1994, p. I-2). Also, energy supply management necessitates emergency power generators. Annex S offers a comprehensive inventory of all the equipment readily available to the university. It includes a

catalog of expendable supplies, general supplies, instrumentation, power equipment, transportation resources, and others. This is an extremely significant section to Western's plan. The list gives the description and location of each item, thus decreasing the time spent searching for the equipment. In an emergency, efficient use of time is crucial.

### Facilities

The facilities discussed in Western's CM plan include the Crisis Operations Center and safe zones specified for evacuations of campus buildings. "The Crisis Operations Center (COC) is a facility for centralized direction and control of the emergency organization and the campus community" (*Crisis*, 1994, p. 9). The plan names Room 340 of the Downing University Center as the primary COC location. An alternate location is the Institute for Economic Development, 2355 Nashville Road.

According to CM guidelines, a second facility some distance from the crisis source is a vital management contingency. WKU is correct in this decision. However, one might ask why a COC is so important that a second facility be designated. As explained in the university's CM plan,

A functional COC is the key to successful response and recovery operations. Within the COC, local entity decision-makers work together directing and coordinating emergency activities. The COC coordinating staff gathers and disseminates situation reports and information for the local decision-makers and other units of local, state and federal governments. Through this process, resources can be utilized without duplication of effort and operation can be more efficient. The COC also serves as the central

coordinating point for obtaining, analyzing, reporting, and retaining disaster-related information. . . (*Crisis*, 1994, p. A-2)

A COC is the central point of action from which all crisis-management operations emanate. Without it, management efforts would be scattered and ineffectual, thus rendering the university helpless in a crisis.

Other facilities essential in a university crisis include mass-care facilities. The plan appropriates the Shelter Manager as the liable employee for shelter supervision and coordination. Because Western's assistance would be imperative for the community's welfare in a city-wide crisis that could not otherwise be controlled, the plan includes a list of dorms, schools, and other public buildings that could act as congregate facilities. Additionally, feeding points are recorded. "When a relocatee is assigned to a congregate care facility the person will also be assigned to a nearby Mass Feeding Facility by the Registration Center" (*Crisis*, 1994, p. N-2). Western's help, or lack thereof, will be noted by the public and news media. Thus, all possible efforts should be organized and employed.

### Money

Money is the base resource for any organization facing a crisis situation. Therefore, it is vital to know who possesses the authority to use the university's money and what funds are set aside to secure an emergency. For instance, crisis purchasing falls among the Resource Manager's duties, but all purchases must be authorized by the CM Director. This knowledge allows other CM team members to go quickly through the correct channels when acquiring additional supplies or services, thus increasing efficiency.

The plan also requires the Resource Manager to purchase goods and services through existing price contracts when possible to expedite emergency purchases and reduce cost. Nevertheless, whether items are purchased from this venue or other sources, “[. . .] standard specifications must be used and every effort made to make the purchase at the lowest and best price possible” (*Crisis*, 1994, p. J-2). City and county agencies can offer support through resource augmentation, and further assistance may be sought through established mutual-aid agreements with private organizations, the American Red Cross, and other volunteer groups.

### Information

During a crisis, because there is little time to collect data, locate resources, or contact key players, it is vital to have such information available in a complete format before a crisis occurs. Western’s plan scores well in this element. For instance, Appendix B of the plan lists the CM team and telephone numbers at which they can be reached. This allows them to respond quickly to an emergency.

Appendix C lists the CM plan distribution. Key players on campus and various city departments and agencies have copies of the plan. To increase overall crisis response efficiency, outside agencies likely to be called upon to aid Western *should* know the university’s CM procedures and whom to contact in specific situations. This would cut confusion and unnecessary delays caused by unorganized efforts.

Western also recognizes the impact of information availability at the Crisis Operations Center. It is the Crisis Operations Chief’s duty to “Ensure that all available information is supplied to the Crisis Operations Center staff. Maps, status board, etc., will be in position at all

times. . .” (*Crisis*, 1994, p. A-3,4). Lack of proper information at the COC would hinder productive decision-making. While some staff members scurry for the information they need, others might make choices based on incomplete or outdated reports. Since bad decisions can be inadvertently made based on wrong information, a university should have relevant data on hand prior to a crisis situation.

The CM plan at WKU contains several annexes that catalog vital crisis-management data. This is effective because the data is in one location and accessible to the CM team and other decision-makers. For instance, Annex B indexes telephone numbers for the CM Executive, Director, Operations Chief, and COC staff. The plan also includes a city-wide list of emergency shelters and mass transportation capabilities (E-5,6,7), and emergency resource inventory lists for equipment, supplies and transportation (Annex S).

The comprehensive inventories virtually put essential items at the Resource Manager’s fingertips. The Shelter Manager, for example, can review the information and know in just a few moments where to place people. Relocation in general can be a hectic feat, but fast decisions are possible with current data. Annex N contains a feeding list that follows USDA standards for food allowance. This is an excellent baseline to follow. It provides for the health and physical safety of city and university citizens under Western’s care, thus reflecting on the university as a responsible institution.

All intelligence critical to the management of a crisis should be collected in an institution’s preparedness phase. Indeed, data gathering should be the first task each CM team member undertakes in preparation for an emergency. Annex K, for example, concerns Energy Supply Management; the first six items named in its preparedness phase deal with the

accumulation and maintenance of information. This includes essential personnel contacts at outside power suppliers, documents/maps locating energy resource distribution systems on campus, locations of emergency generators, etc. The gathering of such information should occur while the university is enjoying stability, not in the midst of a problem situation. Then, the information should be reviewed often and updated as needed.

#### General Analysis: Plan Overhaul

Overall, Western Kentucky University's crisis-management plan deals well with the five basic elements every plan should include: people, equipment, facilities, money, and information. The plan is also comprehensive, explaining procedures and responsibilities in many situations the university is likely to face. However, the plan needs revision for three major reasons.

First, much of the equipment lists, names, and phone numbers are out of date. Most people designated for important crisis-management positions in the old plan are not presently employed by the university. Secondly, vital information being collected for specific annexes was never fully compiled and added to the manual. Perhaps Western employees did gather this data, yet neglected to distribute it to others involved in crisis management. Everyone in an important CM role should have a complete copy of the plan. Finally, circumstances have changed since the plan was written in 1994. For instance, the United States has recently encountered terrorism, and although an attack on Western is unlikely, we must be prepared to deal with suspicious substances or people that could harm the student body. The plan should be updated to include procedures and information useful in controlling new threats to the university.



