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Crisis Communication Response for Field Offices of the Airline Pilots Association

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**CRISIS COMMUNICATION RESPONSE FOR FIELD OFFICES OF THE
AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION**

Gina L. Butikofer

An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Lindenwood
University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of
Corporate and Industrial Communications

1999

ABSTRACT

This project-based thesis examines the issue of crisis management, focusing on communication as an integral part of an organization's response to crisis. It explores the benefits of a crisis communication plan to successfully respond to a crisis situation and explores the components, writing style and considerations of a manual that make such a plan useable. This research highlights these communication challenges in relation to the airline industry, and more specifically, to the branch offices of the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA), by applying the information gathered into a written crisis communication manual.

Chapter one of this thesis discusses the importance of effective and efficient communication in the aftermath of a crisis and the necessity for organizations to prepare for a crisis situation through the creation, maintenance and practice of a crisis communication manual. The chapter discusses the difficulties of creating a crisis communication manual specific to an organization and uses the research to outline general guidelines that form the basis of every crisis plan. It also introduces the specific challenges of the airline industry in the event of a major crisis, illustrating these challenges by detailing ALPA's response to the crash of TWA's Flight 800.

The literature-based research is detailed in chapter two, highlighting each source, its focus and level of detail. However, understanding the stress, confusion and numerous responsibilities to consider in the aftermath of a crisis is difficult to

learn through this written medium. For this reason, a number of personal interviews with pilots and ALPA staff members who responded to TWA's Flight 800 were conducted during the research process, and detailed in chapter three. These interviews provide an inside look at the successes and pitfalls of a specific response to a crisis in the airline industry. They also provide a detailed view of how ALPA field offices function in times of crisis, thus contributing to the conceptualization of how a crisis communication manual should be written specific to the organization.

The suggestions and guidance gathered from literature written on the subject of crisis communication, coupled with the advice from those pilots and ALPA staff who responded to Flight 800, are applied in chapter four to create an actual crisis communication manual for ALPA branch offices. Through a series of checklists and expanded information sections, this manual focuses on four possible crisis scenarios including an airplane crash, a criminal act, a major mechanical incident and a pilot incident.

Eliciting the editorial assistance of pilots and ALPA staff members resulted in a crisis communication manual that is specific to the airline industry and the offices of ALPA. These individuals agree, as reported in chapter five, that the steps outlined in the manual are consistent with ALPA pilot and staff responsibilities, are developed in an accessible format, and will provide needed guidance to ALPA branch offices during times of crisis. This manual serves as a "work in progress" and must be continually updated, practiced and supported by all individuals involved to successfully aid in crisis response.

**CRISIS COMMUNICATION RESPONSE FOR FIELD OFFICES OF THE
AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION**

Gina L. Butikofer

A Culminating Project Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Lindenwood University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Corporate and Industrial Communications

1999

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Crisis Communication Value and Preparation

An airline jet explodes instantly and unexpectedly in the night as the airline's managers sleep. They are awakened with the paralyzing news. It's 3 a.m.

What should they do? Who should they call? What do they actually know and what can they legally say? Are there any victims? Who will be accountable for this crisis?

The unexpected, shocking and sometimes paralyzing news of a crisis can virtually shut down a company by disrupting its organization, confusing employee roles and silencing normal communication vehicles. The result can be devastating. Some companies, like Pan Am, have gone bankrupt largely due to their management's poor handling of a crisis (Newsom 547). Clearly, the manner in which an organization handles itself and communicates in the face of a controversy or crisis can have a powerful effect on the future success of a company. However, an unexpected disaster does not mean bankruptcy to an organization. With effective management and communication, an organization can successfully emerge from a crisis situation—sometimes with even greater

respect from their industry and the public for doing so. The key appears to be preparation.

There is no question that Americans seem to be bombarded by an increased number of "crisis situations." Advanced technology has brought us a first-hand look at wars, national disasters and other crisis situations. Although advanced technology increases the awareness of world events, it also puts heightened responsibility on the individuals who must manage those crises. Joe Marconi, a marketing and communications consultant, writes:

For years, a problem, crisis, or even just bad news could be held back from shareholders, regulators, or the general public until at least a reasonable time had elapsed for the story to be represented in a controlled fashion...the panicked reactions were exceptions, not the rule. (24-25)

Taking time to sit back, evaluate the situation and act on it is surely a luxury for organizations facing a crisis situation today. The public can now watch events instantly as they happen on live television and chat about them in news forums on the Internet throughout the world. "If the media can communicate the news the instant it happens, crisis communication dictates that a company must be prepared to respond almost as fast. The inability to communicate your message skillfully during a crisis can prove fatal"(Fink 92). No company is excused from the immediate, watchful eye of technology. Organizations, therefore, must be ready to act instantaneously if the inevitable should occur.

While technology mandates that companies respond to a crisis immediately, consumers mandate they do it professionally and responsibly. Since the late 1960s, during the rise of consumerism, companies have had to assume a greater responsibility in the business community. The public has increasingly expected more from an organization—no longer can most companies stay in business if they just focus on “turning a profit.

responsibility is why public relations and general communication is so important in today’s marketplace—especially when companies are faced with a crisis. For example, Johnson & Johnson experienced a well-publicized crisis situation in which the company responded with their consumers in mind first, ultimately winning public approval and gaining additional trust in their company and products. In 1982, the company learned that seven people had died from taking one of their products, Extra-Strength Tylenol, that had been laced with cyanide. Instead of reacting defensively and scrambling to save profits, the company reached out to the public and media, expressing sympathy for those affected and immediately recalled the entire lot of possibly tainted bottles. They also conducted tests of their product, suspended product advertising, offered a \$100,000 reward for information leading to an arrest of the responsible party and helped with the investigation. Johnson & Johnson took a proactive role with their consumers in mind—demonstrating a heightened level of consumer awareness and ultimately enhancing their image as a concerned, ethical company. Johnson & Johnson took this crisis and turned it into an opportunity (Marconi 193-4).

Crisis situations can have a dramatic effect on the long-term viability of an organization and preparing to deal with often inevitable situations both efficiently and effectively is no easy task. Companies should continually reevaluate and attempt to improve their preparation in anticipation of a crisis as advancing technology and consumer awareness demands immediate information and response. But why does one company deal with a crisis situation better than another? How do employees and management throughout an organization come together to deal with a crisis with a singular and coordinated purpose? One key answer is the development, understanding, practice and implementation of a crisis communication plan, an integral part of any organization's crisis management plan.

Although a crisis communication plan and a crisis management plan are two distinct formulas, many authors on the subject of crisis response do not differentiate between them since a crisis communication plan is a large part of an organization's "umbrella" crisis management plan (Sikich 252). Crisis management plans assist organizations in identifying, controlling and responding to a variety of crises. However, effective communication is a vital part of a company's crisis management plan. This plan complements the management of a crisis by providing an in-depth guide on how organizations communicate to each of its publics—both internally and externally. The two plans go hand-in-hand and are frequently spoken of under the term "crisis response" or "crisis management." For example, even if an organization is doing everything possible in the aftermath of a crisis, if the actions themselves are not well-communicated, the

organization's publics will not be adequately aware of how the company is responding, or even if they are responding at all. "Failure to communicate creates the perception that the crisis is continuing out of control, or that the company is hiding something and is indifferent to public concern" (252). Additionally, if an organization does not provide effective internal communication, its employees will not likely be aware of what steps they are required to take to help mitigate the situation.

The effectiveness of a crisis communication plan is immense. An estimated 95 percent of businesses that have experienced a disaster without having a crisis plan have fallen victim to bankruptcy (Big Apple Computers 1). Furthermore, it is estimated that the initial crisis lasts two to two and a half times longer in organizations without a plan in place at the time of the crisis (Fink 69). Despite these results, a surprisingly low number of organizations employ a crisis communication plan. In a survey conducted by Western Union of internal public relations or communications directors in the top 1,000 industrial and 500 service companies (as identified by Fortune magazine), only 53 percent of America's largest corporations have a crisis communication plan that would assist them in successfully communicating during a crisis situation (101).

Although statistics prove the value of crisis communication plans, merely having a plan will not necessarily save a company from chaos during a crisis. If management and their employees do not understand or rehearse the plan, effectiveness will be diminished. No two crises are the same and "practicing" response to a crisis is far different than actually being involved in one. "Disaster

plans presuppose that all humans will act like computers and machines and respond perfectly,” says Michael Klepper, president of New York’s Michael Klepper Associates. “Unfortunately in a crisis, there is a human component. There’s fear, shock, anger, frustration” (Elsasser 2).

Crisis Communication Plans

No organization can expect to respond perfectly to a crisis or follow a crisis plan exactly because no plan can presuppose every variable of a specific crisis situation. When bad news hits, people react. However, with preparation and practice of a crisis communication plan, employees are more prepared to handle the crisis. Although every crisis situation is different, a plan can provide an organization with needed guidelines that help put order into an unstable circumstance. “An effective crisis management plan presets certain key decisions on the mechanical portions of the crisis—those aspects that rarely vary—and leaves you free to manage the content portion of the crisis with your hands unfettered” (Fink 55).

Crisis communication plans should address basic questions those faced with a crisis must know how to answer immediately. These include: who will be notified first, who will handle the media, who will be the spokesperson and the spokesperson’s backup, how will the community and employees be kept informed, and what can the company legally say (Sikich 252-3). The plan also contains valuable information for the communications team to use immediately—

information they would not have time to obtain in the event of a crisis. Additionally, when the initial crisis has been managed, the plan provides an organization with a system of “checks and balances” to ensure they did not miss any major steps in their response to the crisis.

Arguably the most important benefit of creating a plan and practicing crisis response techniques is that it gives employees a sense of confidence in the event a crisis occurs. Although no one can recreate a real disaster, practicing a response can be the next best thing. This boost of confidence could alter an employee’s response to an unexpected situation—a response that could “make or break” any organization in distress. Fink states:

In an acute crisis, the key to managing the fluid situation successfully is the ability to make good, vigilant decisions. Psychologically, just having confidence in yourself and your managers—the sort of confidence that a crisis management plan instills—will help you make sound decisions in the height of stressful, crisis-induced situations. (69)

Although some detailed opinions differ, most authors and researchers agree on several general items or information that can be included in all crisis communication plans. These general areas are: 1) creating a crisis response team, 2) identifying a spokesperson, 3) developing a single, focused message and communicating that message, and 4) providing background information and telephone numbers.

Creating a Crisis Response Team:

Before a crisis communication plan can be written, crisis management teams must be chosen to ensure proper input from all necessary parties of the crisis response team. This means a company must look at the various crisis situations they might be faced with and evaluate what expertise would be necessary to help alleviate that crisis. For example, a company involved in a crisis might appoint someone with technical and operational knowledge about their products to the team so that the chosen spokesperson has the technical assistance to understand the information and communicate it effectively. Other specialized roles might be legal counsel, an environmental specialist or an outside public relations consultant. Every situation is different and therefore every team might be different for a company depending on the situation.

Depending on the size of the organization, individuals on the team may also need to assume a number of different roles. For example, the spokesperson may also have to act as a public relations coordinator, working to develop the actual message that he or she is responsible for communicating. Or, the public relations coordinator, whose primary duty is to manage the external and internal flow of communication to the company's various publics, might also have to produce the newsletters or hotline messages to fulfill his or her directives. Choosing a team is challenging since every organizational structure is different. The important element is choosing a team ahead of time.

Whoever is designated to fulfill a specific role, the plan itself should be written using the position title, not specific names. Names change as people come

and go. However, each "position" or role chosen should also be assigned to a specific individual so those individuals know what role they assume in the event of a crisis. Individuals' names should be written somewhere in the plan, such as in the appendices, with the knowledge that they are subject to change. Those individuals should also name their replacement in the event a crisis occurs and they are not immediately accessible. Fink describes this aspect of the plan. He says, "One of the 'best things' about having a crisis management plan is not just knowing where the 'flashlights' are kept, but knowing as well who is in charge of the flashlights and the batteries"(70).

Methods of choosing a crisis management team differ but authors on the subject of crisis management generally agree on two things: 1) A pre-planned crisis management team is necessary so that individuals can assume these roles instantly and 2) these plans must always name one main public spokesperson (Sikich 261, Fink 56).

Identifying a Spokesperson:

When a crisis situation occurs involving an organization, if the media has not first informed the affected organization, they will surely be there to ask questions soon after. For the media, crisis is news, and it is advantageous for an organization to take a proactive role with the media to speak to their respective audiences and ensure the reports of the situation, good or bad, are accurate (Ries 2). Therefore, naming one main spokesperson before a crisis occurs is vital.

Public relations and communications experts disagree on who that spokesperson should be. Some think that a company's chief executive officer (CEO) or president should be in the spotlight. Conversely, others believe the CEO would be too busy to devote the necessary time to the continuous media interest, and that it should be handled by an individual trained to effectively communicate the company's message full-time. It is inevitable that the media will prefer to talk to the CEO of a company, the leader of a crisis relief effort or an expert in the field (Smith 1). However, a crisis management team should plan what is best for their specific organization and ensure the spokesperson can handle the media effectively. If the CEO or other leader is not effective as a spokesperson or has other duties to attend to, an organization's message would be more effectively disseminated through another spokesperson. Regardless of who is communicating the organization's message, it is important to note that if the spokesperson is not the CEO or president of the organization, the chosen spokesperson and the CEO or individual "in charge" must agree on a coordinated message. After all, the spokesperson has considerable responsibility in delivering the organization's message to the media and ensuring the message is in line with the CEO's views. G. Foster, corporate vice president—public relations for Johnson & Johnson and a "pivotal player" in the successful handling of the Tylenol crisis says, "The single most important thing for a communicator in a crisis is immediate access to authority. The second most important thing is to have authority himself" (Fink 94). In other words, the CEO should consider it a priority to make him or herself accessible to discuss strategy of a crisis situation with the spokesperson or

individual responsible for disseminating the company line. If the CEO is not accessible, he or she should have enough trust in his communicator to establish that message or strategy himself.

Developing and Communicating the Message:

If a crisis occurs, an organization must use their spokesperson, with support from the crisis response team, to relay a single, consistent message to each of their audiences. The creation of this message, especially under extreme circumstances, can be difficult.

When a crisis occurs, confusion is usually the norm. Often, organizations faced with a crisis do not know all the facts immediately and yet their employees, shareholders and the public are looking to them for information. Therefore, it is important for communicators to be proactive in their communication efforts and not wait for the time when the organization has all the facts or information. In some cases, that time may never come. Lack of communication will effect a lack of trust in the company and can heighten the crisis situation. "At the beginning of the crisis, even if you have no information at that time, let your audiences know that status and that you're working on it"(Smith 1).

The message an organization conveys during times of crisis is obviously situational. A company cannot create "canned" messages specific to an individual crisis ahead of time because of any situation's unlimited variables. However, a communicator can research general legalities of different types of responses and develop guidelines or general messages that would help in times of crisis. For

example, if a hydroelectric power plant experienced a small and unexpected explosion and the organization had to respond, their communicators must first know what information is and is not legal for them to disseminate. Can they release the plant's maintenance records before attorney approval? How extensively are they allowed to discuss the details of the explosion? When can they release names of victims? If a company knows the answers to these hypothetical questions, they have the knowledge to create the specific messages if an actual crisis occurs.

Despite the fact that no one can plan the exact message for a crisis situation, communication experts overwhelmingly advise organizations that, whatever their message is, it must always be open and honest. For example, Johnson & Johnson, who has been touted as "a corporate role model for how to deal with a major crisis," was candid with the public and press since the first accounts of the tragedy—and this honesty paid off. years of being a good brand "name," the public wanted to believe Johnson & Johnson was a company of good people doing the right thing. When management responded as openly and broadly as it did, it indeed validated itself in the public mind"(197). Without this honesty, the company would have lost the trust they had built with their customers and shareholders.

The communications team of an organization must also be aware that the message may be more than just the facts. Depending on the situation, it might be important to acknowledge the public's sorrow, concern or fear. Aviva Diamond, president of an LA-based firm specializing in crisis communication and media

training, says, "The most important thing...is to reassure the public, to show them what you're doing, to show them your compassion, your sympathy, to show them that you're going to move heaven and earth to get to the bottom of this" (Elsasser 1).

Conversely, dodging the press, stating "no comment," or avoiding the situation only hinders a company from dispelling a crisis. These techniques only foster animosity or mistrust for the company. Instead, a company must actively work to communicate during a crisis situation. "Communication should be continuous, particularly during periods of change or crisis...dead silence is deafening"(Young 7). Therefore, after the message is fully developed, the company must communicate it effectively.

In order to communicate effectively, the public relations coordinator or another appointed person who manages the flow of communication must be intimately aware of all the organization's communication vehicles, how to use them, and when to use them. For example, it would be necessary to know if some internal communication vehicles are more secure than others, or that the company's newsletter reaches the highest percentage of shareholders but takes over two weeks to create and mail. Both internal and external communication must be quickly planned, executed, and then maintained. Sikich says that "the principal communications requirement at the time of an emergency is a steady flow of accurate, reliable information" (260). Organizations must be continually responsive to their publics, many times using multiple communication devices, to ensure effective communication (Young 5).

Background Information:

Background information is a necessary component in a crisis communication plan. When an organization is under the siege of a crisis and action must be taken quickly, communicators need background information or telephone numbers of necessary contacts quickly. Time spent researching this information is time taken away from communicating with their publics.

To accurately report a crisis situation in the press, reporters also need accurate background information. Therefore, the plan should include general information that is collected and packaged to be disseminated immediately. For example, if a hospital is involved in a controversial malpractice lawsuit, the press would initially want to know the training requirements of the hospital's physicians, if the hospital has been involved in any other malpractice lawsuits and their outcome, the hospital's general philosophy on patient care and general information about the hospital's employees and day-to-day treatment. If a CEO of a major corporation dies, the press would inquire about his or her background and achievements within the company, the names of the company's past CEOs and the structural hierarchy of the organization. This information is constant and can be anticipated, collected, and accessible before a crisis occurs.

The background section of a crisis communication plan should also include telephone numbers and names of contacts that might be useful in a crisis situation, such as personal contact information for employees or lists of agencies

and contacts that can help mitigate certain situations. Again, time searching for these numbers is time taken away from executing a crisis communication plan.

Each of these four major issues should be included in a crisis communication plan. However, every organization is different, and therefore, every plan is different. Although the plan shouldn't be too detailed, it should provide enough specific information so anyone could use the plan—not just the organization's main communicator.

Once a plan is written, however, it will not benefit an organization if the organizations' employees do not know the plan or are ready to act on it if a crisis occurs. If the spokesperson knows the company message and understands what is expected of him or her in the event of a crisis but did not actually practice the situation, the written words of instruction in the crisis communication plan are meaningless. Elsasser writes:

The best thing you can do is practice...whether or not the exact situation that they're practicing for is the one that eventually happens is less important than practicing the ability to think on your feet while facing tough questions from reporters and understanding what kind of pressures that will be present. (1)

For example, those who have undergone mock press conferences and interviews are more prepared to effectively handle the situation than someone who has never had to respond to pointed questions or been in front of a camera. The same can be said for other roles and activities of those associated with a crisis response.

Still, with the practice of a solid crisis communication plan, not all organizations are as well prepared to deal with a crisis as others. The difference between these organizations is how well they have laid the foundation for an organization that functions smoothly in the event of a crisis. Fink states that “the time to begin crisis communications is when there is no crisis” (96).

One of the ways to lay that foundation is to develop effective two-way communication in the organization before a crisis occurs. Sikich states, “Note that public information about a significant accident should differ only in degree, not in kind, from information about reportable events that may occur fairly frequently” (253). Employees and the public should look toward the organization for clear, trustworthy information at all times. If the company has not developed these communication channels before a crisis situation occurs, they will not have the time to do it during a difficult situation.

Clear lines of communication also build trust with employees—an important aspect that many organizations underestimate. For example, during a crisis, the media is eager to talk to employees whom they believe can provide an “insider’s” point of view. If the employees do not understand what has occurred, or don’t believe what their organization is telling them, rumors and personal opinions will rule their comments (Parker 1). Young explains:

Effective employee communications practices should be consistent under all organizational conditions. What works in bad times also works in good times. One of the hallmarks of companies is their commitment to ongoing employee communication—not an emergency measure only. (8)

The CEO, president or leader of an organization must build trust by being philosophically committed to communicating with employees and taking a skilled and visible role as a communications role model (Young 2). Employees must know whom to trust. "In a company that doesn't practice any sort of employee communications, you don't know who to believe if you hear one thing from the media and another from a department head," Steven Fink, president of Lexicon Communications Corp., a public relations and crisis management firm, said (Wiesendanger 1).

Crisis and the Airline Industry

Clearly, all organizations in today's society are at risk to be involved in some type of crisis that will necessitate immediate, effective response. However, the airline industry is perhaps one of the industries at the highest risk.

Not a day goes by—nor does a second of any day—when an airline carrier is not at risk of an acute crisis—a crash, a midair collision, a hijacking, a terrorist bombing or threat, extortion, or even an enemy country shooting down a civilian plane. Airlines are on alert literally every time a plane rolls out of a hangar. The entire airline industry operates in a constant, never-ending prodromal crisis stage. (Fink 64)

In the early days of aviation, when airlines were still trying to convince passengers of air travel safety, airlines would paint their name over the airplane's

passenger door so any photos taken of famous passengers deplaning would capture the airline insignia and promote the company. However, if the airline suffered an accident or crash, the first job of the individual in the field would be to go out with a bucket of white paint and cover up the name of the airline before any photos could be taken. "That," said Charles Novak, manager of corporate communications for United Airlines, "was the beginning of crisis management and one of the first things ever written down in a crisis management plan"(65). Since that time, however, airlines have advanced their crisis management and response. Unfortunately, they have had a number of opportunities to use it.

In July 1996, Trans World Airlines (TWA) suffered a major accident. TWA's Flight 800, a B747 aircraft bound for Paris, exploded off the coast of New York killing all 230 people on board. Television cameras capturing the burning wreckage on live television brought the crisis of this devastating tragedy to the public immediately. TWA's handling of the crash drew enormous press coverage and the company's response to the tragedy was widely critiqued by the media and public alike.

It is not uncommon for a company's response to a crisis to be critiqued, especially during a major crisis such as the crash of Flight 800. However, there are many other groups or organizations besides the company itself affected by a major crisis and have a responsibility to deal with it. The tragedy of Flight 800 is not an exception. This project focuses on one such group, their response to the accident and how their lack of a crisis management plan affected that response.

The TWA Pilots' Union: Response to TWA Flight 800

The Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) is an international union that began in 1931 and currently represents the interests of over 55,000 pilots worldwide. ALPA, an affiliate of the AFL-CIO, is a union that represents almost every major domestic air carrier in the United States and dozens of regional airlines. In 1998, the Canadian pilots' union joined forces with ALPA to strengthen their contract bargaining abilities and the political influence of the entire association.

The mission of the organization and its dues-paying members is twofold. First, ALPA is a labor union with the primary function of protecting pilot jobs and ensuring decent wages for pilots. Secondly, ALPA is a unique professional association that is concerned with air transportation safety—both for pilots and the traveling public (Hopkins 2).

Due to the Association's concern with air safety issues, ALPA has been intimately involved in many airline accident investigations. As a "party" to the investigation, working along side the National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and sometimes the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the pilots have been able to share their expertise and experience regarding flight safety. Some of these investigations have led to enhanced safety procedures or aircraft changes that have increased the safety of air transportation. This participation in aircraft accident investigations allows pilots

within ALPA a vital opportunity to help protect themselves as a group, as well as protect the public (Schwartz).

During an investigation, the Association's communication to its various publics is important. ALPA's primary audience is to its pilot membership who is interested in the safety aspects of the accident and their fellow pilots' work to help solve these investigations. These men and women fly the same aircraft everyday and have a strong vested interest in the accident, what went wrong and how to avoid the same problems. Another primary audience during an investigation is the American consumers or public at large. Pilot jobs depend on the customers who fly their airlines and one of ALPA's goals is to ensure that the public knows the pilots are concerned with their safety. In addition, since ALPA is a trade union whose job it is to engage in contract bargaining for wage increases, pilots want to create a relationship or understanding with the public and communicate the responsibilities of their position in hopes the public will support them during future contract negotiations. Other secondary audiences, depending on the specific situation, vary.

The TWA pilots are one of the many pilot groups who belong to ALPA. Under ALPA's national organization, TWA has their own representational structure and hierarchy. This branch is made up of professional staff, elected TWA pilot representatives and TWA pilot volunteers who specifically represent the TWA pilots' interests and work out of their branch office in St. Louis, Missouri—the "hub" of the airline. Since almost all TWA pilots belong to ALPA, the term "TWA pilots" and ALPA is used synonymously in this thesis.

As a branch office of the national organization of ALPA, the TWA pilots' office has access to the national union office's resources. The Association has its own advanced accident investigation and emergency response teams. An "800" hotline number is available at all hours for pilots to report an incident and a full-time communications staff is available to their field "specialists" for advice, assistance and media training. However, no one knows each airline's issues, priorities, leaders and politics as well as the staff members and pilot volunteers directly associated with that specific airline. In the event of a crisis, a communications staff member from the national office would not be as familiar with the internal and external communication efforts of a specific pilot group as the communications team from that airline who use them everyday. No one would have developed the relationships or built the rapport with the company's managers, local news contacts and political leaders as well as the team from the branch office. Although the TWA pilots' office can use the national office for resources and support, the employees and pilots at the branch office are the individuals who were responsible for the crisis and would be responsible if another crisis should occur. Therefore, it is essential that each airline's branch in the union is able to respond immediately to any crisis situation.

As is the case with any aircraft accident involving an ALPA carrier, the union's role, specifically the TWA branch's role during the investigation of TWA's Flight 800, was enormous. These pilots worked on the investigation of Flight 800 for years and continue at the time of this writing—over three years after the tragedy occurred. Most of the investigators' time was spent at the

accident site in Long Island, New York, collecting and cataloguing evidence, rebuilding the wreckage, studying electrical wires and recovering victims. Pilots also assisted government agencies by studying witness accounts, the path of the aircraft and many other technical areas. Along side the investigators, other TWA pilots, trained in helping those who have experienced an emotional trauma, worked with family members of accident victims.

Clearly, ALPA played a significant part in the accident investigation of Flight 800, and therefore the accident played a significant part in the pilots' communication efforts. To effectively represent their members' interests, the TWA branch had to effectively communicate a variety of information. The crash of Flight 800 was significant to each pilot at TWA. For example, some of these pilots flew B747s, aircraft identical to the one that mysteriously blew up in mid-air, and looked to the association for operational information. Many were concerned about the effect the crash would have on the viability on their already financially troubled airline, relying on the union for advocacy to help keep their airline in business and information to help protect their jobs. Also, most of the pilots at TWA knew one of the 53 TWA employees killed in the crash, and looked to ALPA to help find answers to the mystery surrounding the tragedy. Even though ALPA had a different role than the company, the union had to respond just as quickly as the company to successfully manage this crisis from a union and pilot perspective.

Other roles of the Association became evident as the investigation pursued. For example, the union itself is a political organization with credibility

among legislators, press and the public at large. Therefore, since TWA was trying to survive a host of negative and sometimes misleading publicity both from the press and some politicians, ALPA took a high profile role in the press advocating the safety of the airline and correcting misleading reports. Although the company had its own communication department and spokesmen, the pilots took on this varied role to protect their jobs and reputations that were incumbent on the company successfully surviving the tragedy.

These varied roles, especially considering the unusual length of the investigation, afforded the TWA branch a challenge in the coordination and efficiency of effective communication to their pilot group. And although statistics prove that the creation, practice and maintenance of a crisis communication plan can help mitigate a crisis situation, the TWA branch of ALPA is one of the many groups or organizations that does not have one.

Effectively writing a plan that is unique to an organization can be a difficult task. However, once a group or organization has experienced a major crisis, it is useful to learn from that experience. Doug Newsom, author of the book, This is PR, writes, "Once a crisis is passed, it's important to evaluate every aspect of what was done, to determine what might be a better approach next time, because there will be a next time" (559). To begin creating a plan, a detailed look at what occurred in the initial aftermath of the crash, as well as in the days and weeks following, might be helpful.

Just before the crash of Flight 800, the TWA union office ran smoothly. Everyone knew what role he or she played in the organization and accomplished

tasks fairly well. Both internal and external communication were generally clear and consistent. The office staff and pilot leaders were accustomed to working under high levels of stress resulting from the company's difficult financial state and the union's contentious political atmosphere. However, the union did not have a crisis management plan, and despite the smooth operation of the office before the crisis, was not prepared for the effects of Flight 800.

Response in the Initial Aftermath:

The efforts of the union office began minutes after the crash occurred. Because Flight 800 exploded just off the coast of New York, a media capital of the world, the press reported the tragedy almost immediately. A number of individuals closely associated with the union leadership saw the breaking news on television and contacted the branch's pilot chairman of their communications committee. In turn, the chairman contacted the pilots' three elected officers (the "chairman," "vice chairman" and "secretary/treasurer"), and a local pilot representative who happened to be with the officers. The branch's office manager was also contacted with the news and called the office from her mobile phone to ensure that the officers were notified and to see if she was needed. Still in shock and not knowing exactly what happened or what should be done, the officers asked her to come in to help. All of the individuals in this newly formed "team" arrived at the union office in St. Louis within 15 minutes of the crash.

Because ALPA has a sophisticated accident investigation unit and safety and training department, their response was immediate. The investigation team,

headed by a TWA pilot, acted independently as they planned for and are trained to do. The branch office does not direct them, but supports them when needed and works with them to gain information and disseminate it to the pilot group. After ensuring that the team had been contacted, the four pilot representatives, pilot communications volunteer and the ALPA staff member quickly assessed the situation (Menoni).

"There was so much confusion," said former Communications Committee Chairman Capt. Glenn Stieneke. "We stood in shock for about the first hour. We had no disaster plan and the company was panicking...we were totally unprepared." Factual information about the crash was scarce. It was not immediately known what type of aircraft went down, if there were any survivors, or even if it was indeed a TWA flight. TWA's president and communications director were both overseas when the crash occurred, which added to the lack of information.

Due to this confusion and the volume of work needed to be handled, the group in the office decided to assign tasks to each individual. The chairman maintained contact with senior officials in the company and other parties involved with the accident such as NTSB. The vice chairman was dispatched to the St. Louis TWA command center to act as the ALPA liaison. He was responsible for gathering information from the company and feeding it back to the office. The secretary/treasurer and Communications Committee chairman handled the numerous press calls, and the local council representative answered calls from TWA pilots inquiring about the accident. The office manager helped coordinate

efforts and offered general support. She also contacted the rest of the office staff members at home to notify them of the tragedy with the information known at the time and prepare them for the next day's work. The office also contacted their senior attorney who prepared to fly out to the crash site that night to represent any possible surviving cockpit crewmembers. The staff communications specialist offered assistance from home. Other pilots called in to the office to offer their help, but not knowing what other tasks needed to be accomplished, the individuals in the office elected to turn down these offers (Schwartz).

After notification of the accident, the branch's staff communications specialist contacted ALPA's national director of communication who reviewed the legal implications of press statements, explained how the investigation would proceed and provided important contact names and numbers. The specialist was in contact with the Communications Committee chairman at the office, but since both individuals had already undergone media training and knew not to speak to the press after an incident, they only commented that they had no new information and did not want to speculate. This statement was quickly agreed upon by the two spokesmen and pilot leadership. After talking with the specialist about the legal implications, they also explained that since ALPA was a party to the investigation, they could not legally provide information about the accident. They did offer to be a source for public background information, helping to clarify the facts of the case in any way they could (Stieneke).

Response in the Hours Following the Crash:

About two hours after the accident occurred, the chairman of the pilot group and the Communications Committee chairman discussed and implemented internal communication efforts. The chairman of the TWA pilots sent a brief update to the president of the national organization and all pilot union volunteers over ALPA's messaging system. The Communications Committee chairman posted a message to the pilots on their 800 hotline information system, the pilots' most immediate and highly-used communication vehicle, explaining the known facts concerning the crash and indicating that they would continue to update the hotline frequently in the next few days. Soon after, he put a similar message on the pilots' CompuServe forum. Contact was also established with TWA's corporate communication office to exchange information and explain responses to media inquiries.

Others in the office worked to obtain valuable information. For example, the office was able to obtain the list of crew members aboard the flight off a computer system before it was shut down by the company and located their home addresses and domiciles to check with company records the next day. Other background information, such as TWA history, was researched from old files as time permitted.

At about 3:30 a.m., the team thought they had completed all that could be done that night. Everyone, except the Communications Committee chairman, left to sleep before arriving back at the office early in the morning (Stieneke).

Response in the Days Following the Crash:

The next few days after the accident continued to be hectic. The communications specialist and committee chairman posted a few more general hotline updates. They brainstormed questions the media might ask and developed answers to those questions for the pilot spokesmen. They also prepared the TWA pilots' chairman to speak at a press conference they were soon holding in New York to combat the negative publicity TWA was receiving over the accident and advocate the interests of their members. Most of the major decisions regarding communication efforts were made by the communications team who proposed ideas to the chairman and worked with him for approval; other routine efforts were implemented without discussion.

Many individuals found themselves in ad hoc roles in which they seemed to be well suited. The secretary/treasurer made political contacts, the Communications Committee chairman worked with the media, and the staff talked with pilot members who were upset or angry with the accident and had numerous questions (Stieneke).

On the third day after the accident, the branch's chairman and the Communications Committee chairman traveled to New York for the press conference and to handle press inquiries at the site. The secretary/treasurer and office supervisor went to New York subsequently to ensure that the TWA pilot investigators and other pilot volunteers had the resources they needed. The communications specialist remained in St. Louis to assist with internal

communication vehicles such as publications and the 800 hotline, and provide the media with background information (Berkley).

The weeks after the accident turned more toward the pilot membership, keeping them informed on the progression of the investigation through a succession of hotline messages and publications. These weeks turned into months and then into years as communication continued to be a constant necessity (Menoni).

The TWA pilots' union tried their best under extreme circumstances—both in the initial aftermath of the crisis and as the months unfolded. However, a crisis communication plan might have eliminated some of the confusion in the aftermath of the tragedy and provided guidance to those caught unexpectedly with the responsibility of handling it. “Although I believe we did the best we could, a procedure manual would have helped tremendously. We were just paralyzed,” said Capt. Scott A. Schwartz, former secretary/treasurer of the union. Stieneke agreed. He thought that what was accomplished in a few days could have been accomplished in the matter of hours if the office had been prepared and had a manual to refer to for guidance.

For example, because the tragedy took the union leaders so off-guard, they did not know who should take care of the numerous media calls, if there should be more than one spokesperson and who, if anyone, had the time to “prep” the spokesperson. They did not know the “chain of command” for deciding the statements that would be disseminated to the press and neglected to adequately communicate with their office staff. In general, they did not know if they were

doing all that was necessary or if everyone's resources were best utilized. Although many aspects of the crisis were handled correctly, some mistakes could have been eliminated, responses might have been quicker, and most importantly, the individuals handling the crisis might have had more confidence that they were doing all they could if the office had a crisis communication plan. Stieneke explains:

A crisis plan, especially with a checklist of what should be done and when, would have been instrumental. Obviously, you can't script what to do in a crisis, but some kind of guidance for those who have never been involved in this before would have made a big difference.