According to Robert Skipper (2001), WKU's Public Affairs Director, Western is currently conducting the first major revision to the plan since its composition in 1994. He also explained that there have been only two tabletop exercises for the entire plan in the last eight years. Summer training with the fire department and various drills on campus are conducted regularly, but the emergency training is fairly piecemeal. For instance, Skipper said that the communications department conducts regular training exercises, as does the department that handles hazardous materials; however, the various departments do not go through exercises together.

Dr. Gerald Tice, Vice President of Student Affairs and Campus Service, is the new Crisis Management Director. He is coordinating the CM plan revision, which is much like the first composition of the plan. Different departments are contributing annexes based on their areas of expertise. These will then be compiled into one plan to be reviewed and approved. However, Dr. Tice feels that this complete revision will not be the last update to Western's plan. "I'm not sure if it will ever be complete. If it is done correctly, because. . . every year we ought to be doing simulations, evaluations, and modifying whatever section we are reviewing. . . It ought to be an ongoing process from now on" (2001).

After the new manual is complete, Tice also wants to utilize tabletop exercises and put the plan into action. "That is our first goal, to go out to the South Campus where our crisis center is and set it up, work with the city. . . Work with the fire department. Make sure that it all works correctly" (2001). Tice wants to conduct two exercises per year to familiarize the faculty and staff with the plan, and evaluate its effectiveness. He aspires to keep the plan current by incorporating modifications each year.

Robert Deane, Western's Director of Public Safety and the plan's Operations Chief, agreed: "We have a pretty good [plan], but in a university setting, it needs to be updated regularly" (2001). The older plan is a good starting point; it includes the five key elements, and the general structure is comprehensive. However, because the university has so many people in administrative positions, there is a relatively high risk for turnover compared to other types of organizations. The names of people in key positions need to be updated regularly.

Western should build upon the 1994 version, bring the information to current status and add procedures that might be missing. Tice feels that the plan ". . . is a living document that is really never complete. We want to get a good basic document and build on it" (2001). Western can then follow through with the next step -- training. Tice and Deane agree that regular exercises are vital to the plan's effectiveness. "It was a year or so before I discovered we had a crisis-management plan," Tice said. "And that is what we don't want to have happen. It's easy to do; all of us get caught up in our details and if we do have a crisis, we'll wish that we had practiced it at that point" (2001).

The terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, September 11, 2002, and the subsequent anthrax threats put the entire country on guard. Western felt this reaction as well, especially after a few potentially hazardous situations. A suspicious white substance was found on a piece of mail in the Helm-Cravens Library. The building had to be contained for two hours, and no one except authorized emergency personnel could enter or leave. The Bowling Green Fire Department's Hazardous Response unit tested the substance on site for anthrax. With 95% accuracy, the test proved that it was not anthrax. However, the situation prompted the Crisis-Management Plan revision and a desire to practice the procedures more often.

According to the October 23 edition of Western's newspaper, *The College Heights Herald*, Tice called a meeting for October 17, 2001, the Wednesday after the anthrax scare, to "determine how well the situation was handled." Skipper feels that the situation was handled effectively, but there was room for improvement. "I think the Anthrax scare made us really serious about updating the plan," Skipper said. "That incident went as well as it could have. It really made us realize that what we had in writing was lacking." He explained that Western needs to be more specific in defining key player's roles, and find a way to keep the plan current. Skipper stressed the need for Western to be serious about practicing the plan as well. Since September 11, this view is shared by others in administration, and greater efforts will be made to practice the plan regularly. "I think you need the hands-on experience," Deane said. "You can learn a theory in a book, but can understand it much better once you use it in a hands-on setting."

### *Recent Changes*

Revisions have already been made in several areas of Western's crisis-management plan. For instance, the revised organizational chart shows the addition of a Director of Food Services to the crisis-management team. This person will be responsible for managing food services, food supplies, and water for students, employees, and other groups during a crisis. The responsibility did belong to the Resource Manager. However, the addition of a team member to deal specifically with food allows the Resource Manager to focus on other supplies. It allots someone more familiar with food and water safety regulations to deal with the issue.

There have also been changes concerning the people who will fill CM team positions. For example, WKU no longer has a Vice President for Finance and Administration; the position

was discarded. The new CM Director is Dr. Tice, the Vice President of Student Affairs and Campus Services. Telephone lists have also been amended to facilitate swift communication between the new key players.

There are many other additions and corrections, as well, especially in the information element. Six pages of cellular phone numbers were added to Annex B, Telecommunications, whereas, before the revision there was only one page of this important communication data. Western updated many other annex contact lists with correct names and phone numbers. Deane conceded that the main difficulty in crisis communications is keeping the list updated (2001).

During the revision, all annexes, including charts or lists of university resources, were reviewed. Current resources in Reception and Care/Evaluation, Transportation, Food Management, and Water Resource Management were again cataloged. The data missing from the previous plan, annex appendices marked "being developed," was included in the new draft. Four annexes had information pending in the previous plan; now there is only one annex with information missing, and revisions are not yet complete. The university is working to alleviate this major problem with the old plan by collecting the information before approving the new crisis-management plan.

Western has conducted a significant modification of the annex on hazardous materials. The previous plan consisted of five pages with seven appendices still being developed. According to Deane (2001), this is a weighty problem with the older plan. These absent sections were not only to contain data, but procedures and regulations to follow in a crisis. A train line runs parallel to the busy University Boulevard. It also spans near several dorms, parking lots, and athletic facilities. If a train derailed along this track, it would greatly impact the university

and everyone within a certain radius, depending on the nature of the accident. However, if the train carried hazardous materials, the threat to human safety would increase dramatically.

Without the correct procedures to follow, it becomes more likely that the situation would not be managed well. The necessary procedures are now present and follow professional and federal regulations. Other changes made to the plan are minor, but add to its overall arrangement and thoroughness.

### *Future Possibilities*

In addition to plan revisions and practice sessions twice each year, there are other possibilities Western can consider. Some of these ideas stem from innovations at other universities and organizations. For instance, Eastern Kentucky University's crisis-management plan is discussed in the university president's executive staff meeting one or twice each year, and updates are sent to the budget head of each department. Eastern also conducts low-level CM exercises twice each year in cooperation with the local community of Richmond, KY. Ronald Harrell from ECU's Office of University Relations explained that Eastern has benefited from a crisis plan that sets general management processes (2001). He added that the nature of ECU's plan allows for more flexibility. Although the plan is general, the university still has basic guidelines to follow. Jeff Stein, Director of Emergency Management at Murray, said that Murray uses the Federal Emergency Management Agency's guidelines for its crisis-management plan (2001). The agency, also known as FEMA, posts a suggested crisis-management plan draft on its website [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov).