Crisis planning is fundamental to an organization for survival from a serious crisis, as illustrated in Pan Am's crisis situation and subsequent bankruptcy, and communication is an integral part of a crisis management plan. The TWA branch of ALPA, like the other branch offices of ALPA, is a large part of the union, made up of thousands of pilots, hundreds of volunteers, a full-time professional staff and a multimillion-dollar budget. These branch offices have responsibilities to their company management, fellow employees and the traveling public, and have a fiduciary responsibility to the process of an accident investigation as an official party to such an investigation. The duties and responsibilities are grave and deserve a well thought out and cogent crisis plan inclusive of crisis communication strategy. This project will focus on creating such a strategy for branch offices of ALPA.

The firsthand account of what happened in the aftermath of Flight 800 from the individuals involved, both what "worked" and what could have been improved, coupled with research from experts in the field, offer a strong foundation for the creation of a crisis communication plan that is unique to the union's branch offices. The plan, which will focus on key tasks and activities during each "step" of a crisis situation involving a major airline incident or accident, will provide ALPA offices a tool to help mitigate what could be another difficult situation. Hopefully the TWA pilots, ALPA staff and volunteers will not experience another tragedy of this magnitude. However the development and practice of a crisis communication manual would proactively use their experiences to help ensure a more effective response for all branch offices of the union and garner a sense of confidence that could prove invaluable if another crisis situation should occur.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Communication theorists have studied the manner in which individuals verbally and non-verbally exchange ideas for centuries. However, the specific study of “public relations,” beyond techniques relating to publicity, promotion or press agency, is relatively new. For example, it was not until 1923 that Edward L. Bernays, the first to call himself a “public relations counsel” two years earlier, wrote the first book on the subject, Crystallizing Public Opinion, and taught the first college course on public relations at New York University (Newsom 32). Since that time, however, the focus and responsibilities of those in the field of public relations has changed.

With the rise of consumerism in the 1960s, companies and organizations could no longer focus solely on turning a profit. Instead, they took on a more visible and responsible role in their communities and with their customers. This shift in company focus also meant a shift in the focus of public relations practitioners who had aided their companies in generating profits. As a result, the study and development of public relations slowly changed.

Although the ideas and techniques used to garner favorable public opinion and trust had been developed in the past and fostered during this time, it is difficult to pinpoint when “crisis communication” became a distinct aspect of public relations. However, since crisis communication techniques are a product of responsible community and consumer awareness, it has only been in the last few

decades that it has been brought to the forefront. Therefore, the research that pertains specifically to responsible crisis communication and crisis communication plans is fairly recent.

The project that this research focuses on is the creation of a crisis communication plan for the field offices of ALPA. Although some of the literature researched pertains specifically to ALPA as an organization and the airline industry, the bulk of the literature focuses on crisis communication and crisis communication plans.

In general, the literature on the subject of crisis communication tends to focus on the practical application of communication techniques during times of crises and does not largely discuss crisis communication in terms of theory or philosophy. Therefore, the ideas among the authors researched do not widely vary, but instead serve to substantiate or expand on one another's points.

All of the literature researched was written from the general philosophy that effective, efficient and proactive communication is helpful to organizations in times of crisis. However, the authors seem to struggle with the endless variables associated with crisis management as it pertains to specific and unique situations within various organizations. The focus, level of detail and practical application widely vary among the authors researched, and how they handle these endless variables is the basic difference in the literature used for this project.

Due to the difficulty of incorporating so many variables into one article, many authors give only general guidelines or "tips" on how to communicate during a crisis and/or what to incorporate in a crisis communication plan. These

guidelines, however, do not detail any one specific area of crisis communication, and therefore, provide little practical use. One author who provides basic “tips” for effective communication during a crisis is Stacy Smith, author of the article, “Public Relations—How Best to Weather the Storm of a Crisis.”

Smith’s article, published in the Birmingham Business Journal, provides guidelines for communication during a crisis without much detail. Some of these guidelines include defining audiences, preparing to provide accurate and timely communication, communicating immediately, identifying spokespeople and training them to deal with the media in an emergency, and telling the truth. Although it would be impossible to incorporate the kind of detail necessary to fully explain how to construct a communications plan in a short article such as this one, a public relations practitioner might find it difficult to incorporate these general “tips” into a specific and personalized crisis communication plan. For example, how does one “prepare” to provide accurate and timely communication? What kind of information should be communicated and when? How does one train a spokesperson to deal with a situation he or she has never been involved in before? Although the article touches on points that are consistent with the ideas or guidelines of other authors in the field, it does not elaborate on those points and, therefore, diminishes their practical use.

Other articles on crisis communication also provide basic, general guidelines, but use brief examples to help the reader personalize these guidelines to their own organization’s communication efforts. In the article, “Coping With a

Ries provides many of the same tips that were in Smith’s article, but

uses various short scenarios to illustrate how these techniques can be used. These scenarios are all based on school or classroom crises, but are fundamental enough for any public relations practitioner to understand their universal value. For example, Ries gives the scenario of a vocational student at a community college who punches a referee in anger after receiving a technical foul. The referee files suit against the student which incites national attention—a public relations crisis for the school. Ries' article uses this and other examples to illustrate how crisis communication tips or techniques are employed. In this specific case, Ries generally explains how the school directed media inquiries to the trained spokesperson and how the spokesperson developed trust with the media and public, garnering a favorable opinion of the school during an unfavorable situation. The article also describes the school's message to the media—both what was emphasized and what was avoided. Although the tips are very basic and do not broach the many aspects associated with the communication efforts during a crisis, brief examples such as this one add more “life” to the general guidelines and provide additional information to help the reader personalize the information.

Some authors of the literature researched focused on only one aspect of crisis communication and were able to give more detail regarding that one area. For example, in the article, “Managing to Communicate, Communicating to Manage: How Leading Companies Communicate with Employees,” authors Mary Young and James E. Post focus their discussion on effective employee communication. Although the article as a whole focuses on the benefits of effective employee communication and the techniques associated with that

communication, one small section of the article relates these points directly to organizations experiencing a crisis situation. To build a better company, a section of the article relates these points directly to a crisis situation.

In this section, Young and Post provide general guidance on how effective communication with employees during a crisis can help mitigate the situation. For example, one main technique described in the section was to employ multiple communication vehicles to ensure that the message is understood by all employees during a crisis. Because informed employees can have a vital impact on the outcome of a crisis and every individual understands information differently, the authors contend it is critical that a number of communication vehicles is used to communicate with employees. For example, some individuals learn better by visual media such as posters on company bulletin boards while others learn better by audio media such as telephone information hotlines. A public relations practitioner must be aware of how different types of individuals gather and understand information in order to disseminate an organization's message during a crisis situation quickly and effectively.

The benefits of focusing on one issue are also seen from John Elsasser in his article, "TWA Flight 800: A Crisis Casebook," which was published in the September 1996 issue of Public Relations Tactics. Elsasser's article is unique in that it uses the opinions of various professionals in the field to critique TWA's communication in the aftermath of the airline's crash of Flight 800. It does not focus on one aspect or technique of crisis communication, but teaches its readers by example by examining a specific case study. For example, the article explains

specific criticisms TWA received after the tragedy such as poor public perception when the mayor of New York blasted the airline for its handling of the tragedy. Instead of proactively using this event to show the public their concern and explain what the airline was doing to help solve this investigation, the article claims the company took a defensive position—making the airline look guilty. The article then goes beyond its critique and gives advice from PR professionals on how to avoid this and other specific mistakes.

By focusing the article on one case study, Elsasser successfully uses someone else's situation to teach his readers about possible crisis situations similarly affecting their own organization. Although the article is not intended to be a "how to" guide in the event of a crisis, it provokes its readers to think about the many variables associated with a crisis situation and realize that handling a crisis is an often confusing and difficult task. The article quotes a member of management from Tower Air, an airline that experienced a minor crisis in 1995 when a B747 jet skidded off a New York runway, who emphasized this point. He said:

I can tell you that pandemonium breaks out—complete pandemonium. You can talk about how crisis plans are wonderful, but when you factor in fast-breaking events, human reactions and families and agencies and governments, you're being bombarded from sides you could not have even anticipated. (2)

Because the study and application of effective communication in the aftermath of a tragedy is such a difficult task due to the ever-changing and

stressful events, it is not surprising that books provide more practical information regarding the creation of an actual communication plan than do articles from periodicals—specifically because they have the space to provide more detailed information. One source for detailed, practical information on crisis communication is student textbooks.

One textbook that provides detailed information is This is PR, written by Doug Newsom, Judy Vanslyke Turk and Dean Kruckeberg. Although this textbook deals with many different aspects of public relations, it focuses one chapter solely on communication during crisis situations. In this chapter, the authors cover a number of specific points associated with public relations during a crisis. Some of these areas of discussion include maintaining a positive public opinion, creating a communication plan, developing a crisis team and training one spokesperson. Not only do the authors touch on these points, but they also give detail to these areas. For example, the chapter gives advice on who should be on the crisis team, outlines the different “types” of crises, provides lists of the “dos and don’ts” of handling the media during a crisis, and explains how to deal with rumors.

Besides using real world examples to illustrate how these techniques help to manage other organizations’ crises, This is PR also provides readers information and lists to help understand these points and incorporate them into specific communication plans. Some of these lists include: the names of individuals that should be present at the central communication “base,” the specific duties of the PR person in charge, the information that should be gathered

in the initial aftermath of a crisis that might help with media and consumer relations, and examples of proactive statements to the media.

While this textbook chapter successfully provides additional detail and practical information, two of the authors researched, Steven Fink and Geary Skich, take this combination of helpful ideas, detailed examples, and practical materials even further.

Steven Fink, author of the book, Crisis Management: Planning for the Inevitable, provides an in-depth look at crisis communication as a whole, focusing specifically on crisis communication plans, controlling the message during a crisis and handling a hostile press. Fink, president of a public relations consulting firm that offers specialized crisis management counseling, uses this book to provide the same type of specific and personalized instruction to its readers. For example, although some authors discuss the benefits of “promptly communicating” with the media, Fink discusses the benefits of holding a press conference versus providing interviews one-on-one. Instead of advising readers to “carefully respond” to the press during a crisis, Fink provides specific examples or phrases to help a PR practitioner take control of a hostile interview. This kind of detail gives readers more knowledge to prepare for a crisis situation and determine what communication techniques are best for their own crisis communication plan.

Besides providing detail on specific aspects and responses to a crisis situation, Fink also uses the experience, opportunities and failures of others in a crisis situation to illustrate his points. In-depth casebook examples cover the spectrum of crises that could affect organizations such as the Ohio Savings and

Loan Crisis and the Johnson and Johnson Tylenol Crisis. Fink provides a brief summary of each crisis and lists the “key players” in the organization’s response to the crisis before providing a detailed look at each case with personal accounts from the individuals involved. In these case studies, Fink explains the organization’s various audiences, the communication vehicles they employed to respond to the crisis, and their rationale for using those specific vehicles. In some of the examples, Fink provides a timeline, allowing readers to see how events unfold and more accurately illustrating how the timing of communication efforts in the aftermath of a crisis is critical.

It Can’t Happen Here: All Hazards Crisis Management Planning, written by Geary Skich, outlines how to create a crisis communication manual in-depth by discussing the philosophy behind effective crisis response and the techniques used to accomplish specific goals, and offering the practical guidance to help the reader use those techniques. Skich takes the reader through the value and purpose of proper crisis communication and explains various aspects involved in crisis response such as the organization and management of information, and testing and updating crisis communication plans. For example, the article explains who should be on a crisis communication team, why each role or position is chosen for specific situations, and the assignments of each. The author also details how the creation of a plan differs, depending on various factors in specific circumstances and organizations. This allows readers to more accurately use his suggestions and personalize a plan to the needs of their specific organization. For these reasons,

Skich's book could possibly be used as a "workbook" to help write a personalized crisis communication manual or plan.

The book is unique in that it provides a sample emergency management plan outline from which to work and explains the reasons for each element of the plan. The outline is constructed under 10 main sections, helping the reader categorize the many aspects involved in a crisis response. These categories range from "Administration," where the purpose, objectives and various planning factors are contained including the description of both on-site and off-site facilities, to "Maintaining Emergency Preparedness," where the training programs, trainers, drills and exercises are detailed (269-75).

Skich's crisis communication plan sample is important because it can be difficult to assimilate all the information, lists, examples and tips of the research on the subject of crisis communication and write a complete and specific plan. Surprisingly, even an outline of a sample plan can be more useful than an actual plan. For example, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is one organization that publishes their actual crisis management plan on the Internet. Although it is interesting to evaluate an actual plan because most companies do not make this information public, this comprehensive plan can be difficult to understand due to its technical and government-specific language. The reader must also search for communication-specific aspects of the plan because the crisis communication response is included in the NRC's overall crisis management plan.

However, the NRC's plan is not published as an educational tool. They do not offer any explanation of the rationale behind aspects of the plan or items

specific to the organization itself—making it difficult for other organizations to effectively use it as a model.

Despite its technical language, the plan itself is very detailed. It contains information pertaining to the identification of a number of different possible crises the organization could be involved in and roles of each federal agency the organization is associated with in response to those crises. Although it might be difficult to use as a model, the plan illustrates the amount of detailed information that can be necessary in an organization's crisis management plan and shows the reader that crisis communication plans are specific to one organization.

Other information culled from the Internet proved useful in furthering the facts and research regarding the airline industry in general. One such website was www.nts.gov. This official NTSB website includes a search engine that allows its users to research various incidents and accidents in the airline industry. It provides a detailed summary of each investigation and its outcome, including information regarding the aircraft involved and its crew. This information is valuable for generating factual examples of various crisis situations in the airline industry for inclusion in the crisis communication manual.

Another useful website used for research in this project is www.faa.gov—the official website of the FAA. This website provides information regarding the organization and also includes a search engine to locate other crisis-related web pages. Many other research sources were found through this search capability.

Materials that focus specifically on ALPA, including in-house communication vehicles, proved helpful in tailoring this project to the needs of

the Association's branch offices. In order to create a crisis communication plan, it is necessary to intimately understand the organization. Although most of the information on ALPA and its branch offices was gathered through personal experience and interviews, the written material provides additional information on the organization as a whole. For instance, although none of ALPA's field offices have an extensive crisis communication plan, the collection of materials from various ALPA departments provides helpful examples of what to include in an overall crisis communication plan for ALPA branch offices. They also help acquire an overall perception of the union and how it deals with a crisis as a whole.

One of the in-house materials used as reference for this project is a written script of a speech given by John Mazor, a media specialist from ALPA's communication department. This speech was given to pilot members of the Critical Incident Response Program (CIRP) which is a group that helps other pilots and other pilots' families with emotional trauma. This speech, given Feb. 14, 1996, deals directly with how the media covers the story of an airline accident and what to expect during the initial aftermath of a tragedy. Material contained in the speech is especially informative because it deals specifically with the airline industry and ALPA as a union. For example, Mazor says the following about the initial aftermath of a crisis:

The first 24 hours after an accident produces a round of news stories that follow the classic journalistic model, describing the

who, what, when, where, why, and how of a major news event. At this stage, there will be some questions about the crew, but more reporters will be scrambling to get the basic facts—how many victims, the passenger lists, what were the origin and destination points of the flight, and so forth. Questions about the crew usually are limited to information about their identity, what happened to them after the accident if they survived, were they given drug tests, are they available for interviews, etc.

This information is detailed and specific, giving the reader a clear idea of what a public relations practitioner, especially one for a pilots' union, might face in the initial aftermath of an airplane accident.

Other information in Mazor's speech details "gag" rules for those involved with an accident investigation and how those rules affect ALPA's response, the average life cycle of news coverage of an airline incident including when the press begins to speculate on reasons for the crash, and the natural targets of media attention after an accident such as family members of victims. Again, this level of detail can be very useful when creating a crisis communication manual that must deal directly and substantially with these issues.

Another beneficial source of information used as reference for the creation of a crisis communication plan for the TWA pilots is the ALPA/Northwest Airline's Air Safety Office Manual. This manual was created to assist staff members at the Northwest ALPA branch office if a pilot should call reporting an accident. Although the manual does not delve into the branch's communication response, but focuses only on the initial notification process, it is helpful to this project because it is useful to see how the manual itself was constructed.

Because crises have numerous variables, it can be difficult to develop a usable plan. The Northwest MEC acknowledges these major variances in its manual by constructing the plan in a question/answer format. For example, the plan, which begins when an individual calls the branch office to report an accident, asks the reader if there is an ALPA safety representative in the office. If there is, the reader moves on to a certain set of questions, if there is not, the reader is given different instructions. This type of format continues throughout the manual, giving readers a different set of options from which to work after answering situational questions.

The plan also provides an information worksheet to help gather facts in the initial stage of a crisis. This worksheet facilitates the acquisition of necessary information, including the accident location, the aircraft type, the number of fatalities or injuries, the crew list, and the crew phone contact at the accident site. It is useful in that it is already personalized to the airline industry and, more specifically, a branch of the union dealing with a major incident or accident.

Although Delta Airline's branch of ALPA does not have a complete crisis communication manual, the communications group created a Communications Emergency Checklist that offers assistance in the event of a crisis. This checklist involves four major areas: notification, dispatch, on-site involvement and field office operations. Although the document does not provide expanded or extensive information for response to crisis, it provides a quick reference for the communications group to follow in the event of an emergency. Some of these ideas can be used in a crisis communication manual for all ALPA branch offices.