Eastern also uses what Doug Whitlock of Administrative Affairs called a “Reverse 911 System” (2001). The electronic system is programmed with the phone numbers of key players and a recorded message consisting of crisis information and instructions. Then, the system’s automatic dialer contacts the people and repeats the message. If no one answers the phone, the system will call again after a certain rotation. Then, it stores data concerning who was contacted and if a machine or human answered.

Whitlock stated that the system is very efficient and frees human resources for other crisis-management duties. The people originally responsible for contacting all vital personnel can now fulfill other responsibilities during an emergency situation. However, Western’s Chief Deane made a valid point. “Without a correct list, an automated system wouldn’t do any good. We have to have a good basis to work from.” Then, Deane described another efficiency obstacle Western must overcome in the future:

One of our problems is notifying the complete university. A university-wide loud speaker system in every building would be ideal. The “cow” system can’t be heard in some areas. We have to have people go from room to room. This is a big disadvantage.

We need a reliable, top-of-the-line communication system. (2001)

Funding for such a project would be a problem, and Western does not have specific funds set aside for emergency or crisis-management use. This is the case for EKV and Murray State University as well.

Eastern Kentucky University has contingency budgets in each department for emergencies. According to Jeff Stein, Murray’s Director of Emergency Management, Murray has a slush fund set aside for discretionary expenditures (2001). Like Western, neither of them

has a specific emergency budget. However, allowing a contingency budget for each department to make small emergency purchases could increase efficiency. Members of the CM team could then allocate funds to fulfill their responsibilities without working through a third party. This saves time that could be contributed to other duties.

Eastern employs another time-saving technique as well. At the beginning of every semester, students are given an emergency guide. The guide discusses the student's role during natural and man-made disasters and supplies information. For instance, it tells students how to react to certain disasters and how they can help in the situation. The section concerning fires instructs them to pull the fire alarm and, if time permits, call 911 describing the fire and its location in the building.

The guide also gives an inclement weather class delay schedule for students' convenience, which should keep phone lines relatively clear. It then describes what actions the university will take in these emergencies to protect the students and resolve the situation. All of this is very important. By informing and involving the students, Eastern facilitates faster response times, thereby ensuring the physical and emotional well-being of students, their parents, and employees.

Crisis-management innovations from other universities could be useful at Western Kentucky University, and some of Western's innovations might be valuable in return. The universities should share their knowledge with each other in order to develop more effective crisis-management systems. As Harrell from ECU stated, "There is always room for improvement" (2001). The statement is also applicable to Western. While administration

conducts the CM plan revision, the time is perfect for them to look at these developments from other universities and consider utilizing them.

### Conclusions

The crisis-management plan at Western Kentucky University is essentially a well-developed plan. It addresses the five basic elements -- people, equipment, facilities, money, and information -- as well as procedures for the major crises the university is likely to face. However, there are pieces of data missing, out-of-date information, and lack of consistent training and review. Administrators at Western have considered these faults, and Gerald Tice is coordinating an effort to alleviate them. Thus far, the previously missing data has been compiled and the information updated. The administration has a renewed interest in training employees and reviewing the plan, with crisis exercises scheduled for twice each year, one of them requiring the use of the COC.

Yet, there is still more that the university can do to improve its crisis-management system. Student crisis guides, an automated telephone warning system, loud speaker systems, contingency budgets for each department, and a review of FEMA regulations are all suggestions for Western to consider. It would also be beneficial for WKU to compare its CM system to those at other universities. The process would generate constructive debate over improvements in the CM plan and system. As seen by Western's example, all universities' crisis-management systems should continue in this evolutionary process. A "living document" that starts with a solid foundation but is regularly update will continue to help university administrators effectively control and resolve crisis situations.



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## PROMULGATION STATEMENT

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Preparedness to cope with the effects of a crisis includes many diverse but interrelated elements, which must be woven into an integrated emergency management system involving all departments of the University, other public and support agencies, plus the individual citizen.

Making the transition from day-to-day operations to a crisis response results in an escalation in numbers, quantity, proportion, and stress -- stress on people, equipment and resources. In a disaster, there is an escalation of human need which overtaxes the response capability of the routine systems to deal with that disaster. To develop a total emergency management system, it is necessary to develop a plan based from within the existing departments using their expertise which operate routinely each day.

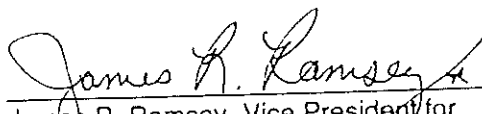
Many lives can be lost in the confusion and disorganization that accompanies the lack of a full planning effort. Therefore, failure to develop an integrated Crisis Management Plan encourages reactive type activities instead of an effective proactive operation.

Planning for population protection must be a cooperative effort to avert or minimize the effects of natural, technological, and civil disasters; protect lives and property; and restore the stricken area to its pre-disaster status with a minimum of social and economic disruption.

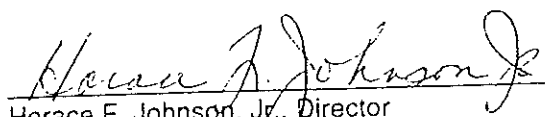
This plan is a statement of policy regarding crisis management and assigns tasks and responsibilities to University officials specifying their roles during an emergency or disaster situation.

  
Thomas C. Meredith, President  
Western Kentucky University  
Crisis Management Executive

8/12/94  
Date

  
James R. Ramsey, Vice President for  
Finance and Administration  
Western Kentucky University  
Crisis Management Director

8/12/94  
Date

  
Horace F. Johnson, Jr., Director  
Department of Public Safety  
Western Kentucky University  
Operations Manager, C.O.C.

8/12/94  
Date

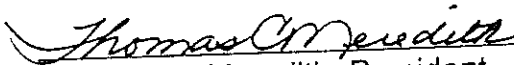
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## PREFACE

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This is Western Kentucky University's Crisis Management Plan. You have received a copy of the Plan because you will have important responsibilities during a campus crisis. Please read this document immediately, and re-read it periodically, so that you are thoroughly familiar with the contents of the Crisis Management Plan and fully understand your specific role.

The Crisis Management Plan set forth in this document is designed to rapidly and efficiently mobilize the University's resources, both personnel and equipment, to meet an emergency that may confront Western Kentucky University. The effectiveness of this plan is dependent upon the full and rapid response of all personnel. In the event that the University is faced with an emergency, the Crisis Management Director, acting under the guidelines of this plan, is authorized to implement those measures necessary to prepare for an emergency to minimize loss; to react to the emergency to save lives and property; and, in order to recover rapidly, to minimize disruption of normal activity. Each member of the University community who has a part in these important tasks will give the matter his or her full and complete attention and support.

  
Thomas C. Meredith, President  
Western Kentucky University  
Crisis Management Executive

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# SECTION I -- CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

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This document has been prepared at the instruction of the President and approved by the Board of Regents of Western Kentucky University.

## I. PURPOSE STATEMENT

This document, with its associated information and contingency plans, constitutes the Crisis Management Plan for Western Kentucky University. This Plan is to be implemented to deal with emergencies and disasters and is intended to protect lives and property through the effective use of available manpower and resources during emergency operations. It is placed into operation whenever a natural or induced emergency affecting the campus reaches proportions where such a situation cannot be controlled by routine measures. Its purposes are:

- A. Protect the lives and property of every person on the Western Kentucky University campus and to preserve the orderly continuity of university functions through coordination between and among departments.
- B. To establish a mutual understanding of the authority, responsibilities, functions, and operations of the University crisis management units during emergencies.
- C. To provide a basis for the conduct and coordination of emergency operations and the management of critical resources during emergencies.
- D. To provide contingency plans for major potential disasters that may effect the University.
- E. To identify the University's role in coordinating emergency operations with outside agencies.

## II. CRISIS LEVEL IDENTIFICATION

A crisis level identification for Western Kentucky University has been completed and hazards that could affect all or parts of the campus have been identified and analyzed. The results of this identification and analysis were used as the basis for developing the Crisis Management Plan and revealed that:

### Level I - Natural Disasters

- A. Campus Fires - always pose a serious and very traumatic threat. The greatest because of the life threatening situation. Special consideration was given because of the vulnerability if not the maximum threat and probability.
- B. Earthquake - could affect the University, although at different levels of damage. Due to the rating of this hazard and the fact that many seismologists are predicting scattered occurrences with a recurrence



along the New Madrid (Missouri) fault, a separate plan will include procedures to meet this threat.

- C. Hazardous Materials/Spills - incidents could occur on or near the University due to hazardous materials accidents.
- D. Weather Problems, to include:
  - 1. Tornado/Severe Storms - could occur at any time. Damage and loss of life could result and overtax the resources.
  - 2. Winter Storms - could affect the entire county at the same time. This type of emergency poses a most difficult response effort because of road conditions which impede or prohibit vehicle movement.
- E. Shortages - of water and energy are the two most probable events to occur.

### **Level II - Man-made Disasters**

- A. Civil Disorders - have always disrupted university communities in the past and, depending on social issues at the local, state, national, or international levels, could occur in the future. Such civil disorders drastically disrupt University activities and functions and may pose a threat to persons and property.
- B. Terrorism
- C. Crimes

### **Level III - Crisis**

- B. Technical/Economic - Internal
- C. Accidents
- D. Operational problem
- E. Product/Service failure
- F. Resource Shortages
- G. People/Social Organizational - Internal
- H. Change in human resources
- I. Conflict and morale
- J. Health problems
- K. Misunderstandings
- L. Rumor
- M. Technical/Economic - External
- N. Adverse political change
- O. Legal problems

- P. Marketplace failure
- Q. Resource scarcity
- R. People/Social Organization - External
- S. Boycotts
- T. Image problem
- U. Labor strikes
- V. Loss of confidential information

### III. CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN ACTIVATION

This Plan shall be activated under the following circumstances:

- A. When the University President or his designee deems it necessary to declare a local emergency for the purpose of safeguarding the lives and property of the University community or to maintain the orderly conduct of University business.
- B. When the governmental officials proclaim a State of Emergency that affects the University, either locally, city-wide, regional, or statewide.

### IV. INTER-JURISDICTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- A. The President of Western Kentucky University is ultimately responsible to respond to threats to lives and property in an emergency or a disaster situation.
- B. Should there be an occurrence(s) that affects only Western Kentucky University, emergency operations will take place under the University's direction and control, with city and county agencies supporting the operation through resource augmentation of manpower, equipment, and materials.
- C. Should there be an occurrence(s) that affects both Western Kentucky University and the City of Bowling Green or Warren County, emergency operations will take place under each jurisdiction's direction and control with the county-wide agency coordinating the operation and resources for all affected areas.
- D. This Plan is based on the assumption that initial crisis management (response) will, to the maximum extent possible, be by Western Kentucky University. Assistance needed will be requested by executing existing mutual-aid agreements with the City of Bowling Green private sector organizations, American Red Cross, and other volunteer groups, as needed, and with Kentucky Emergency Management Agency.
- E. Before State assistance can be rendered, the President will notify the city and county. Following this contact, the President will assure the Governor that all local resources have been expended and that State assistance is mandatory to protect the lives and health of citizens.

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## SECTION II -- ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY

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Western Kentucky University operates under the guidance of its President and Board of Regents. In a crisis or grave emergency, the normal operations of the university are not possible or practical, and the emergency structure of this Plan is implemented. The President of the University has authorized that when an emergency or disaster occurs and the Crisis Management Plan is activated, the organizational structure contained herein shall be used to direct the operations of the University.

### I. EMERGENCY ORGANIZATION

A. **Crisis Management Executive** - the President of the University, or in his absence, his alternate. The Crisis Management Executive is responsible for the basic policies which govern the campus emergency organization. Alternate Crisis Management Executives are listed in order of succession:

1. Vice President for Student Affairs
2. Vice President for Academic Affairs
3. Vice President for Institutional Advancement

B. **Crisis Management Council** - the advisory body to the Crisis Management Executive. During a disaster, the Council will generally be located near the Crisis Operations Center (COC) for coordination with the Crisis Management Executive and the Crisis Management Director. The Crisis Management Council is responsible for advising the Crisis Management Executive on policy level decisions during the disaster. The Council is composed of the following people and other appointees as necessary:

1. Vice President for Finance and Administration
2. Vice President for Student Affairs
3. Vice President for Academic Affairs
4. Vice President for Institutional Advancement
5. Director of University Relations
6. University Counsel
7. University Professor Appointed by the President

Note: In the event of a crisis, the Executive Assistant to the President will remain in the Office of the President, Wetherby Administration Building, for the assumption of normal Presidential duties and responsibilities.

C. **Crisis Management Director** - the Vice President for Finance and Administration, or in his absence, his designee, should be located near

the COC to coordinate with the President and Crisis Management Council. The Crisis Management Director is responsible for the overall coordination and execution of the Crisis Management Plan.