Flying the Line, written by George E. Hopkins, is another source of background information on the union that can be used as reference in this project. This book details the first half-century of ALPA since its founding in 1931. It explores the purpose of the union and how it grew, what it focused on and how those goals were accomplished. The book also discusses various accidents in airline history and although it does not detail specific communication responses, it provides the union's general philosophy about safety, response, and ensuring proper communication with their pilot membership. The philosophy and ALPA motto of "Schedule with Safety" is at the heart of all ALPA communications, including their response to tragedy (Hopkins viii).

Even with the most detailed, informative and practical information, it is clear that the creation of a crisis communication plan is a very personal and difficult task. Anticipating any number of different crises under any number of different circumstances, preparing for them and practicing the response can be daunting. Many organizations even turn to outside assistance to help them create such a plan. Big Apple Technologies, a company whose planning division offers "a pre-disaster plan at a fraction of the cost you would expect to pay from your current contingency plan provider," advertises its services on the Internet. Big Apple supports the need for its services of tailoring crisis communication plans by providing statistics which illustrate the positive impact of crisis communication plans on organizations. These services are available because of the seemingly difficult task of collecting useful information and forming that information into a personalized plan.

However, no outside consultant organization is as intimate with a specific organization as members of the organization itself. Knowing the "ins and outs" of an organization can be vital when creating a crisis communication plan. Therefore, looking to the individuals who have that experience and intimate knowledge is necessary. They understand the culture of the organization, the staffing, the flow of communication, and, to some degree, the organization's response to crisis. Even if an organization has not experienced a major crisis, every organization and employee has experienced minor day-to-day crises such as the breakdown of a computer or problems with the organization's telephone lines. Although helpful in understanding the organization's response to stress, a day-to-day crisis is much different than a major crisis such as an airline accident. If one has never been involved in the response to a major crisis, it can be difficult to imagine. Books or articles can never truly relay the emotions, stresses, and confusion of a real and specific crisis situation. Therefore, drawing on the first-hand experiences of those who have been involved in a major crisis can be helpful.

This project is largely the result of research gathered from those who have responded to a major crisis situation—the tragedy of Flight 800. The TWA branch of ALPA is in a unique situation because even though the office staff and pilot volunteers responded to a major crisis situation without a crisis communication plan, they have first-hand, recent knowledge of the aftermath of a tragedy at their office. These individuals have the opportunity to use their experiences to build an accurate crisis plan if something should happen again. They know first-hand how

the culture of their organization lends itself to the response of a crisis, what problems associated with a volunteer organization arise in these situations, what audiences need to be addressed, and what roles staff members and pilot volunteers must fill in order to accurately communicate with various audiences.

Although this first-hand experience is invaluable in the creation of a crisis communication plan for ALPA pilot offices, the construction of the actual written plan is founded on the literature of public relations professionals in the field. This literature provides the professional guidance with which to use these experiences to customize a plan that is organized, complete and easily used. Despite some authors' brevity or struggle with the many variables associated with crisis management, most expert opinions are consistent with one another. Therefore, this research can be applied, using the personal accounts and experience of those who helped in the aftermath of TWA Flight 800, to create a crisis communication manual that is effective and personalized to ALPA's culture, staff and organization as a whole.

Chapter III

SELECTIVE REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF RESEARCH

The preparation for a crisis situation is essential in any organization and the assistance found through literature written by professionals in the field of crisis management or crisis communication can be substantial. However, the experience of those who have actually dealt with a crisis situation first-hand is invaluable. James E. Lukaszewski, author of the article "Building a Crisis Response Plan That Works," says, "The real value of crisis planning comes from the lessons people learn from participating in the process." Surely, speaking to those individuals who have experienced the management of a crisis situation can provide further insight to the extent of the varying situations and the wide range of audiences and emotions that must be addressed in the aftermath of a crisis. Although valuable to any organization planning a crisis response, these individuals' experiences provide a unique opportunity to the organization to which they belong. They have the knowledge of how that specific organization and its culture handle a crisis situation, what roles and personnel are best suited for crisis management response, what specific audiences must be addressed, what "pitfalls" to avoid and what opportunities to seize. These individuals already know the structure of the organization, its mission and goals, its relationships with

key "parties" in the industry--basically, what "works" and what doesn't for that specific organization in a crisis situation.

Perhaps the ALPA TWA branch office is one organization that is best served by the experiences of those individuals who responded to a crisis situation. The union's peculiar and unique hierarchy and duties, made up and shared by both ALPA staff members and pilot volunteers, would be difficult to understand and assimilate into a cohesive crisis communication plan by someone who has not worked in that environment. No one but those who actually work with the union office truly understand how these unique aspects of the organization fit together and how they can affect a crisis response.

The Association is fortunate in that many of the staff members and pilot volunteers who worked during the aftermath of Flight 800 still work with the organization today and can provide first-hand testimony and useful advice for the creation of a crisis manual. They personally experienced how a major airline accident affected their office environment. The work life of each staff member and pilot volunteer, from the front desk receptionist to the pilot chairman of the ALPA branch, was affected by this tragedy in a unique way. Each has a different perspective on what worked and what didn't in their professional response to the accident, and each can contribute on how to fine-tune the union's response if another should occur. Interviews with both ALPA staff members and pilot volunteers, as illustrated in this chapter, help apply the information from experts in the field to the specific crisis response plan for branch offices of ALPA.

The TWA ALPA office operates differently than most other offices. It relies on both the continuity of ALPA staff members and the direction and volunteerism of TWA pilots. The environment of the union is in a constant state of change. New pilot officers are elected to oversee the union and office, pilots become more or less involved in volunteer work, and pilot committee chairmen take on additional tasks or delegate new tasks to staff members. As a result, even though there are certain key duties assigned to each staff member, there are no "rules" for what specific role each staff member plays and how the relationship between the pilot volunteers and staff member affects that role. This unique relationship between professional staff and pilot volunteers is illustrated in the stories of two individuals who provided valuable information regarding the work of the office: Suzi Menoni, an ALPA staff member, and Capt. Glenn Stieneke, a TWA pilot volunteer. Interviews with these individuals provide insight into the organization, how it works, and how it responds to crisis from both an ALPA staff and pilot volunteer perspective. This information is applied to the creation of crisis communication manual for ALPA field offices, using their unique experiences with the response to TWA's Flight 800 to improve ALPA's response to crisis in the future.

ALPA Professional Staff

Suzi Menoni is the ALPA TWA branch's office manager and has been with ALPA for 10 years. She came to the office as a receptionist and worked her

way up to the management level through an inner determination, tenacity and involvement, demonstrating her abilities and dedication to perform the job. Her background, however, was not in the airline industry. She worked in a number of different fields including waitressing and selling cars while raising two small children before moving into support work and joining ALPA.

Active in her position as the TWA branch's office manager, Menoni supervised two clerical staff members and maintained an advocacy role for the other seven staff members—ensuring that everyone's needs were met and the office ran smoothly. However, her outgoing personality drew her into many experiences and tasks that were different than her counterparts' within ALPA. For example, administratively, she became a liaison to the TWA pilots' national ALPA office and was given responsibilities in the branch's internal budget. She also became a confidant of some staff members, elected pilot officers and pilot committee volunteers. Menoni used her position to involve herself in special projects, using the somewhat ambiguous guidelines of her job description to command a different level of responsibility and control.

Based on her active participation and longevity within the union, Menoni offered the Association and every incoming TWA pilot officer one primary thing—a knowledge of what needed to be done. Many pilots are elected as an officer of the union without substantial ALPA office work and do not know the day-to-day details of how the office is run. This can be a complicated task. Within a day, a newly elected officer is responsible for an over \$3.5 million internal budget and ten professional and clerical staff members. He or she must ensure

that finances are examined, office equipment bought, paperwork completed, rent paid, meetings organized and staff problems solved. The staff, used to working independently in a changing environment, act as the continuity of the office in their particular field within the office structure. Each helps teach the new officer how the office functions from their specialized role, whether it be benefits, communications or legal. Although Menoni does not specifically work in these areas, she is the staff member with the most continuity and whose "macro" job touches most aspects of the union. Therefore, she knows who takes care of the tasks, how they have been handled in the past or who to call for more information. She is someone to whom pilots turn in the office for information and a sense of comfort from that knowledge.

Menoni's account of her experience in the aftermath of the tragedy is detailed. Like many, the crash of Flight 800 had a dramatic effect on her, personally and professionally. Her role in the crisis aftermath, like her role as office manager, was varied and evolved as events changed. Although she continued to fulfill the regular duties of her job supervising the administrative functions of the office, she assumed other roles as well. These roles played a large part in the union's internal communication efforts during the aftermath of the crisis.

Upon hearing the news of a possible TWA airline crash, Menoni called the pilot officers who were already at the branch office and drove in to help in any way she could. At this time, Menoni and the five pilots who had come to the office (either union representatives or committee volunteers) did not know any

facts about the crash. They were learning what happened as the press was reporting live from the accident site off the coast of Long Island, New York. "It was such a chaotic time in those first few hours,"

was try to collect our bearings, gather as much information as we could and figure out what we needed to do." These were not easy tasks because the union branch did not have a crisis management plan and no one had been intimately involved with an ALPA crisis response. In addition, they were just beginning to realize what a major crisis it actually was and that there were probably no survivors.

Menoni's main role in the initial aftermath was to act as a conduit of information between the pilot volunteers in the office and the TWA pilot safety volunteers who had traveled to the accident site to help with the investigation. She helped answer the telephones, ensuring that the pilot officers received important incoming calls such as those from TWA personnel, ALPA national leadership or ALPA's legal counsel. Menoni's knowledge of the organization and the people it worked with allowed her to prioritize the incoming calls—handling those that were appropriate and interrupting the officers for the calls that needed immediate attention. Many of the incoming calls were from TWA pilots or family members of pilots who were wondering if a specific pilot was on Flight 800. Although the office was able to pull the list of passengers and crew off of a TWA computer system before the company removed it, the office declined to release any names to the individuals who called. It was the company's responsibility to verify and release the passengers and crewmember names. The ALPA office did not know if it was legal to disseminate any information or, more importantly, if the names

were 100 percent accurate. (Since the crash of Flight 800, it is now federal law that the verification and release of all names will be handled solely by the Red Cross.) "That's one thing I don't know if any of us were prepared for that first night...taking those calls from family members and not being able to tell them

Menoni said.

In the chaos of the evening, the internal communication was cumbersome and chaotic. At that time, the office did not have as sophisticated communication tools as they do now. For example, they had no system to send mass email messages and information to TWA pilot members and had no website to post private information and facts about the crash. The staff and pilot volunteers also did not have pagers or digital telephones with which to communicate quickly.

After working most of the night, Menoni went home for a few hours of sleep and returned the next morning. The normal work of the office had to continue but it did so in an emotional and hectic environment. Family members of pilots continued to call, television crews came in and out of the office, and staff members and pilots grieved the loss of friends and coworkers. As office manager, Menoni supervised her two clerical staff members whose duties were intensified by the additional paperwork, accounting and telephone calls. In addition, Menoni coordinated the logistical aspects of the union's crisis response including securing hotel rooms and rental cars at the investigation site and working to provide everyone the needed communication tools.

Two days after the accident, Menoni was in direct contact with the TWA pilot investigators' command post at the accident site on Long Island. The

investigators learned in the first few days that it was harder and less efficient trying to get things done themselves, and called Menoni who offered any assistance she could. Due to her longevity within ALPA, she knew the people at ALPA's national headquarters in Herndon, Virginia well and knew who to call to get things accomplished. As a contact for the investigators, she also passed along information to the staff and pilot officers in the office as well as to the CIRP pilot volunteers and investigators who were at different sites in New York. Everyone knew Menoni and therefore she was a link among the pilots involved.

Realizing that the investigation would be substantially longer than expected, the investigators asked Menoni a few days later to travel to the accident site to help. At the command post in New York, she helped with the coordination of the pilot volunteers and acted as a liaison among their command post, the TWA pilots' chief investigator and the pilot investigators on site. Menoni helped these pilots by typing notes, setting up computer databases, driving people to and from the airport, taking care of the dry cleaning, keeping the command post stocked with beverages, and performing countless other tasks to help make their time at the investigation site easier. She also became a confidant of the investigators, listening to their concerns as they came off a shift. What she thought would be a three-day trip turned into a two-week trip, followed by subsequent visits in the next few weeks as ALPA's involvement in Flight 800 became a day-to-day operation.

Menoni's "macro" role in the crisis touched many volunteers and staff members and offered her a unique sense of how the office worked during the

response to Flight 800, what problems it encountered, and what improvements could be made. Although she did not write press releases or perform the layout of pilot newsletters, Menoni assisted the Communications Committee with internal communication and saw what issues were a hindrance or stress to the committee. For example, she saw how the lack of communication from the national ALPA office created problems for the communications group. Spreading themselves "too thin," the committee created additional work for themselves because they did not have the advice from other communication professionals at the national office. Since there was a lack of communication between the branch and national office, they did not ask for additional personnel to travel to St. Louis to assist them with projects. She also saw that support staff or additional volunteers could have aided the committee who was overburdened by the mounting communication needs. For example, if the committee had three or four individuals in the office the evening of the crash and in the days following who were tasked only with answering pilot calls, the staff communications specialist and other communications volunteers might have been freed to focus on other important communications tasks such as constructing talking points for the media and preparing the pilot chairmen for on-camera interviews.

Other problems, such as the difficulty contacting key individuals such as the pilot officers, accident investigators and staff members, were taken care of during the crisis. These individuals now have the necessary communications equipment such as laptop computers, digital telephones, and pagers if another crisis should occur.

As a source of information from all different committees and staff members, Menoni spoke with countless volunteers as well as the staff throughout the investigation. She recognized the signs of stress on the communications group and others as a result of the accident. The office did not employ the assistance of mental health professionals to help the staff and pilot volunteers deal with the emotional impact of the crash. She said that as a result, many individuals involved could not concentrate, made simple mistakes or simply took too much on themselves and did recognize the need for time away. Since this time, she has pushed for the training of staff in CIRP and recommends that if another tragedy should occur, a mental health professional visit the office the day after an accident—regardless of the level of work activity.

The various tasks that Menoni completed and the roles she assumed are not in her job description or outlined in a crisis communication manual. Most of these problems are ones that she identified and took care of on her own. However, it is necessary to be aware of how staff members like Menoni go beyond normal job descriptions to solve problems when they arise and interact with the parties involved to make the situation better. Although invaluable to this crisis response, this level of personal involvement cannot be assumed in future situations. Rather, the office should plan for a crisis in the event that individuals like Menoni are not around.

It is also important to realize how effective communication relies on the efficient use of personnel, the coordination between the communications group and other groups such as the accident investigation committee or the safety

committee, and the organization of the office as a whole to ensure proper support to complete projects and provide timely communication to the pilot group. The lines between crisis management and crisis communication are blurred and it is evident that the creation of a crisis communication manual must be part of a larger crisis management plan.

ALPA Pilot Volunteers

Capt. Glenn Stieneke, the TWA branch's former Communications Committee chairman, is illustrative of the other half of the union office's makeup—the pilot volunteer. Attending junior high and high schools in France and Germany, and graduating college from the University of Manchester in England, Stieneke experienced many different cultures at a young age. He continued his travels through his pursuit of a career in aviation and was hired to TWA as a flight engineer pilot in 1985. Since that time, he has flown five different aircraft for TWA and achieved captain status.

Currently an active TWA MD80 pilot, Stieneke began ALPA work nine years ago, volunteering on the Communications Committee for most of that time and serving as Communications Committee chairman two years before the accident of Flight 800 occurred. As chairman, he worked along side the staff communications specialist to communicate the union's message to external audiences and the pilot group. This included a wide range of duties including handling press calls, writing, editing and performing the layout of union

newsletters and publications, assisting other committee chairmen with graphics and presentations, developing the union's electronic communication tools and acting as an advisor to the pilot officers on communication strategy.

Stieneke was attracted to the Communications Committee largely due to his love for computers and electronic communication. (Besides flying for TWA, Stieneke previously worked part-time for Microsoft, Corp. testing new programs.) However, he brought to the Association and the Communications Committee more than technical knowledge. He also brought a fundamental asset to the Communications Committee—a pilot's point of view.

Although the staff communications specialist is trained in the methodology, strategy and practical application of communication tools, the pilot chairman of the Communications Committee brings the pilots' perception and viewpoint to the communication. For example, a staff communications specialist might know how to effectively write and edit copy, but a pilot would know what stories would be of interest to the pilot group and what distribution format might best suit the pilot's lifestyle.

Stieneke's "roll up your sleeves" work ethic, along with his intimate knowledge of the union's communication tools, was essential in the communication response to Flight 800. Living in the St. Louis area at the time, he came into the office minutes after learning about the crash and stayed throughout the night. Stieneke provided timely information to the pilot group by recording a message on the pilots' frequently-called 800 hotline, explaining the known facts concerning the crash and informing the pilots that the hotline would be updated

regularly in the coming days. He answered telephone calls from fellow pilots inquiring about the 50 crew members aboard Flight 800 and helped devise talking points for the other pilots and staff who were also answering calls. Stieneke also established contact with the company's communication department to share information.

By the second day, the local media had their initial reports of the accident and began calling the union office for the pilots' point of view of the accident and for information regarding pilot-focused stories. For example, because there was no explanation for the crash, the press began to speculate on a cause for the accident—including pilot error. They also heard rumors of possible crewmembers aboard Flight 800 and were calling to see if they could verify any names. "One thing the press is very good at in those situations—prying for information. It was important that everyone knew not to give out sensitive information," Stieneke said.