- D. **Operations Chief** - the Director of the Department of Public Safety, responsible for directing operations from the COC. The first alternate is the Facilities Management Administrator.
- E. **Crisis Operations Center/Support staff** - responsible for directing emergency field operations and coordinating the application of available resources in dealing with the disaster/emergency. Includes personnel from Public Safety, Facilities Management, University Relations, and other support services.
- F. **Manpower** - The manpower to staff the emergency functions of the Western Kentucky University shall consist of:
  - 1. All employees of the University.
  - 2. All volunteers from within and outside the University community.
  - 3. City, state, and federal authorities responding to the disaster.
- G. **Outside Agencies** - Federal, state, and local government agencies, as well as volunteer organizations, i.e. Red Cross, Salvation Army, Bowling Green Fire Department, Bowling Green Police Department, Kentucky State Police, etc.
- H. **Emergency Organizational Chart** - a chart located in Appendix A illustrates the initial emergency organization formed when a civil state of emergency, or a local state of emergency has been declared.
- I. **Organizational Structure**
  - 1. The functioning of the emergency organization structure as outlined in Appendix A is based on:
    - a) Clear lines of authority and channels of communication.
    - b) Simplified functional structure.
    - c) Incorporation into the emergency organization of all available manpower and resources.
    - d) Continuous leadership at the administrative level.
  - 2. The Crisis Management Plan is ultimately under the command of the President and is directed by the Crisis Management Director. The Crisis Management Director is the principal staff officer and reports directly to the President. Changes in the emergency organization structure may be required to satisfy specific situations. Such changes will be confirmed by the President. Each position alternate will fill vacant positions as they become available.

J. **Task Assignments.** The following are task assignments and/or responsibilities of Plan positions and operational areas:

1. **Crisis Management Executive**

- a) Establishes basic policies which govern the campus emergency organization.
- b) Proclaims a campus emergency.
- c) Acts as the highest level of authority during a crisis.
- d) When counsel is needed, the Crisis Management Executive will call upon the Crisis Management Council.

2. **Crisis Management Council**

- a) The Crisis Management Council is a committee assembled to make recommendations and provide advice to the Crisis Management Executive on matters related to disaster and emergency preparedness and response.
- b) Members of the Council will be required to accept positions of authority/responsibility when they become vacant or when an alternate is needed.

3. **Crisis Management Director**

- a) The Crisis Management Director shall be responsible for the overall operation and funding of the Crisis Management Plan. Upon activation of the Plan, the Vice President for Finance and Administration will immediately assume the responsibility of Crisis Management Director and remain in that capacity until relieved by the President or until the emergency or disaster has been declared to be over.
- b) When the Crisis Management Plan is to be implemented, the Crisis Management Director will ensure notification of those persons on the roster of the Crisis Operations Center maintained in the Department of Public Safety, and ensure that all necessary aspects of the disaster preparedness are activated.
- c) The Crisis Management Director will consult with the Operations Chief to determine the appropriate location of the COC.
- d) When the emergency/crisis is over and the campus is deemed safe, the Crisis Management Director will instruct the Operations Chief to notify the community of the "all clear" signal. This will be communicated by whatever means available.

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## SECTION III -- CRISIS OPERATIONS CENTER

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### I. CRISIS OPERATIONS CENTER

The Crisis Operations Center (COC) is a facility for centralized direction and control of the emergency organization and the campus community. During a declared emergency, the COC will be activated and manned to the extent required.

- A. **Operational Considerations.** The Operations Chief and assigned staff will direct and coordinate emergency operations from the COC. Alternate COC facilities may be manned or readily available for specific circumstances.
- B. **COC Location.** The primary facility shall be located in Room 340 of the Downing University Center. An alternate location will be located at the Institute for Economic Development, 2355 Nashville Road.
- C. **COC Functions.** The COC is responsible for the following operations:
  - 1. Gather, analyze and chart conditions throughout the university;
  - 2. Track and maintain availability of resources located throughout campus;
  - 3. Allocate and direct distribution of available resources to accomplish the purposes of this plan;
  - 4. Request needed resources that are unavailable internally from available outside resources;
  - 5. Keep the Crisis Management Executive and Council apprised of conditions and respond to their instructions.

### II. COC STAFFING.

The COC shall consist of the following staff:

- A. **Operations Chief** - responsible for directing the operations of the COC in supervising field operations.
- B. **Public Information Officer** - responsible for distributing official public statements, coordinating relations with the press, and preparing proclamations, resolutions and bulletins for distribution to the community. The Public Information Officer shall also be responsible for establishing an open phone line or means of communicating conditions of WKU and its members to concerns parents and/or family members.
- C. **Medical Director** - responsible for coordinating campus first aid and emergency medical operations; for coordinating with surviving existing

medical facilities and resources near campus; and for coordinating with Red Cross and other volunteer efforts.

- D. **Resource Manager** - responsible for maintaining lists of available resources, and for tracking the availability and use of such resources. Also responsible for procuring supplies and equipment needed from off-campus sources, and for maintaining records of all allocations, uses, and purchases of resources in the emergency/disaster.
- E. **Personnel Manager** - responsible for assessing available manpower on campus and for the appropriation of manpower, and for maintaining records of the manpower utilized during the emergency/disaster.
- F. **Communications Manager** - responsible for coordinating use of radio and telephone systems and for the supervision of a system of runners, if needed, to hand deliver messages when other means have failed.
- G. **Shelter Manager** - responsible for supervising the available shelter for community uses and for coordinating shelter operations with the Red Cross.
- H. **Administrator of Facilities Management** - responsible for coordinating and supervising all plant and equipment operations, including mechanized debris removal, construction operations, repairs, demolitions, and damage assessment.
- I. **Volunteer Coordinator** - responsible for integrating volunteers with appropriate functions on campus; for coordinating volunteer operations off campus involving community members, and for coordinating with local, state, and federal agencies operating on and around campus.
- J. **Communications Technician** - responsible for providing technical support and the maintenance of communication equipment.

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## SECTION IV -- OPERATIONAL PLANS

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### I. EMERGENCY EVACUATION

A. **Purpose:** To reduce the possibility of death and injury to members of the campus community through an organized evacuation procedure.

B. **Objectives:**

1. To alert campus community that a hazard exists.
2. To conduct an orderly and safe evacuation from the danger area via designated routes.
3. To notify necessary departments to assure that the evacuation is conducted in an orderly and safe manner.
4. To warn the campus population through the use of:
  - a) Loud speakers in Public Safety vehicles or hand held units.
  - b) Telephones, as available.
  - c) Building fire alarms.
  - d) Public Safety and Plant personnel.

C. **Evacuation**

1. When evacuation is deemed necessary by the Operations Chief and approved by the Crisis Management Director, occupants will leave their buildings immediately and in an orderly manner via the nearest designated exit. Emergency Coordinators will be available to direct students, employees, faculty and visitors to the designated evacuation areas.
2. Evacuation of persons with disabilities will be given a high priority in all emergencies. They will be evacuated in accordance with the building evacuation plan.
3. If total evacuation from the campus is necessary, specific instructions for safe evacuation procedures will be coordinated by Public Safety personnel in conjunction with civil authorities.

D. **Building Evacuation.** If it is determined that any building or buildings need to be evacuated, the following steps will be taken:

1. Building fire alarms will be activated.
2. Loudspeakers in Public Safety vehicles will be used.
3. Building coordinators will be contacted immediately.



4. On site evacuation commands voiced by Public Safety and Facilities Management personnel.
- E. **All Clear** (Safe to Return to Buildings). On site personnel, Public Safety vehicle loudspeakers and any available means will be used to sound the "all clear" signal.
1. On Campus Evacuation Areas. Safe zones have been designated as staging areas for evacuations on campus. The following areas are designated as Safe Zones; however, in an emergency, these areas may not be safe, or additional areas may need to be designated for evacuations:
    - a) Jones Jagers Building / Normal Drive Lot
    - b) Downing University Center / Diddle Arena Lot
    - c) Thompson Complex Center Wing / Chestnut Street Lot
- F. **Evacuation from Campus.** If evacuation from campus becomes necessary, Public Safety personnel or COC personnel will coordinate the evacuation route with civil authorities. Once determined, this route and information about the evacuation will be disseminated by emergency personnel.

## IX. SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS

A. **Purpose:** To assist Crisis Operations Center personnel in dealing with severe weather conditions which could endanger life and safety at the University.

B. **Background:**

1. Any occurrence of a severe weather condition which threatens life or safety will automatically include the Department of Public Safety and/or Facilities Management. Such conditions include, but are not limited to:
  - a) Tornado
  - b) Severe Storm
  - c) Snow/Freezing Rain
  - d) Flooding
2. When severe weather is predicted, employees should be instructed to take measures to minimize the dangers to personnel and facilities. Notification of impending severe weather will be obtained from radio, television, visual observation, or other means.
3. Severe weather conditions may lead to other types of emergencies described elsewhere in this plan, including emergency evacuation, power outages, or fires
4. Since many severe weather conditions occur with little warning, an effective system of communicating impending conditions is paramount.

C. **Concept of Operations:**

1. **Tornadoes:** Due to their intensity, tornadoes may cause extensive damage to any structure.
  - a) **Tornado Watch:** Conditions are favorable for the development of a tornado. When Public Safety receives information regarding a tornado watch, the communications officer shall immediately contact the director of the campus weather service.
  - b) **Tornado Warning:** A tornado has actually been sighted in the area. When the Department of Public Safety receives information from the National Weather Service, Bowling Green Police Department, Kentucky State Police, Warren County Sheriff Office, or other official law enforcement or service agency, the communications officer shall immediately initiate the early warning system in accordance with standard operating procedures.

- c) Once notified, persons on campus shall follow the University's tornado safety rules posted in each building.
- 2. If severe weather has resulted in damage to University facilities or interruption of essential utilities, Priorities of work will be assigned to restore Facilities Management operations at the earliest practical time. Completion of this effort may involve restoration of utilities, clearing of roadways and walks, repairs to buildings, roofs, windows, and waterproofing, and removal of water from facilities. Assistance required at this time will include but not be limited to: an increase in manpower, emergency procurement, and provision for an emergency expenditure of funds.

### III. POWER OUTAGE

- A. **Purpose:** To assist Crisis Operations Center personnel in dealing with a major power outage occurring at the university.
- B. **Background:** A major power outage can occur at any time and at any location and will significantly affect the university's ability to function normally. Such an outage in itself may not be destructive, but can lead to other occurrences, such as fire that could endanger life or property.
- C. **Concept of Operations:**
  - 1. This type of emergency could be caused by any of the man made or natural emergencies listed in the Crisis Management Plan. In combating a major power outage, there are varying degrees of severity; therefore, the immediate evaluation of the situation must be accurate and based on the most reliable information at hand.
  - 2. A decision on the need to evacuate or to cancel classes should be made by the Crisis Management Executive. Notification of this decision should be made by telephone and personal contact and announced to employees and students as soon as possible.
  - 3. In all cases where employees and/or students are allowed to remain in buildings, periodic situation checks will be made. Once the safety and welfare of personnel is ensured, and the danger to property and equipment is reduced, recovery and repair operations will receive primary consideration.
  - 4. Assistance required at this time, in addition to an increase in manpower, will be emergency procurement and provision for emergency expenditure of funds.

#### IV. EARTHQUAKE

A. **Purpose:** To provide instructions for assisting the COC personnel in dealing with the natural disaster of an earthquake that would cause damage or endanger life at the University.

B. **Background:**

1. Historical and geological data substantiates the fact that Bowling Green is within an area of potential major damage in the event of an earthquake of major magnitude. The exact time and place that a natural disaster may strike cannot be anticipated; therefore disaster planning is the only successful means of preventing or minimizing the danger to life, property and equipment.
2. As in the case of all emergency actions at the University, safeguarding the lives of employees and students is paramount. This is particularly important in an earthquake, since all employees and students will be affected at the same instant. Fear of an earthquake is inherent in our population, and immediate fear breeds panic. Panicked action accounts for more deaths and injuries than the direct results of an earthquake. Therefore, prompt action is required to calm personnel and to assure them of their safety.

C. **Concept of Operations:**

1. Public Safety personnel will be available to assist in calming employees and to prevent panic. Although aftershocks must be anticipated, safe areas and routes of evacuation are the next consideration for Public Safety. A cursory inspection by Public Safety and Facilities Management personnel will be completed to determine what buildings should be evacuated, what hazardous areas should be avoided, and what safe routes of egress from the buildings and facilities may be available. Any decision to evacuate will be made as soon as possible and activated by the use of loud speakers, telephones, word of mouth, fire alarms, and any other methods available to Public Safety staff and Building Coordinators. An assembly area will be determined and employees and students will be requested to remain in the area until it is deemed safe to be released. Accountability of employees and students can be accomplished in the assembly area, and instructions and information about road conditions and the situation in general can be provided more easily there. Of equal importance is the announcement of safe conditions in one or all buildings, and the extent of damage to areas outside the University.
2. Simultaneously with the procedures to safeguard employees and students, the Crisis Operations Center is activated in addition to the establishment of other essential services, such as medical aid

locations, shelter operations, rescue and recovery operations, and survivor registration.