The secretarial staff took the mounting press messages, recording the stated focus of the story and the reporters' deadline. Meanwhile, Stieneke and the communications specialist prepared the pilot chairman for on-camera interviews, conducting mock interviews to prepare for any unseen or difficult questions. By this time, it was evident that there were no survivors of the crash. If there had been surviving crewmembers, it would have been the Communications Committee's duty to work with those individuals, keeping them out of the press spotlight. They did, however, provide guidance to some family members of pilot

victims whom the press had bombarded after the crewmember names were released.

New information sporadically came to the office from the accident site, providing the officers and communications group an update on the investigation—even if it was to explain that there was no news at all. However, with each development, the “message” of the union changed and that message had to be disseminated to a number of audiences including ALPA pilot volunteers, staff, the pilot membership, the press and others. Stieneke describes how he and the communications specialist worked with the press during this situation:

Because TWA was buried [with work] and weren't talking to the press, [the media] came to us for information and we provided them the facts we knew. But, the relationship worked both ways. We had built a good relationship with our local and national media contacts and so in some instances, the press called us to give us new information that they received from one of their other sources.

A positive and proactive relationship with the media was not enough to thwart the erroneous information that was being reported about the accident. In addition, New York Mayor Rudolph Guiliani took a vocal position against TWA, criticizing the company for not providing the public more timely information. As a result, ALPA planned a press conference in New York with the flight attendants' and machinists' unions to clarify the distorted facts of the information. “We had to speak for our airline because TWA had gotten into a defensive position rather than an offensive one. Because of Guiliani's comments, anything

TWA said looked like a rebuttal," Stieneke said. It was important for the union to clarify misinformation in the press not only for the sake of accurate reporting, but also because negative press coverage could negatively affect the airline and therefore put pilot jobs in jeopardy.

In New York, the pilot chairman of the union gave an address at the press conference and Stieneke traveled along to help prepare him and to provide the media any needed background information. Although the committee learned a few lessons regarding press conferences in fierce media battles (Mayor Guiliani upstaged the planned press conference five minutes earlier with his own public address), the committee did clarify some misinformation and learned what they would do if ever confronted with a similar situation. As discussed later, the committee thought it would have been wise to keep specific information regarding the press conference as private as possible in that environment until it was necessary to inform the media.

As the chairman of the communications effort during the aftermath of Flight 800, Stieneke has distinct recommendations on what should be done differently and what should be included in a crisis communication manual. He believes that the use of simple checklists would have made their communication response to the crisis more efficient. These checklists would have helped to ensure that the correct information was gathered, specific individuals or groups were contacted and specific actions taken. For example, because the committee had not previously experienced a crisis of that magnitude, they did not know to send an ALPA spokesperson to the accident right away. Instead, it was three days after the

crash before the pilot chairman went to New York for the press conference. A spokesperson might have been able to clarify incorrect information sooner. Stieneke also suggests that up-to-date background information on the union, its elected pilot representative and its relationship to TWA should be a large part of the manual. The Communications Committee had no background information or press kits on the union and therefore spent valuable time collecting historical data and explaining information over the phone to the media when they could have concentrated on other efforts. "Time management in a crisis situation is extremely critical and if you spend 20-30 minutes on the phone with each reporter just satisfying immediate information, there will not be time for anything else," Stieneke said.

Stieneke's contribution during the aftermath of Flight 800, just as that of many other pilots, went above and beyond reasonable expectations. His work and volunteerism helped tremendously during the union's response to the tragedy. However, it is essential to create a crisis communication plan without assuming that Stieneke, like Menoni, would take on as much work as he did or even be available at the time. As a pilot, he could have been out of the area or even the country when the accident occurred. No other pilot knew as much about the union's communication as he did and there was no manual to provide assistance in his absence. A crisis communication manual would guard against this situation, providing enough detail to help guide the communications team of an ALPA field office regardless if the Communications Committee chairman or any other one individual is present or not.

The wealth of information gathered from these two individuals through personal interviews, as well as from the many other staff members and pilot volunteers who helped during the response to the tragedy, provide a level of practicality and depth to the creation of a crisis communication manual for ALPA field offices. Menoni and Stieneke understand the unique relationship of ALPA staff and pilot volunteers and have a sense of how that specific culture and environment handle crisis situations. Their experiences and perspective help mold an ALPA crisis communication plan—drawing on their successes, avoiding their mistakes, and learning from their perspective of the office make-up in the aftermath of a tragedy. The application of this first-hand experience and knowledge unique to ALPA field offices is critical in the creation of a crisis communication manual, providing the kind of personalization that cannot be found in any book.

Crisis Communication Manual

**Air Line Pilots
Association, Intl.**

Pilot Field Offices

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Introduction

The threat of a crisis situation for those working in the airline industry, including the professional staff and pilot volunteers of the Air Line Pilots Association, Intl. (ALPA), is a daily reality. Our pilot groups' careers, reputations and job security rely on effective and efficient response to crisis that is based on external and internal communication. However, knowing what to do (and knowing what not to do) in a crisis situation without any guidance can be difficult—especially in the initial stages of a crisis when misinformation and uncertainty is the norm. The key to effective crisis response is preparation.

This manual is designed to help ALPA field offices and their communication groups effectively respond to a crisis situation by identifying and explaining specific tasks and audiences that should be addressed in a possible crisis situation. It also gives suggestions on when these tasks should be completed and by whom. Through the use of checklists, the manual helps the reader identify the type of crisis and respond to that unique situation. Each checklist is followed by an extended explanation of each item, providing additional information and direction. The appendix should be completed by each individual field office to include important contact information and “how to” instructions for various communication vehicles and tasks.

Navigate through the manual by beginning with the “Initial Checklist-All Crises,” (page 3). This checklist will help organize the communications group and identify the type of crisis: crash, criminal act, major mechanical incident or pilot incident. Once this checklist is completed, follow the prompts to the next, crisis-specific section. Each checklist points the reader to the next step. Each section includes an

initial checklist for the first 12 hours following the crisis and a checklist for the 12-24 hours following the accident/incident. A narrative regarding communication efforts in the days and weeks after the crisis completes each section.

Be aware that this manual is intended only as guide. It cannot presuppose the varying circumstances of each crisis situation or replace common sense, but rather should be adapted to fit individual needs.

It is important to review this crisis communication manual, update it frequently, and discuss possible situations and responses before they occur. Although one can ever reenact an actual crisis, discussing response strategies and practicing communication response to crises will better prepare the communications group if the inevitable should occur.

All Crises

Initial Response (0–12 hours) Pages 3–13

The following checklist outlines the general steps to take once informed of a possible crisis situation involving an airline incident or accident. Before beginning the manual, determine if the incident/accident involves the possibility of serious injuries or death or extensive damage to aircraft or other property. If it does, follow the checklist below. If the incident/accident does not, follow regular communication channels/efforts.

Checklist

1. Confirm, to the best possible degree, the extent of the incident/accident with reliable sources
2. Notify communications team
3. Dispatch appropriate team members to MEC office
4. Assign/confirm the following roles:
 - a) Emergency Communications Manager
 - b) Internal Communicator
 - c) Media Coordinator
 - d) Spokesperson(s)
 - e) Phone Bank Volunteers
 - f) Phone Bank Supervisor
 - g) On-site Liaison
 - h) Primary Sysop(s)
5. Establish contact with company communications
6. Record basic facts (who, what, when, where)
7. Identify the type of crisis and follow the corresponding checklists (page numbers provided) of specific crisis situation.
 - a) Airplane Crash (fatal and non-fatal) - page 14
 - b) Criminal Act - page 37

c) Mechanical Incident - page 64

d) Pilot Incident - page 88

After identifying the type of crisis situation, turn to the corresponding page to complete the 0-12 Hour Initial Checklist specific to the crisis type.

Extended explanation of this checklist begins on page 5.

All Crises

Extended Explanation and Direction

Initial Response (0-12 hours)

1. Confirm, to the best possible degree, the extent of the incident/accident with reliable sources

2. Notify communications team

The chairman of the MEC communications committee and/or the staff communications specialist should be notified immediately in the event that a possible incident or accident occurred. Once notified, these individuals should, in turn, notify the entire communications team and other key individuals necessary to help in the initial aftermath of the crisis. Contact information for these individuals is located in Appendix B1. An initial urgent ASPEN message should be sent to the group of individuals, followed by an attempt to contact each individual via personal contact information.

The following individuals should be contacted immediately in the initial aftermath of a crisis (in order):

- MEC officers
- Communications Committee chairman
- MEC staff communications specialist
- Communications Committee members
- MEC contract administrator
- MEC Safety Committee
- MEC office supervisor

3. Dispatch appropriate team members to MEC office

The MEC Communications Committee chairman, staff specialist, or designated individual, should dispatch the following individuals to the TWA MEC office.

- All MEC officers (if available)
- MEC communications specialist

- MEC Communications Committee chairman
- 2-4 Communications Committee volunteers
- MEC contract administrator

Sysops (pilots who help with the MEC website and CompuServe forum) should be on “stand-by” to offer assistance if not in office.

4. Assign/confirm roles

The following roles should be assigned by the Communications Committee chairman or other individual in charge of communications in lieu of the chairman. These roles should be maintained throughout the entire crisis response. Individuals may assume multiple roles depending on resources and location. The Communications Committee chairman or other individual in charge of communications in lieu of the chairman should also be assigned a role—usually acting as the Emergency Communications Manager.

a. Emergency Communications Manager:

The Emergency Communications Manager will be responsible for the following general duties throughout the crisis response:

- Ensure that all team members are assigned the appropriate roles and have reported to assigned locations.
- Ensure that appropriate communications and record-keeping procedures are being properly implemented.
- Request additional communications equipment and repair through the office supervisor.
- Review and approve all public information and media news releases.
- Ensure 24-hour operations capability.
- Establish communications with key on-site and off-site emergency personnel.
- Coordinate all communication response activities.
- Designate personnel to interface with law and government officials, company officials, the MEC safety

and accident investigation committees and other key parties of the crisis situation.

- Coordinate spokespersons.
- Prepare daily/weekly summary of events/activities for MEC officers, staff and other volunteers working with the crisis and distribute via ASPEN.
- Consult daily with MEC officer(s) and communications specialist regarding communication strategy.

b. Internal Communicator:

The Internal Communicator will be responsible for the following general duties throughout the crisis response:

- Act as liaison to ALPA National Communications Department.
- Script, record and distribute telephone hotline message, ASPEN and electronic communication updates to ensure consistent and steady stream of information.
- Script and gain approval of press responses, ensuring they are up-to-date, legal and technically accurate.
- Write and obtain approval of all news releases from an MEC officer.
- Consult daily with MEC officer(s) and Emergency Communications Manager regarding communications strategy.
- Prepare publications as needed.
- Write Letters To All Pilots from the MEC chairman.

c. Media Coordinator

The Media Coordinator will be responsible for the following general duties throughout the crisis response:

- Write and gain approval of all press releases.
- Send press releases to media contacts (or delegate to ALPA National).
- Arrange and coordinate press interviews.
- Arrange and coordinate press conferences.
- Prepare spokespersons.

- Arrange for the monitoring of press coverage including radio, TV and print and forward reports to the appropriate union officers.
- Consult daily with MEC officer(s) and Emergency Communications Manager regarding communications strategy.

d. Spokesperson(s)

(Primary spokesperson should be a pilot, preferably an MEC officer. Most importantly, however, all spokespersons should be media trained and able to speak effectively with the press. When appropriate, “field” spokespersons should be prepared to speak in domicile at the request of the media coordinator.)

The Spokesperson(s) will be responsible for the following general duties throughout the crisis response:

- Work with media coordinator to prepare for interviews by discussing talking points and participating in mock interviews.
- Deliver union message to the media—print, on-camera and radio.
- Act as visible representative of the union at various press relations and public relations functions.

e. Phone Bank Volunteers: Communications Committee Volunteers (4-6)

The Phone Bank Volunteers will be responsible for the following general duties throughout the crisis response:

- Read prepared statements to fellow pilots or others inquiring about the crisis.
- Follow written phone bank volunteer guidelines.
- Log calls.
- Notify MEC communications team of any immediate issues that should be addressed.

- Track pilot issues and notify communications team of any repetitive or “stand-out” questions that have not been answered in prior communication efforts.

f. Phone Bank Supervisor

The Phone Bank Supervisor will be responsible for the following general duties throughout the crisis response:

- Schedule shifts of phone bank volunteers to handle pilot calls, ensuring each volunteer has had enough rest.
- Monitor volunteers to ensure they follow the guidelines.
- Handle any calls or inquiries that are not addressed in talking points.

g. On-Site Liaison: Communications Committee Volunteer

The On-Site Liaison will be responsible for the following general duties throughout the crisis response:

- Divert media away from any surviving crewmembers and/or safety team members ensuring they do not speak to the press. Refer the press to the MEC office.
- Act as a conduit of information between the Safety Committee chairman and the MEC office.
- Monitor local news media and inform field office and Safety Committee on-site coordinator of coverage, faxing pertinent newspaper articles to communications staff.
- Attend all on-site press briefings and report developments back to MEC office.
- Prepare and coordinate interviews of on-site spokesperson when deemed appropriate by the Emergency Communications Manager.

h. SysOp(s)

The SysOp(s) will be responsible for the following general duties throughout the crisis response:

- Be “on-call” to upload information to the website and send email to mass distribution list.
- Post newswashes.

- Monitor MEC website message board pilot questions/issues and forward issues of particular concern to appropriate individual(s), copying forwarded messages to Emergency Communications Manager.

5. Establish contact with company communications

department: Emergency Communications Manager

Establish contact with the head of the communications department at the company immediately. (See Appendix B4) Trade names and contact information (including home, pager and cell phones) of those individuals who will be handling the response to the crisis. Review known facts at the time. Ask about the establishment of a company command center and request to be involved in any company conference calls. Set up system of open line of communication to share facts and press responses in the hours ahead.

6. Record basic facts (who, what, when, where,[why]):

Internal Communicator

It is essential that the communications committee keep an updated fact sheet on the evolving crisis. This up-to-date and accurate fact sheet **should be used as the basis for all communications efforts**. The Internal Communicator or designated individual should record and save each fact sheet. These sheets can be found in the front pocket of this manual or located in Appendix A1.

During the first few hours of a crisis, many questions (especially why the incident/accident occurred) are not known. It is imperative that no one speculates as to the cause or specific details of an incident or accident. Relay only proven facts; do not draw conclusions.

The fact sheet should also include key "players" in the incident/accident and the investigation such as survivors, company personnel, family members of victims, local law

enforcement, the military, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB), etc. Names, telephone numbers and any other pertinent information should be recorded for future use.

7. Identify the type of crisis

Airplane Crash:

An airplane crash involves any type of significant damage to an aircraft or collision with an object. This could include those in the air or on the ground, mid-air collisions, or those with another aircraft. An "airplane crash" might be identified before a specific reason for the crash is known. Such reasons might fall into the categories of criminal act, mechanical or pilot incident.

Examples of airplane crashes include:

- On June 2, 1999, an American Airlines MD-80 aircraft, Flight #1420, attempted to land at the Little Rock, Ark. airport during severe thunderstorms. The aircraft slid off the runway and crashed into a pole, killing nine people and injuring dozens. At the time of this writing, the crash has been speculated in the press to be caused by weather factors, quality of radar equipment, poor pilot decision and/or poor Air Traffic Controller communication. This accident is illustrative of a crash that would necessitate responses relating to possible mechanical incident and pilot error as well.
- On July 1996, Trans World Airlines Flight #800 crashed into the Atlantic Ocean just off the coast of New York, killing all 230 people on board. The crash is an example of an accident of which cause was not determined. In a case like Flight #800, all scenarios or possible causes were examined including mechanical failure and criminal act. At the time of this writing, the investigation has proven the case inconclusive.

Criminal Act:

A criminal act could involve any terrorist act, hostage taking, assault to a crewmember or passenger, shootings, bombings or extreme criminal violence on or about the aircraft.

Example of criminal acts include:

- On Sept. 5, 1986, a Pan Am B747, Flight #73, was hijacked in Karachi, Pakistan by four Palestinian terrorists who stormed aboard the aircraft as it was preparing for departure. The terrorists demanded to be flown to Cyprus to release three terrorists who were in prison there. Approximately 390 passengers and 13 flightcrew personnel were taken hostage. The pilots on the aircraft, aware of the attack as it was in progress, escaped through the cockpit windows. This escape transformed the aircraft from a mode of transportation to a "building." Sixteen hours of negotiations ensued. Before the four terrorists were apprehended, at least 22 individuals were killed and approximately 125 were injured.
- On December 21, 1988, Pan Am Flight #203, bound from London to New York, crashed into the Scottish town of Lockerbie, killing all 259 people aboard and 11 Lockerbie citizens. The cause of the crash stemmed from a bomb hidden in the radio system, which blew up at 31,000 feet. At the time of this writing, the investigation of the case is still open.

Mechanical Incident:

A mechanical incident involves any major incident or accident incurred due to aircraft or aircraft component malfunctions. Examples of mechanical incidents include:

- On April 28, 1988, Aloha Airline's Flight #243 experienced extreme "airframe failure" while en-route from Hilo, HI to Honolulu. Approximately 18 feet of cabin skin and aircraft structure separated or "peeled" from the aircraft. One flight attendant was swept out of

the aircraft—the only fatality. The pilots landed the plane safely. The cause of the accident stemmed from structural weather fatigue.

- On July 19, 1989, United Airlines Flight #232 suffered a severe mechanical failure when the DC-10's #2 engine separated from the aircraft. This separation led to the loss of the three hydraulic systems which powered the flight controls. The pilots had difficulty controlling the aircraft and the plane crashed during an emergency landing in Sioux City, IA, killing 111 people. The cause of the accident was deemed failure to detect a fatigue crack.