3. The existing University agreement with the Red Cross naming the University as a Mass Care Facility will necessitate coordination with the Red Cross and other civil authorities.
4. Requests for municipal or state aid, or for other private emergency services will be made in accordance with established procedures, but it must be remembered that in such an emergency, our requests for assistance may be of a low priority and that University emergency capabilities must be exploited to the maximum. Search and rescue teams, disaster service workers and similar functions will be organized and readily available for assignment.
5. In the event of a catastrophic earthquake where outside areas are affected and travel is disrupted, employees and students may be required to remain at the University for an unusual length of time. While shelter capability and food and water are limited, it may be necessary to house, feed, and provide drinking water for a large population. Rationing of food and water must be considered. Assignment of personnel to safe areas and rooms may be necessary, and other actions such as eating schedules, emergency lighting, etc., may be required.
6. Once the safety and welfare of personnel is ensured and the danger to property and equipment is reduced, recovery and repair operations will receive primary consideration. Priorities of work will be assigned to restore Facilities Management operations at the earliest practical time. Completion of this effort may involve restoration of utilities, electrical and machinery areas, specialized areas such as the Computer Center, lobbies, offices and other support facilities. Assistance required at this time will include but not be limited to; an increase in manpower, emergency food services, emergency procurement, and provision for an emergency expenditure of funds.

## V. HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INCIDENT

A. **Purpose:** To assist Crisis Operations personnel in dealing with chemical and biological hazards that could endanger life at the University.

B. **Background:**

1. All chemical and biological materials stored and handled normally pose no extreme threat to the University community. However, during times of natural or man made disasters, these materials become a very special concern to the University community, as well as to emergency personnel who may be responding to an affected area.
2. Since the loss of life and the contamination of property are usually primary in this type of hazard, the immediate action taken may determine the outcome of the entire situation.
3. Your decision to choose the right plan of action may be based on the result of an accident or the result of any of the following emergencies and/or disasters: earthquakes, fire and/or explosions, hazardous materials spill, aircraft accidents, floods, sabotage, or vehicular accident. Therefore, this plan should be reviewed for possible action where any of the above operational situations occurs.
4. The report of any suspected and/or potential spill, reaction, release or condition involving hazardous chemicals or biological agents will be and must be considered factual, by responding personnel, rather than possibility.

C. **Initial Notification of Hazardous Materials Incident.** If it is safe to do so, the reporting party should be asked to provide the following information:

1. Location of the incident.
2. Type of incident (spill, leak, fire, explosion, etc.).
3. General description of the type of hazardous material (caustic, poison, flammable liquid or gas, biological agent, etc.).
4. Best direction of approach by emergency response units, taking into account wind direction, blocked streets, and access.
5. Estimate of immediate needs for ambulances.

D. **Communications Officer's Response.** The person receiving the report of a hazardous materials incident will immediately notify:

1. Public Safety field units.
2. The Bowling Green Fire Department.
3. The Facilities Management Environmental Safety Officer.

4. The Public Safety Department will be responsible for establishing a safe perimeter to the spill/event. They will remain in control on the scene until relieved by the Bowling Green Fire Department.

E. **Operational Response:** The Public Safety department shall be the primary response agency on campus to reports of hazardous materials incidents on the Western Kentucky University campus. Their immediate task is to provide a safe perimeter and to learn as much as possible about the exact threat posed by the incident. This information is to be passed on to the fire department as quickly as possible, either through the dispatcher or directly to fire department responders on the scene. Public Safety personnel will then assist civil authorities in coordinating the on-campus reaction to the event. Should the event proceed to pose a threat to the community, the Crisis Management Plan and COC should be activated by the Crisis Management Executive or its designee.



## VI. FIRE

- A. **Purpose:** To assist Crisis Operations Center personnel in dealing with fires that are beyond the scope of normal Public Safety and Facilities Management operational plans.
- B. **Background:**
1. Any incident of a fire occurring on the campus of the Western Kentucky University will automatically involve Public Safety and Facilities Management personnel. A fire in any University building or facility could involve the loss of life or injuries, and damage to physical structures or facilities.
  2. The report of any suspected fire, the smell of smoke, or visible manifestations of a fire must be considered as a working fire and treated, by responding personnel, as factual rather than as a possibility.
- C. **Initial Notification of Fire.** In any situation where a fire is known to exist or if a fire is suspected, the following steps must be taken:
1. From on campus phones, dial 9-9-1-1 and report the situation directly to the Bowling Green Fire Department. Report the location and the reason you suspect (or know) a fire to exist. Answer any questions asked you.
  2. If safe, immediately call the Public Safety Communications Officer at 2548 and state your location and situation and state whether or not you have notified the fire department.
  3. State whether or not there are people trapped in the building, request any specific assistance that you know you need.
- D. **Communications Officer's Response.** The Communications Officer should immediately:
1. Notify Public Safety and Facilities Management field units.
  2. Confirm with Bowling Green Fire Department that they have been notified.
- E. **Operational Response:**
1. The Department of Public Safety will be responsible for the immediate response to the situation to perform an analysis of the hazard. They will communicate any information through the dispatcher to the Fire Department to assist in their response. Facilities Management engineers will also respond to provide assistance.
  2. Public Safety will assist in the evacuation of any involved University facility. Designated Building Coordinators will provide direction in the evacuation of the building and will provide information at the

evacuation site as to missing persons, persons requiring assistance, or specific information about the incident.