Pilots Incident:

A pilot incident is any major damage or injuries caused by a cockpit crewmember or a major media event caused by cockpit crewmembers. Examples of pilot incidences are intoxication, mental instability, pilot error, pilot incarceration, etc.

Examples of pilot incidents include:

- Swissair Flight #11, an MD-11 aircraft, crashed into the Atlantic Ocean on Sept. 2, 1999, killing all 229 people on board. Although the official cause of the accident was cited as a mechanical error, the pilots were highly criticized in the press for responding too slowly, insinuating that if the pilots had acted differently, they could have saved passenger lives. This is an example of how a pilot group might be faced with a pilot incident even though the actual cause of the incident/accident was not cited as pilot error.
- In the mid-1980s, the pilots of a major U.S. airline were caught flying while intoxicated. After the incident, the three pilots were fired from the company and the captain served a jail sentence. This incident incited wide media attention. (The details of the incident are not recorded due to ongoing legal proceedings.)

Airplane Crash

Initial Response (0–12 hours) Pages 14–29

Follow the checklist below after the All-Crises Initial Response Checklist (page 3) has been completed and “Airplane Crash” is identified as the cause of the crisis.

Checklist

1. Determine if there are any fatalities
2. Obtain a list of crewmembers on board
3. Identify acceptable sources of information
4. Contact ALPA National Communications Department
5. Contact local law enforcement, establish liaison and gather information
6. Contact the NTSB, establish liaison and gather information
7. Contact the FAA, establish liaison and gather information
8. If crash occurred in or around an airport, contact the airport manager’s office, establish liaison and gather information
9. If crash occurred in a foreign country, contact the state department and consider translators
10. Distinguish between public and non-public information
11. Record telephone hotline message with basic public facts
12. Send out a mass Email message
13. Update website with message
14. Begin a list (using form) of media calls
15. Develop simple statement to press
16. Deliver union message to press
17. Contact press contacts local to crash site
18. Develop talking points for those answering telephones of non-media calls
19. Ensure office has adequate phone ports for phone bank through MEC office manager
20. Dispatch a local communications volunteer to site (if necessary)

Extended explanation of this checklist begins on page 15.

Airplane Crash

Extended Explanation and Direction Initial Response (0–12 hours)

1. Determine if there are any fatalities: Designated Communications Volunteer

Whether or not crewmembers survive an airplane crash, the union's priority remains focused on the representation of those pilots involved—both as individuals and representatives of the entire pilot group. However, the direction of the communication department changes dramatically depending on fatalities of the crewmembers as well as passengers—both in message and in focus. For example, if there are fatalities, the communications group might give additional focus to the families. If there are survivors, the communications group might help protect those individuals from the media and act as their “spokesperson.”

Contact the company, union officers, pilot investigators, local law enforcement or any other official party in the investigation to determine fatalities.

2. Obtain a list of crewmembers on board: Designated Communications Volunteer

Obtaining the names of crewmembers on board the aircraft helps the communications group formulate statements, prepare background information and concentrate on other communication initiatives. Names of crewmembers can be obtained through the airline's computer system. This information should be obtained as quickly as possible because the company will blank out the information—sometimes as quickly as within the first hour after the crash.

The names of crewmembers are extremely sensitive. Do not, under any circumstances, release this information to anyone, including fellow pilots. The names should ONLY be released after they are officially released by the Red Cross.

3. Identify acceptable sources of information

A variety of individuals will provide the communications team with "inside information" regarding the crisis. Rumors are widespread during this time and although some of the sources might be useful, do not disseminate speculative, unverified, or second-hand information. Only the following sources, until otherwise indicated, are trusted and accepted sources of information for possible dissemination:

- ALPA National
- MEC Safety Committee
- National government
- Local/State government or law enforcement
- Military
- NTSB
- FBI
- FAA

4. Contact ALPA National Communications Department: Internal Communicator

The Internal Communicator or designated individual should contact the director of ALPA's communication department and the communications supervisor assigned to their specific airline. Brief them on the facts of the accident, explain tentative communication plans and ask for any direction, advice or modification of the plans.

5. Contact local law enforcement, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should call the sheriff and/or police department local to the crash site. Explain who you are (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information obtained from local officials could include evolving facts in the case, names of victims, etc.

6. Contact the NTSB, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB) is the primary investigating branch of the Dept. of Infrastructure and Interior (formally Department of Transportation) in charge of accident investigation. The board investigates and submits a report to the FAA regarding the cause of the crash. They also make recommendations stemming from their investigation relating to aircraft construction, flight safety procedures, etc.

Since the NTSB is involved in any crash that occurs in the United States, it is important that the Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual contact the board, explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information from the NTSB can be valuable. For example, during the investigation of the crash of TWA's Flight 800, the NTSB gave a press briefing everyday. Establishing contact with the board might afford the opportunity to attend these briefings and gather updated information.

Note: If the crash occurs in a country other than the U.S., the NTSB will not be the primary investigators. Contact the safety board specific to that country.

7. Contact the FAA, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with the Principal Operations Inspector (POI) for their carrier or other liaison in order to share information. (Each airline has an FAA representative or POI assigned to work primarily with that carrier.) Inquire whether there is any possibility or discussion regarding actions taken against the pilots.

19 Developing a relationship with the FAA is important in a crash situation, especially if there is any chance of an action or violation taken against a pilot. As the administrative branch of aviation community, the FAA is concerned with pilot-related issues during a crash including the determination of negligibility or pilot error. Any information obtained before the actions occur could help the union prepare for the representation of the pilots and communication of events to their membership.

8. If crash occurred in or around an airport, contact the airport manager's office, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should call the manager's office at the airport at or around where the crash occurred. Explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information obtained from the airport in a crash situation could include airport and runway diagrams, airport security personnel contact, initial information from those individuals first on the scene, etc.

9. If crash occurred in a foreign country or over international waters, contact the U.S. State Department and consider translators: Emergency Communications Manager

A crash in a foreign country or over international waters poses different guidelines and challenges. The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the U.S. State Department to establish liaison and gather information. If necessary, elicit help from the pilot group via the telephone hotline for translators or consider assistance from a Language of Destination (LOD) flight attendant. (Most airlines have flight attendants who speak the language of international destinations called LODs.) The Emergency Communications Manager should coordinate an LOD by contacting the company.

10. Distinguish between public and non-public information: Internal Communicator

As the pilots' union, ALPA's primary goal is to represent any crewmember involved in the crisis and act as an advocate of the pilot group as a whole. To this end, the communications team should provide as much clear, honest and timely information to the pilots as possible. However, some information is non-public and, therefore, cannot be disseminated to the pilot group as a whole—even through "private" channels. In a crash situation, ALPA is considered an official "party to the investigation." Therefore, the union cannot provide any information that could jeopardize their participation in the investigation. The union cannot speculate or provide any information that is not deemed as public facts by the NTSB. If they do, ALPA will be banned from the investigation.

Although some information cannot be disseminated to the pilots, it is the communications team's responsibility to explain what the union can and cannot say and why. This provides pilots with the most information possible and builds trust within the union.

Below are some of the many items that the union is prohibited from disseminating. As a general rule, if there is a question whether or not the information is public, do not release the information until it has been approved by a contract administrator, ALPA National and/or an MEC officer.

NON-PUBLIC

- Names of crewmembers
- Names of passengers
- Special accident circumstances
- Facts known by "insiders" to the investigation/situation
- Any speculative information

11. Record telephone hotline message with basic public facts: Internal Communicator

The telephone hotline, sometimes referred to as the “code-a-phone,” is an effective tool to disseminate timely, non-sensitive information to the pilot group and “tell our story” to the public and press who regularly call the hotline. Pilots should know to call the hotline if there is any type of emergency.

The Internal Communicator should write the hotline message and have it approved by the Emergency Communications Manager and/or an MEC officer. The Internal Communicator should record the telephonic message.

Schedule: Special hotline messages should be recorded frequently during a crisis situation to disseminate breaking news or keep the pilot group updated on the situation. Hotline messages should give basic facts regarding the crisis, tell pilots how ALPA is involved, thoroughly and honestly explain answers to frequently asked questions (received by communication volunteers manning the phones) and give pilots an idea of when the hotline will be updated again. If possible, the communications team should also continue to maintain the regular schedule of hotline updates.

Tips to remember: *Although the hotline is an opportunity to talk directly to the pilot group, be wary of how the hotline is worded and what information is disseminated. The press regularly quote directly from the update.*

Regardless of the message, every code-a-phone message during a crisis should:

1. Give the facts immediately
2. Bring up any issues of importance to the pilots to mitigate any questions and maintain an open communication policy (Tell the pilots what you do not know and why)

3. Explain what ALPA is doing
4. Tell pilots when the next update will occur

EXAMPLE HOTLINE:

Give the facts immediately: Your MEC has learned through contact with the FAA and company officials that a Trans Global Airline's B767 aircraft has crashed in the desert, just outside of Tempe, Arizona. Flight #502 departed Phoenix airport for St. Louis at 1:39 p.m. and crashed at approximately 1:45 p.m. CST. **Acknowledge information not known at the time:** At this time, we do not have any further confirmed information from the FAA or NTSB including the cause of the crash, number of passengers or possibility of any survivors. **What is ALPA doing:** We are currently in direct contact with the FAA, local law enforcement, and NTSB and will pass on more detailed information as soon as it is available. ALPA accident investigators are currently travelling to the crash site to provide pilot expertise in the investigation of this tragedy. **Tell when next update will occur:** We expect additional information from the NTSB within the next few hours and will update this hotline at approximately 5 p.m. CST to provide an update on new information.

Trans Global MEC Communications

3:05 p.m. (CST)

12. Send a mass Email message: SysOp

The mass email system should not be used as primary means of communication, but rather should supplement almost every other communication effort. Any telephone hotline message, newflash, press release and Letter To All Pilots should also be sent via mass email immediately. Mass emails can also notify pilots of events such as press conference times or special union meetings and point them to additional information such as expanded reports on the website.

At this stage of the crisis, the Internal Communicator should direct a SysOp to mass email the text of the hotline message. If a SysOp is not available, the Internal Communicator should mass email the message.

13. Update Website with message: SysOp

One of the greatest obstacles of the communications team during a crisis is to be as open and honest as possible and not disseminate any unlawful information as a “party to the investigation” or legal insider.

All items posted on the website should be considered public information. The “pilots private” side of the website should be reserved for more sensitive information but be aware of the probability that anything posted on the website might be given to the press.

Post all hotline messages, news flashes, press releases, Letters To All Pilots and publications on the website. Additional pictures or graphics that might add meaning to the accident/incident can be posted as well.

The public side of the website may also be used to provide information to the press. For example, complicated, lengthy or non-sensitive background information of interest to the press during this time (such as pilot training history, history of the airline, etc.) should be posted on the web to save time.

At this stage of the crisis response, the Internal Communicator should direct a SysOp to post the text of the hotline message on the website. If a SysOp is not available, the Internal Communicator should post the message.

14. Begin a list (using form-Appendix A2) of media calls: Phone Bank Volunteers and/or MEC Office Staff

During the first few hours after a crash, the media will primarily be concerned with gathering basic facts (the who,

what, when, where and why) from the company, accident site coordinators, local law enforcement, etc. Therefore, the MEC office usually does not receive as many media calls in the first 12 hours following a crisis as it does in the days after. Regardless of the number of calls, begin using the media form immediately. Besides helping the media coordinator later on to prioritize calls and prepare for interviews more efficiently, the form will track media inquiries from the beginning of a crisis and get those answering the phones in the habit of using the form.

Provide a media form to each staff member and volunteer who is apt to take a message from a reporter. Through this form, the following information should be recorded:

- The date
- The reporter's name and time of call,
- Their news organization,
- The deadline they are working under,
- The general premise of the story (if possible).

15. Develop simple statement to press: Media Coordinator

If possible, the Media Coordinator should prepare a simple, factual statement to the press in the first few hours after an accident. This message should be in line with the direction of the MEC chairman and reviewed by the Emergency Communications Manager.

When preparing a statement to the press, begin by answering the questions, "What do you want to accomplish?" and "Who is your audience?" Do not deviate the message from these goals. Remember, the message is not supposed to "create" news. It is only intended to be responsive to the press by providing factual information and representing the interests of the pilot group. Other factual messages can be given to the press to clarify information such as who releases the names of victims, what parties are involved in the investigation, etc.

The statement to the press will continually change as events occur or more information is made available. Update this statement with facts from the fact sheet.

Use these tips as a general rule:

- Keep it simple.
- Stick only to the facts. Do not speculate on any aspect of the investigation. Provide only public facts in a clear, understandable manner.
- Always put pilots' interests first. Speak as a representative of the pilots. For example, "The pilots are dedicated to the task of uncovering the cause of this accident. As leaders of safety of the industry, we..."
- Be honest and open; share as much public and verified information as possible—even if it's bad news.
- Explain what ALPA is doing to help. For example, "The pilots are currently assisting the NTSB in the investigation of this crash. This investigation is ongoing and even though we are prohibited from speculating on the cause of the crash, we want to assure you that everything is being done to get to the bottom of this case. Our pilots are at the scene now providing their expertise in the investigation of this tragedy."
- Always check the legality of the written press response with a contract administrator. If a contract administrator is not available, have someone at ALPA National's legal department review the statement.
- If there are any verified fatalities, injuries or inconvenience to passengers, be sympathetic. For example, "The pilots of Trans Global Airlines are sympathetic to those whose family members who have been lost in this tragedy. We too have lost XX of our crewmembers and friends. We are dedicated to assisting the FBI in the investigation of this incident."

Note: Do not base messages on supposed facts. Ensure the fatalities, injuries, etc. have been proven before disseminating this message.

16. Deliver union message to press: Spokesperson(s)

Spokespersons should be well prepared before speaking to any reporter or press contact—even on “background.”

Spokespersons should participate in mock interviews with the Media Coordinator and others to brainstorm possible questions and practice answers. All answers to reporters’ questions should revert to the union “message.”

Spokespersons should not deviate from the message.

The Media Coordinator should carefully consider the benefits of doing on-camera interviews at this time. The only information ALPA can provide the press is public facts and should avoid “getting out ahead” of the information.

However, if no other sources are providing factual information, if the facts continue to be misrepresented or if the situation requires ALPA to visibly represent the pilot group’s interests, on-camera interviews might be beneficial. If there is a question regarding on-camera interviews, contact ALPA National or the MEC communications specialist.

Below are two important rules to remember when participating in interviews. Additionally, spokespersons should review ALPA’s guidelines on dealing with the press. (See Appendix D2)

- Never say “no comment”
“No comment” connotes guilt. If a reporter asks a difficult question or one that you cannot answer, go back to the original message or defer to “party of investigation” excuse if necessary. Explain to the reporter why you cannot answer the question directly due to ALPA’s status as a “party to the investigation” while still maintaining rapport with the reporter and bringing out what ALPA is doing to help in the investigation.
- Do not speculate
If a reporter is asking you to speculate on the cause of the

crash or any other unverified facts, explain only the public facts you know and can comment on. Do not, under any circumstances, speculate on the crash.

17. Contact press contacts local to crash site: Media Coordinator

The Media Coordinator should call and establish contact with the press local to the accident site. Explain who he/she is and what information the Association can provide throughout the crisis. These calls are not meant to generate media attention, but rather to ensure accuracy of reports at a time when rumors are rampant. Expect the press to report incorrect information often during this time.

18. Develop talking points for those answering telephones/talking to the media: Internal Communicator and/or Media Coordinator

From the fact sheet, the Internal Communicator and/or Media Coordinator should develop talking points for incoming telephone calls to the MEC office from fellow pilots and friends or family of pilots. These talking points should be approved by the Emergency Communications Manager and/or an MEC officer. They should also be reviewed by an MEC contract administrator.

Some of these talking points can also be used for discussions with the media. The talking points anticipate questions that these individuals might ask—providing the pilot group with adequate information and preparing for unseen questions so as not to pass on incorrect or legally damaging information. The talking points are the “official” position of the union. Some questions the talking points might address are as follows:

- What happened?
- Did a bomb, missile or mechanical failure bring the airplane down?
- Why can't you tell me anything? I'm a dues-paying

member!

- How many crewmembers were on board?
- Are there any survivors?
- When will names be released? Who will release them?
- Do you know if _____ was on the flight?
- What was the number of the aircraft?

Phone bank volunteers should adhere to the following rules:

DO:

- Identify yourself as a representative of the Air Line Pilots Association,
- Require the caller to identify himself/herself and provide a payroll number, and confirm that the individual is an XYZ pilot through the pilot roster,
- Refer to the talking points,
- Forward any calls requiring immediate attention to the phone bank supervisor, and
- Record any questions you cannot answer and note the best way to get back in touch with the pilots (email, etc.).

DON'T:

- Respond to questions from anyone other than an XYZ pilot,
- Don't freelance answers,
- Don't make commitments on behalf of ALPA or XYZ airlines, and
- Don't bring your personal views into the process.

Phone bank volunteers should be prepared for emotional calls and should be cautioned NOT to speculate on any information that has not been verified as fact.

19. Ensure office has adequate phone ports for phone bank through the MEC office manager: Emergency Communications Manager

In anticipation of the phone bank, ask the MEC office manager to ensure that enough free phone ports are available to adequately answer pilot calls in the office. Depending on

Airplane C

the size of the pilot group and the accident, phone stations should range from 3-10+ ports.

20. Dispatch a local communications volunteer (On-Site Liaison) to site (if necessary): Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager, with the approval of an MEC officer, should dispatch a volunteer spokesperson to the site to divert media attention away from the investigators/crewmembers. This On-Site Liaison should act as a spokesperson by providing the media the union's message from the talking points. This volunteer should also gather information to pass on to the communications group.

Airplane Crash

12–48 Hours Following the Crash Pages 30–35

Follow the checklist below after the “Initial Response—Airplane Crash” checklist is completed (page 9).

Checklist

1. Set up, staff and schedule phone bank
2. Continue updating evolving facts on fact sheet
3. Continue to update communication channels including telephone hotline, website and mass email, giving specifics of what kind of communication pilots can expect in next few days
4. Continue using media list form to organize press calls
5. Continue to fine-tune key union message
6. Prepare primary spokesperson
7. ALPA spokesperson deliver message to press
8. Contact crewmembers who survived
9. Contact the hospital if survived crew is under medical care, establish liaison and gather information
10. Set-up conference call with main pilot investigator (or designee)
11. Dispatch a communications volunteer to incident if one hasn't been dispatched already (if appropriate)
12. Plan CIRP debriefings for communication volunteers and staff

Extended explanation of this checklist begins on page 31.

Airplane Crash

Extended Explanation and Direction

12–48 Hours Following the Crash

1. Set up, staff and schedule phone bank: Emergency Communications Manager

Review with the office manager the number of phone ports available in the office for use by the phone bank. The number of available ports and the demand for calls determine the number of phone bank volunteers working at any given time. Do not schedule more volunteers than available phone ports.

Schedule phone bank volunteers in shifts so as not to “run down” volunteers. Shifts should be approximately one half of a day in length, with ample time for breaks. Keep volunteers to the schedule even if they want to do “extra” work to ensure proper rest time. Talk to each volunteer often. Inquire about their emotional and physical state before scheduling them for more volunteer work. (See CIRP entry in this section—page 35.)

2. Continue updating evolving facts on fact sheet: Internal Communicator

Events change quickly in a crisis and even though you may know the latest verified information, do not assume everyone else does. To eliminate confusion regarding the situation and to help ensure consistent messages, the Internal Communicator or designated individual should continue updating the fact sheet as new information is learned and verified.

3. Continue to update communication channels including code-a-phone, website and mass email, giving specifics of what kind of communication pilots can expect in next few days: Internal Communicator

The Internal Communicator or designated individual should continue to provide pilots consistent information through all communication channels. It is essential to maintain frequent communication during this time. Reinforce messages. Do not assume every pilot knows the latest information. If possible, provide pilots an overview of what kind of communication they can expect in the next few days (hotline update every day or twice a day, review of company press conference held on Tuesday, etc.)

4. Continue using media list form to organize press calls: Phone Bank Volunteer and/or MEC office staff

During the days after a crisis situation, the MEC office will be inundated with media calls. The use of the media form is very important during this time to reduce confusion and help the media coordinator prioritize calls and help prepare for interviews more efficiently. Anyone apt to take a message from a reporter should continue to record the following information on the form:

- The date
- The reporter's name and time of call,
- Their news organization,
- The deadline they are working under,
- The general premise of the story (if possible).

5. Continue to fine-tune key union message: Internal Communicator

As events occur and additional information is made available, the union's message will change. Use the fact sheet to continually fine-tune the message to reflect recent developments.

6. Prepare primary spokesperson: Media Coordinator

During the 12-48 hours following a crash, the media has already gathered the basic facts of the accident (the who, what, when and where) and are beginning to speculate on the cause of the accident. They are also trying to find out who all

the “players” are in the crisis, trying to follow up on rumors, and tracking down the crew and family.

As the message and focus of the press changes, the spokesperson(s) must continually prepare for these new issues in the interviews. The Media Coordinator should conduct mock interviews with the spokesperson(s), anticipating new questions or issues and developing concise responses that are aligned with the key union message. Any responses that set union policy or that deviate from the key union message should be approved by an MEC officer if necessary. The spokesperson(s) should also practice taking control of the interview and shifting the focus back to the key union message. (See Appendix D2 for ALPA’s tips on dealing with the media)

7. Deliver message to press: ALPA Spokesperson(s) and Media Coordinator

Spokesperson(s) should deliver message to the press as practiced with the Media Coordinator. The Media Coordinator should schedule interviews that would be advantageous to the situation. (This does not mean scheduling interviews that will only provide positive press.) Interviews that would be beneficial to the situation would clarify misinformation, provide information to reassure the public of the work being done, and provide the public sympathy and goodwill on behalf of the pilot group. These comments should not interfere in any way with the investigation.

8. Contact crewmembers who survived: MEC Officer and/or Emergency Communications Manager

Before attempting to contact crewmembers or their families, research the situation and establish his or her condition such as injuries or extreme emotional trauma. Approach each crewmember with sensitivity. Do not be pushy.

11. The crew, and the union representative accompanying them, is usually sequestered after an airplane crash. The MEC officer, Emergency Communications Manager, or designated individual should contact the MEC Safety Committee chairman or union officer to find out their location—usually in a hotel or airport room. Offer (either directly or through the union representative) the crew your assistance and warn the pilots of possible media attention. Advise them not to speak to the press, but to direct inquiries to the media coordinator instead of saying “no comment.” Discuss the necessity of sending a communications volunteer to thwart media attempts.

9. Contact the hospital if survived crew is under medical care, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the hospital if the survived is under medical care. Explain who you are (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information obtained from the hospital in a crash situation could include the medical status of the crew, security information to keep out media interference, etc.

10. Set-up conference call with main pilot investigator (or designee): Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager should establish a system with the investigation team to share information possibly every few hours during an initial crisis situation. Although the accident investigation team will be extremely busy during this time, stress the importance of receiving good information in order to correct misleading news stories and provide the pilots and others accurate and up-to-date information. Conference calls can be set up through the MEC office.

Airplane 11. Dispatch a communications volunteer to accident site if one hasn't been dispatched already: Emergency Communications Manager

If a communications volunteer has not already been dispatched to the accident site, the Emergency Communications Manager should dispatch someone to be the On-Site Liaison at this time. This individual must be able to follow specific duties and be able to speak to the press.

The On-Site Liaison should work behind the scenes to make the investigators' jobs easier and provide information to the MEC office. The On-Site Liaison should divert media attention away from the pilot investigators and any surviving crewmembers. He or she should also act as a conduit of information by receiving information from the MEC Safety Committee chairman and passing it on to the communications group or Internal Communicator.

While at the site, the On-Site Liaison should monitor the local news media and inform the MEC office and MEC Safety Committee chairman of the coverage, faxing pertinent newspaper articles to the communications group.

12. Plan CIRP debriefings for communication volunteers and staff: MEC Office Manager

Discuss with the MEC office manager the need for Critical Incident Response Program (CIRP) debriefings and assistance for the entire MEC office staff and pilot volunteers. A CIRP team should be dispatched to the MEC office and accident site to help those dealing with the accident.

At the training, the Emergency Communications Manager should discuss with the team signs to recognize in the communications group of emotional fatigue. The Emergency Communications Manager should put communications volunteers and staff members' health first and allow for ample "time off" away from the communications response if necessary.

Airplane Crash

48+ Hours Following the Accident

By the 48th hour following a crisis situation, the communications group should have an effective and efficient system of internal and external communication established. Roles should be assigned and carried-out and a schedule of volunteers should be set. In the days and even weeks following a major airplane crash, this system of communication should be maintained. The communications group should continue to focus on providing consistent, factual and frequent communication to pilots using all communication vehicles maintained during the initial response to the crisis. Additional focus may also be put on external communication with the media and various government officials. At this time, ALPA will have more information to provide these outside sources although all external communication should remain based on facts only.

During this time, the communications group should also evaluate what additional communication efforts are needed depending on the unique circumstances of the crisis situation. For example, the pilot group might want the union's perspective on the crisis, further details, or questions answered. Possible communication tools to consider during this time are Letters To All Pilots (Appendix C5), special publications (Appendix C8) press releases and press conferences (Appendix C6, C7). These tools should be carefully examined before use to determine if using these tools will further the MEC's goals. For more information and explanation of these communication tools, see the corresponding appendix.

Criminal Act

Initial Response (0-12 hours) Pages 37-55

Follow the checklist below after the "All Crises Initial Response Checklist" (page 3) is completed and "Criminal Act" is identified as the cause of the crisis.

Checklist

1. Determine if there are any fatalities
2. Obtain a list of crewmembers on board
3. Identify acceptable sources of information
4. Contact ALPA National Communications Department
5. Contact local law enforcement, establish liaison and gather information
6. Contact the FBI, establish liaison and gather information
7. Contact the NTSB, establish liaison and gather information
8. Contact the FAA, establish liaison and gather information
9. If criminal act occurred in or around an airport, contact the airport manager's office
10. If criminal act occurred in a foreign country, contact the state department and consider translators
11. If the airplane's mission was military, contact union rep closest to military establish liaison and gather information
12. Distinguish between public and non-public information
13. Record telephone message with basic public facts
14. Send a mass Email message
15. Update website with message
16. Begin a list (using form) of media calls
17. Develop simple statement to press
18. Deliver union message to press
19. Contact press contacts local to incident site
20. Develop talking points for those answering telephones of non-media calls and for possible media inquires that relates

Criminal A to possible dynamics of a criminal situation

21. Ensure office has adequate phone ports for phone bank through the MEC office manager
22. Dispatch a local communications volunteer to site (if practical)

Extended Explanation of this checklist begins on page 40.

Criminal Act

Extended Explanation and Direction

Initial Response (0-12 hours)

1. Determine if there are any fatalities: Designated Communications Volunteer

Whether or not crewmembers survive a criminal act, the union's priority remains focused on the representation of those pilots involved—both individually and as representatives of the entire pilot group. However, the direction of the communication department changes dramatically depending on fatalities of the crewmembers as well as passengers—both in message and in focus. For example, if there are fatalities, the communications group might give additional focus on the families. If there are survivors, the communications group might help protect those individuals from the media and act as their “spokesperson.”

Contact the company, union officers, pilot investigators, local law enforcement or any other official party in the investigation to determine fatalities.

2. Obtain a list of crewmembers on board: Designated Communications Volunteer

Obtaining the names of crewmembers on board the aircraft helps the communications group formulate statements, prepare background information and concentrate on other communication initiatives. Names of crewmembers can be obtained through the airline's computer system. This information should be obtained as quickly as possible because the company will blank out the information—sometimes as quickly as within the first hour after the crash.

The names of crewmembers are extremely sensitive. Do not, under any circumstances, release this information to anyone, including fellow pilots. The names should ONLY be released after they are officially released by the Red Cross.

3. Identify acceptable sources of information

A variety of individuals will provide the communications team with "inside information" regarding the crisis. Rumors are widespread during this time and although some of the sources might be useful, only the following sources, until otherwise indicated, are trusted and accepted sources of information for possible dissemination:

- ALPA National
- MEC Safety Committee
- White House
- Local/State government
- Military
- NTSB
- FBI
- Anti-Terrorist Team

4. Contact ALPA National Communications Department: Internal Communicator

The Internal Communicator should contact the director of ALPA's communication department and the communications supervisor assigned to their specific airline. Brief them on the facts of the incident, explain tentative communication plans and ask for any direction, advice or modification of the plans.

5. Contact local law enforcement, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should call the sheriff and/or police department local to the incident site. Explain who you are (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish

contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information obtained from local officials could include evolving facts in the case, names of victims, etc.)

6. Contact the FBI, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The FBI, the investigative branch of the federal government, is in charge of criminal investigations involving airline incidents. The FBI can be an important contact when forming communication responses to pilots in a crisis situation. The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the FBI, explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. The FBI can give ALPA a "heads up" on information or events in order to allow ALPA to prepare a communications response. In return, ALPA can provide the FBI necessary information such as crew information, etc.

7. Contact the NTSB, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB) is the primary investigating branch of the Dept. of Infrastructure and Interior (formerly Department of Transportation) in charge of accident investigation. The board investigates and submits a report to the FAA regarding the cause of the incident. They also make recommendations stemming from their investigation relating to aircraft construction, flight safety procedures, etc.

Since the NTSB is involved in any incident that occurs in United States, it is important that the Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual contact the board, explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information from the NTSB can be valuable. For example, during the investigation

of the crash of TWA's Flight 800, the NTSB gave a press briefing everyday. Establishing contact with the board might afford the opportunity to attend these briefings and gather updated information.

Note: *If the incident occurs in a country other than the U.S., the NTSB will not be the primary investigators. Contact the safety board specific to that country.*

8. Contact the FAA, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with the Principal Operations Inspector (POI) for their carrier or other liaison in order to share information. (Each airline has an FAA representative or POI assigned to work primarily with that carrier.) Inquire whether there is any possibility or discussion regarding actions taken against the pilots.

Developing a relationship with the FAA is important in a criminal incident situation, especially if there is any chance of an action or violation taken against a pilot. As the administrative branch of aviation community, the FAA is concerned with pilot-related issues during a airline incident including the determination of negligibility or pilot error. Any information obtained before the actions occur could help the union prepare for the representation of the pilots and communication of events to the membership.

9. If criminal act occurred in or around an airport, contact the airport manager's office: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should call the manager's office at the airport at or

around where the incident occurred. Explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information.

Information obtained from the airport in a criminal situation could include such as airport and runway diagrams, airport security personnel contact, initial information from those first on the scene, etc. and may also include information on perpetrator(s), explosions, damage from bombs or weapons and injuries.

10. If the incident occurred in a foreign country or over international waters, contact the U.S. state department and consider translators: Emergency Communications Manager

A criminal incident in a foreign country or over international waters poses different guidelines and challenges. The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the U.S. State Department to establish a liaison and gather information. If necessary, elicit help from pilot group via the telephone hotline for translators or consider assistance from a Language of Destination (LOD) flight attendant. (Most airlines have flight attendants who speak the language of international destinations called LODs.) The Emergency Communications Manager should coordinate an LOD by contacting the company.

11. If the airplane's mission was military, contact union rep closest to military to make contact: MEC Officer

Through direction from the MEC chairman, the chairman of the Military Affairs Committee or designated individual should contact the military branch that is related to the incident. The Military Affairs Committee chairman should establish a liaison to exchange information. Examples of a situation when contact with the military might be helpful: If there is a mid-air collision with an Air Force cargo plane, contact the Air Force. If a Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF)

mission is shot down by the Navy, work with the Navy branch to gather information.

12. Distinguish between public and non-public information: Internal Communicator

As the pilots' union, ALPA's primary goal is to represent any crewmember involved in the crisis and act as an advocate of the pilot group as a whole. To this end, the communications team should provide as much clear, honest and timely information to the pilots as possible. However, some information is non-public and therefore cannot be disseminated to the pilot group as a whole—even through "private" channels. In a criminal act situation, ALPA is considered an official "party to the investigation." Therefore, the union cannot provide any information that could jeopardize their participation in the investigation. The union cannot speculate or provide any information that is not deemed as public facts by the NTSB. If they do, ALPA will be banned from the investigation.

Although some information cannot be disseminated to the pilots, it is the communications team's responsibility to explain what the union can and cannot say and why. This provides pilots with the most information possible and builds trust within the union.

Below are some of the many items that the union is prohibited from disseminating. As a general rule, if there is a question whether or not the information is public, do not release the information until it has been approved by a contract administrator, ALPA National and/or MEC an officer.

NON-PUBLIC

- Names of crewmembers
- Names of passengers
- Special incident circumstances

- Facts known by “insiders” to the investigation/situation
- Any speculative information

13. Record telephone hotline message with basic public facts: Internal Communicator

The telephone hotline, sometimes referred to as the “code-a-phone” is an effective tool to disseminate timely, non-sensitive information to the pilot group and “tell our story” to the public and press who regularly call the hotline. Pilots should know to call the hotline if there is any type of emergency.

The Internal Communicator should write the hotline message and have it approved by the Emergency Communications Manager and/or an MEC officer. The Internal Communicator should record the telephonic message.

Schedule: Special hotline messages should be recorded frequently during a crisis situation to disseminate breaking news or keep the pilot group updated on the situation. Hotline messages should give basic facts regarding the crisis, tell pilots how ALPA is involved, thoroughly and honestly explain answers to frequently asked questions (received by communication volunteers manning the phones) and give pilots an idea of when the hotline will be updated again. If possible, the communications team should also continue to maintain the regular schedule of hotline updates.

Tips to remember: *Although the telephone hotline is an opportunity to talk directly to the pilot group, be wary of how the hotline is worded and what information is disseminated. The press regularly quote directly from the update.*

Regardless of the message, every code-a-phone message during a crisis should:

1. Give the facts immediately
2. Bring up any issues of importance to the pilots to mitigate

- any questions and maintain an open communication policy (Tell the pilots what you do not know and why)
- 3. Explain what ALPA is doing
- 4. Tell pilots when the next update will occur

EXAMPLE HOTLINE:

Give the facts immediately: Your MEC was notified by the FBI late this afternoon that a Trans Global B767 aircraft has been hijacked on the ground at Chicago's O'Hare airport. Flight #208 was boarding passengers at approximately 5:10 p.m. CST bound for New York's LaGuardia airport when two passengers allegedly pulled guns on the crew. The gate agents estimated 120-130 hostages were on board, including the crew, before the aircraft's doors were closed. *Acknowledge information not known at the time:* The gunmen have been in contact with airport officials. However, at this time we do not know the details of those conversations or if there have been any injuries. The FBI is working with airport officials but due to security reasons, no further information is being released. *What is ALPA doing:* ALPA has made contact with the FBI and will pass on more information when it is made available. *Tell when next update will occur:* We expect additional information in the next few hours and will update this hotline at 7:30 p.m. CST (approximately two hours) to provide an update on new information.