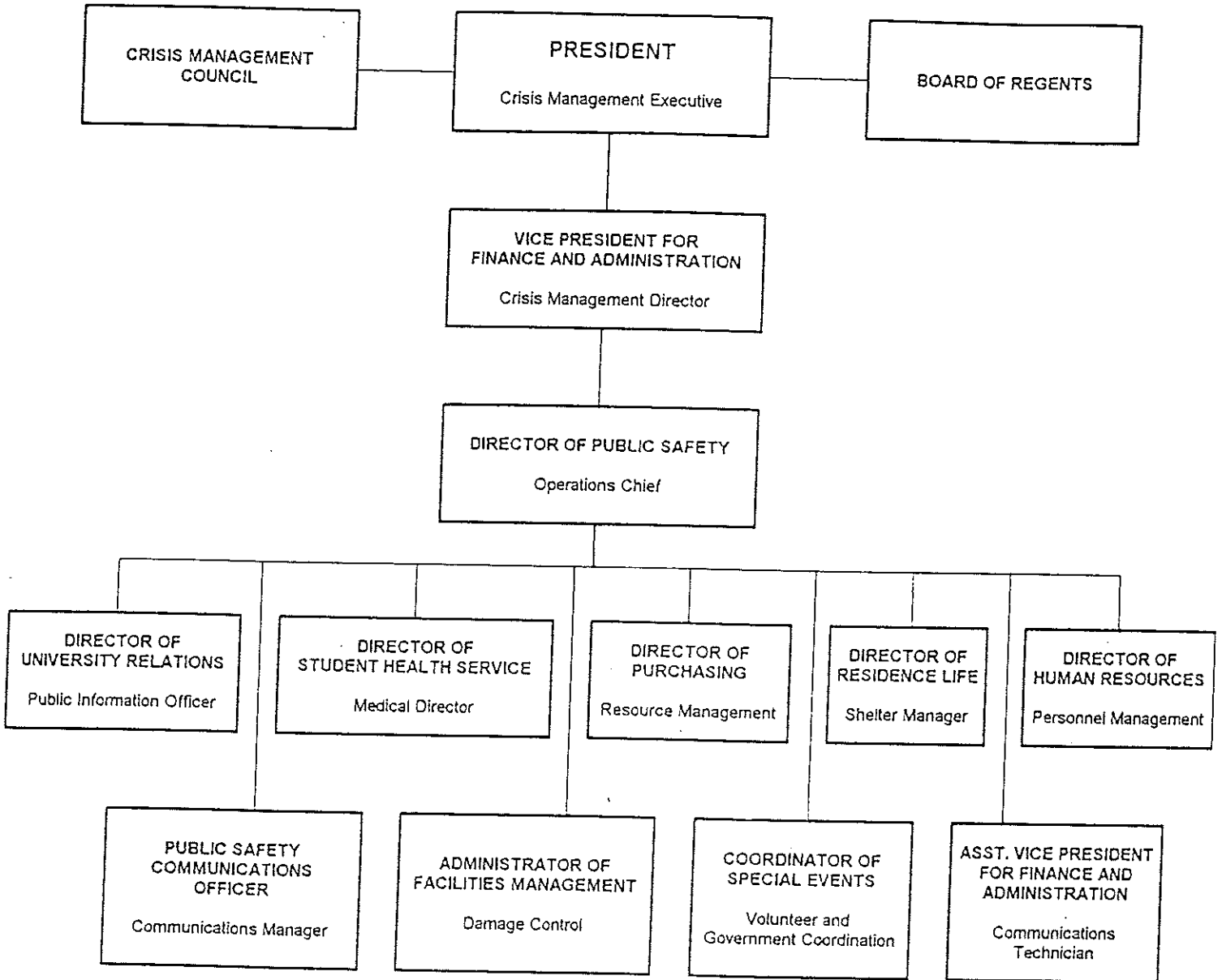
3. Facilities Management personnel will provide information about the mechanical structure of the building, the fire alarm system, and any additional University resources available.
4. The specific information about the incident will determine the necessity for activation of the Crisis Operations Center by the Crisis Management Executive or designee.

## VII. EXPLOSION OR AIRCRAFT CRASH

- A. **Purpose:** To provide instructions for COC personnel in dealing with an explosion or aircraft crash disaster occurring on or about the University. And in such a case, the accident or disaster would likely cause damage or endanger life at the University.
- B. **Background:** The FAA has ruled that most flights, if not all, are banned from flight paths over congestion areas such as cities, but nothing could prevent a pilot from straying off course because of mechanical difficulties or acts of terrorists. In any case, it is wise to prepare oneself to handle or assist in handling explosions or major collisions resulting in an explosion.
- C. **Concepts of Operation:**
1. An explosion can occur or originate by means such as a man-made bomb, chemical combustion, or vehicle/aircraft collision. This type of disaster could be compounded by hazardous materials or if it occurs in an area which would trigger a series of explosions. It is imperative that you or the dispatcher ascertain all pertinent information during the initial report.
  2. Any explosion would require the aid of the Bowling Green Fire and Police Departments. They should be notified immediately. Public Safety Officers, as the initial responders, should isolate the danger by obtaining information of exactly who is involved (casualties, potential victims, or identifying marking on vehicles or aircraft), what is involved (buildings and other property), and they should assure that resources are allocated properly. This is called Situation Analysis. COC personnel should assure that their needs are met in gathering this information, especially since this information must be relayed to responding external emergency teams.
  3. In cases where buildings are involved, Building Coordinators should conduct a head count to assure that their assigned personnel are accounted for and/or present. You must also assure that innocent bystanders aren't affected and by moving them to safe zones that are outside the area of operation. Residents must be cared for and fed during certain hours. The temporary reassignment of rooms and eating arrangements should be coordinated through the Shelter Manager.
  4. In any case, the utilization of resources must be recorded, and COC personnel should keep a running log of runs during operations and serve as liaisons between responding emergency personnel. Officers should preserve the crime scene for a possible criminal investigation by appropriate law enforcement officials.

Appendix A

# Organizational Structure



**APPENDIX B**  
**FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

EMERGENCY FUNCTION	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	PHONE
1. Crisis Management Executive	President	4346
2. Crisis Management Director	Vice President for Finance and Administration	2434
3. Operations Chief	Public Safety Director	2548
4. Public Information Officer	Director of University Relations	4295
5. Medical Director	Director of Student Health Service	5641
6. Resource Management	Purchasing Director	3056
7. Personnel Management	Human Resources Director	2071
8. Communications Manager	Public Safety Communications Supervisor	2548
9. Shelter Manager	Director of Residence Life	2037
10. Damage Control	Facilities Management Administrator	3253
11. Volunteer & Government Agencies Coordination	Coordinator of Special Events	2497
12. Communications Technician	Assistant Vice President for Finance and Administration	2243

**APPENDIX C**  
**CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN**  
**DISTRIBUTION LIST**

President

Board of Regents

Deans, Directors, and Department Heads

Building Coordinators

Department of Public Safety

Crisis Operations Center Personnel

University Legal Counsel

Director of Warren County Emergency Planning Committee

Kentucky Emergency Management Agency

Bowling Green Mayor's Office

Warren County Judge Executive's Office

Bowling Green Police Department

Bowling Green Fire Department

Kentucky State Police