Trans Global MEC Communications
5:15 p.m. (CST)

14. Send a mass Email message: SysOp

The mass email system should not be used as primary means of communication, but rather should supplement almost every other communication effort. Any telephone hotline message, newflash, press release and Letter To All Pilots should also be sent via mass email immediately. Mass emails can also notify pilots of events such as press conference times or special union meetings and point them to additional information such as expanded reports on the website.

At this stage of the crisis response, the Internal Communicator should direct a SysOp to mass email the text of the hotline message. If a SysOp is not available, the Internal Communicator should mass email the message.

15. Update Website with message: SysOp

One of the greatest obstacles of the communications team during a crisis is to be as open and honest as possible and, at the same time, not disseminate any unlawful information as a "party to the investigation" or legal insider.

All items posted on the website should be considered public information. The "pilots private" side of the website should be reserved for more sensitive information but be aware of the probability that anything posted on the website might be given to the press.

Post all hotline messages, news flashes, press releases, Letters To All Pilots and publications on the website. Additional pictures or graphics that might add meaning to the incident can be posted as well.

The public side of the website may also be used to provide information to the press. For example, complicated, lengthy, or non-sensitive background information of interest to the press during this time (such as pilot training history, history of the airline, etc.) should be posted on the web to save time.

At this stage of the crisis response, the Internal Communicator should direct a SysOp to upload the text of the hotline message to the website. If a SysOp is not available, the Internal Communicator should upload the message.

16. Begin a list (using form—Appendix A2) of media calls: Phone Bank Volunteers and/or MEC Office Staff

During the first few hours during and after a criminal incident occurs, the media will primarily be concerned with gathering basic facts from the company, FBI, local law enforcement, etc. (the who, what, when and where of the crisis.) Therefore, the MEC office usually does not receive as many media calls in the first 12 hours following a crisis as it does in the days after. Regardless of the number of calls, begin using the media form immediately. Besides helping the media coordinator later on to prioritize calls and prepare for interviews more efficiently, the form will track media inquiries from the beginning of a crisis and get those answering the phones in the habit of using the form.

Provide a media form to each staff member and volunteer who are apt to take a message from a reporter. Through this form, the following information should be recorded:

- The date
- The reporter's name and time of call,
- Their news organization,
- The deadline they are working under,
- The general premise of the story (if possible).

17. Develop simple statement to press: Media Coordinator

If possible, the Media Coordinator should prepare a simple, factual statement to the press in the first few hours after an incident. This message should be in line with the direction of the MEC chairman and reviewed by the Emergency Communications Manager.

When preparing a statement to the press, begin by answering the questions, "What do you want to accomplish?" and "Who is your audience?" Do not deviate the message from these goals. Remember, the message is not supposed to "create" news. It is usually only intended to be responsive to the press by providing factual information and representing the interests of the pilot group. In some cases, however, the message should proactively seek to clarify a situation before it becomes a negative issue in the press. The example below, expanding on the situation described on page X under Criminal Act, illustrates this point:

The pilots of Pan Am Flight #73 escaped the aircraft through the cockpit window upon learning that terrorists were attempting to hijack the aircraft. These pilots were heavily criticized in the media for "abandoning their passengers." In reality, the pilots were doing as they had been trained. By leaving the aircraft through the cockpit windows, the pilots made the hijacked aircraft inoperable. It was no longer a mode of transportation, but a building. As a result of this action, the hostages could be rescued. These types of misunderstandings and public relations issues should be recognized and proactively addressed through union's messages.

Also, other factual messages can be given to the press to clarify information such as who releases the names of victims, what parties are involved in the investigation, etc.

This statement will continually change as events occur or more information is made available. Update this statement with facts from the fact sheet.

Use these tips as a general rule:

- Keep it simple.
- Stick only to the facts. Do not speculate on any aspect of

the investigation. Provide only public facts in a clear, understandable manner.

- Always put pilots' interests first. Speak as a representative of the pilots.

For example, "The pilots are very concerned about this situation and take seriously any threats that could affect the safety of passengers or crewmembers. The XYZ pilots are actively participating in this investigation and are working with the FBI to do everything we can to ensure that this situation ends successfully."

- Be honest and open; share as much public and verified information as possible—even if it's bad news

- Explain what ALPA is doing to help

For example, "The pilots are currently assisting the FBI in the investigation of this incident. We are working closely with all parties involved to share our experience and expertise as pilots to improve security in these matters."

- Always check the legality of the written press response with a contract administrator.

If a contract administrator is not available, have someone at ALPA National's legal department review the statement.

- If there are any verified fatalities, injuries or inconvenience to passengers, be sympathetic. For example, "The pilots of XYZ Airlines are sympathetic to those whose family members have been lost in this tragedy. We too have lost XX of our crewmembers and friends. We are dedicated to assisting the FBI in the investigation of this incident."

Note: Do not base messages on supposed facts. Ensure the fatalities, injuries, etc. have been proven before disseminating this message.

18. Deliver union message to press: Spokesperson(s)

Spokespersons should be well prepared before speaking to any reporter or press contact. Spokespersons should participate in mock interviews with the Media Coordinator and others to brainstorm possible questions and practice answers. All answers to reporters' questions should revert back to the union "message." Spokespersons should not deviate from the message.

The Media Coordinator should carefully consider the benefits of doing on-camera interviews at this time. The only information ALPA can provide the press is public facts and should avoid "getting out ahead" of the information.

However, if no other sources are providing factual information, if the facts continue to be misrepresented or if the situation requires ALPA to visibly represent the pilot group's interests, such as in the Pan Am example, on-camera interviews might be beneficial. If there is any questions regarding on-camera interviews, contact ALPA National.

Below are two important rules to follow when participating in interviews. Spokespersons should also review ALPA's guidelines on dealing with the press (See Appendix D2).

- Never say "no comment"
"No comment" connotes guilt. If a reporter asks a difficult question or one that you cannot answer, go back to the original message or defer to "party of investigation" excuse if necessary. Explain to the reporter why you cannot answer the question directly due to ALPA's status as a "party to the investigation" while still maintaining rapport with the reporter and bringing out what ALPA is doing to help in the investigation.
- Do not speculate
If a reporter is asking you to speculate on details of the incident or any other unverified facts, explain only the

- public facts you know and can comment on. Do not,
- under any circumstances, speculate on the incident.

19. Contact press contacts local to incident site: Media Coordinator

The Media Coordinator should call and establish contact with the press local to the incident site. Explain who you are and what information you can provide throughout the crisis. These calls are not meant to generate media attention, but rather to ensure accuracy of reports at a time when rumors are rampant. Expect the press to report incorrect information often during this time.

20. Develop talking points for those answering telephones of non-media calls and for possible media inquires that relate to possible dynamics of a criminal situation: Media Coordinator and/or Internal Communicator

From the fact sheet, the Internal Communicator and/or Media Coordinator should develop talking points for incoming telephone calls to the MEC office from fellow pilots and friends or family of pilots. These talking points should be approved by the Emergency Communications Manager and/or an MEC officer. They should also be reviewed by the MEC contract administrator.

Some of these talking points can also be used for discussions with the media. The talking points anticipate questions that these individuals might ask—providing the pilot group with adequate information and preparing for unseen questions so as not to pass on incorrect or legally damaging information. The talking points are the “official” position of the union. Some questions the talking points might address are as follows:

- What happened?
- Why can't you tell me anything? I'm a dues-paying member!
- Has there been any injuries?

- Are there any survivors?
- When will names be released? Who will release them?
- Do you know if _____ was on the flight?
- What was the number of the aircraft?

Phone bank volunteers should adhere to the following rules:

DO:

- Identify yourself as a representative of the Air Line Pilots Association,
- Require the caller to identify himself/herself and provide a payroll number, confirm that the individual is an XYZ pilot through the pilot roster,
- Refer to the talking points,
- Forward any calls requiring immediate attention to the phone bank supervisor, and
- Record any questions you cannot answer and note the best way to get back in touch with the pilots (email, etc.).

DON'T:

- Respond to questions from anyone other than an XYZ pilot,
- Don't freelance answers,
- Don't make commitments on behalf of ALPA or XYZ airlines, and
- Don't bring your personal views into the process.

Phone bank volunteers should be prepared for emotional calls and should cautioned NOT to speculate on any information that has not been verified as fact.

21. Ensure office has adequate phone ports for phone bank through the MEC office manager: Emergency Communications Manager

In anticipation of the phone bank, the Emergency Communications Manager should ask the MEC office manager to ensure that enough free phone ports are available to adequately answer pilot calls in the office. Depending on

Criminal A the size of the pilot group and the accident, phone stations should range from 3-10+ ports.

22. Dispatch local communications volunteer (On-Site Liaison) to site: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Coordinator, with the approval of an MEC officer, should dispatch a volunteer spokesperson to the site temporarily to divert media attention away from the investigators/crewmembers. This On-Site Liaison should act as a spokesperson by providing the media the union's message from the talking points. This volunteer should also gather information to pass on the communications group.

Criminal Act

12–48 Hours Following the Incident Pages 56–62

Follow the checklist below after the “Initial Response—Criminal Act” Checklist is completed (page 37).

Checklist

1. Set up, staff and schedule phone bank
2. Continue updating evolving facts on fact sheet
3. Continue to update communication channels including telephone hotline, website and mass email, giving specifics of what kind of communication pilots can expect in the next few days
4. Continue using media list form to organize press calls
5. Continue to fine-tune key union message
6. Prepare primary spokesperson
7. Deliver union message to press
8. Contact crewmembers who survived
9. Contact the hospital if survived crew is under medical care, establish liaison and gather information
10. Set-up conference call with main pilot investigator (or designee)
11. Dispatch a communications volunteer to incident if one hasn't been dispatched already (if appropriate)
12. Plan CIRP debriefings for communication volunteers and staff

Extended explanation of this checklist begins on page 57.

Criminal Act

Extended Explanation and Direction

12–48 Hours Following the Incident

1. Set up, staff and schedule phone bank: Emergency Communications Manager

Review with the office manager the number of phone ports available in the office for use by the phone bank. The number of available ports and the demand for calls determine the number of phone bank volunteers working at any given time. Do not schedule more volunteers than available phone ports.

Schedule phone bank volunteers in shifts so as not to “run down” volunteers. Shifts should be approximately one half of a day in length, with ample time for breaks. Keep volunteers to the schedule even if they want to do “extra” work to ensure proper rest time. Talk to each volunteer often. Inquire about their emotional and physical state before scheduling them for more volunteer work. (See CIRP entry in this section—page 61.)

2. Continue updating basic facts on fact sheet: Internal Communicator

Events change quickly in a crisis and even though you may know the latest verified information, do not assume everyone else does. To eliminate confusion regarding the situation and to help ensure consistent messages, the Internal Communicator or designated individual should continue updating the fact sheet as new information is learned and verified.

3. Continue to update communication channels including code-a-phone, website and mass email, giving specifics of what kind of communication pilots can expect in next

few days: Internal Communicator

The Internal Communicator or designated individual should continue to provide pilots consistent and accurate information through all communication channels. It is essential to maintain frequent communication during this time. Do not assume every pilot knows the latest information. If possible, provide pilots an overview of what kind of communication they can expect in the next few days (hotline update every day or twice a day, review of company press conference held on Tuesday, etc.)

4. Continue using media list form to organize press calls: Phone Bank Volunteer and/or MEC office staff

During the days after a crisis situation, the MEC office will be inundated with media calls. The use of the media form is very important during this time to reduce confusion and help the media coordinator prioritize calls and help prepare for interviews more efficiently. Anyone apt to take a message from a reporter should continue to record the following information on the form:

- The date
- The reporter's name and time of call,
- Their news organization,
- The deadline they are working under,
- The general premise of the story (if possible).

5. Continue to fine-tune key union message: Internal Communicator

As events occur and additional information is made available, the union's message will change. Use the fact sheet to continually fine-tune the message to reflect recent developments.

6. Prepare primary spokesperson: Media Coordinator

During the 12–48 hours following a criminal incident, the media have already gathered the basic facts of the incident (the who, what, when and where) and are beginning to

follow up on rumors. They are also trying to find out who all the “players” are in the crisis and tracking down the crew and family.

As the message and focus of the press changes, the spokesperson(s) must continually prepare for these new issues in the interviews. The Media Coordinator should conduct mock interviews with the spokesperson(s), anticipating new questions or issues and developing concise responses that are aligned with the key union message. Any responses that set union policy or that deviate from the key union message should be approved by an MEC officer if necessary. The spokesperson(s) should also practice taking control of the interview and shifting the focus back to the key union message. (See Appendix D2 for ALPA’s tips on dealing with the media)

7. Deliver message to press: ALPA Spokesperson(s) and Media Coordinator

Spokesperson(s) should deliver message to the press as practiced with the Media Coordinator. The Media Coordinator should schedule interviews that would be advantageous to the situation. (This does not mean scheduling interviews that will only give positive press.)

- 11 Interviews that would be beneficial to the situation would be ones that clarify misinformation, provide information to reassure the public of the work being done, and provide the public sympathy and goodwill on behalf of the pilot group. These comments should not interfere in any way with the investigation.

8. Contact crewmembers who survived: MEC Officer and/or Emergency Communications Manager

Before attempting to contact crewmembers or their families, research the situation and establish his or her condition such as injuries or extreme emotional trauma. Approach each crewmember with sensitivity. Do not be pushy.

The crew, or the union representative accompanying them, are usually sequestered after a criminal incident. The MEC officer, Emergency Communications Manager, or designated individual should contact the MEC Safety Committee chairman or union officer to find out their location—usually in a hotel or airport room. Offer (either directly or through the union representative) the crew your assistance and warn the pilots of possible media attention. Advise them not to speak to the press, but to direct inquiries to the media coordinator instead of saying “no comment.” Discuss the necessity of sending a communications volunteer to thwart media attempts.

9. Contact the hospital if survived crew is under medical care, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the hospital where the survived crew is under medical care. Explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information obtained from the hospital in an aircraft incident could include the medical status of the crew, security information to keep out media interference, etc.

10. Set-up conference call with main pilot investigator (or designee): Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should establish a system with the investigation team to share information possibly every few hours during a initial crisis situation or until the actual criminal act or situation is resolved. (Some hostage situations and other terrorist acts have continued for days.) Although the accident investigation team will be extremely busy during this time, stress the importance of receiving good information in order to correct misleading news stories and provide the pilots and others accurate and up-to-date information. Conference calls can be set up through the MEC office manager.

11. Dispatch a communications volunteer to incident site if one hasn't been dispatched already: Emergency Communications Manager

If a communications volunteer has not already been dispatched to the incident site, the Emergency Communications Manager should dispatch someone to be the On-Site Liaison this time. This individual must be able to follow specific duties and be able to speak to the press.

The On-Site Liaison should work behind the scenes to make the investigators' jobs easier and provide information to the MEC office. The On-Site Liaison should divert media attention away from the pilot investigators and any surviving crewmembers. He or she should also act as a conduit of information by receiving information from the MEC Safety Committee chairman and passing it on to the communications group or Internal Communicator.

While at the site, the On-Site Liaison should monitor the local news media and inform the MEC office and MEC Safety Committee chairman of the coverage, faxing pertinent newspaper articles to the communications group.

12. Plan CIRP debriefings for communication volunteers and staff

Discuss with the MEC office manager the need for Critical Incident Response Program (CIRP) debriefings and assistance for the entire MEC office staff and pilot volunteers. A CIRP team should be dispatched to the MEC office and incident site to help those dealing with the crisis.

At the training, the Emergency Communications Manager should discuss with the team signs to recognize in the communications group of emotional fatigue. The Emergency Communications Manager should put communications volunteers and staff members' health first and allow for ample "time off" away from the communications response if necessary.

Criminal Act Incident

48+ Hours Following the Incident

By the 48th hour following a crisis situation, the communications group should have an effective and efficient system of internal and external communication established. Roles should be assigned and carried-out and a schedule of volunteers should be set. In the days and even weeks following a major criminal act, this system of communication should be maintained. The communications group should continue to focus on providing consistent, factual and frequent communication to pilots using all communication vehicles maintained during the initial response to the crisis. Additional focus may also be put on external communication with the media and various government officials. At this time, ALPA will have more information to provide these outside sources although all external communication should remain based on facts only.

During this time, the communications group should also evaluate what additional communication efforts are needed depending on the unique circumstances of the crisis situation. For example, the pilot group might want the union's perspective on the crisis, further details, or questions answered. Possible communication tools to consider during this time are Letters To All Pilots (Appendix C5), special publications (Appendix C8) press releases and press conferences (Appendix C6, C7). These tools should be carefully examined before use to determine if using these tools will further the MEC's goals. For more information and explanation of these communication tools, see the corresponding appendix.

Mechanical Incident

Initial Response (0-12 hours) Pages 64-80

Follow the checklist below after the All Crises Initial Checklist (page 3) has been completed and "Mechanical Incident" has been identified as the cause of the crisis.

Checklist

1. Determine if there are any fatalities
2. Obtain a list of crewmembers on board
3. Identify acceptable sources of information
4. Contact ALPA National Communications Department
5. Contact local law enforcement, establish liaison and gather information
6. Contact the NTSB, establish liaison and gather information
7. Contact the FAA, establish liaison and gather information
8. Contact the aircraft manufacturer, establish liaison and gather information
9. Contact component manufacturer(s) (if applicable), establish liaison and gather information
10. If incident occurred in or around an airport, contact the airport manager's office, establish liaison and gather information
11. If incident occurred in a foreign country, contact the state department and consider translators
12. Distinguish between public and non-public information
13. Record telephone hotline message with basic public facts
14. Send mass Email message
15. Update website with message
16. Begin a list (using form) of media calls
17. Develop simple statement to press
18. Deliver union message to press
19. Develop talking points for those answering telephones of non-

Mechanical media calls

20. Contact press contacts local to crash site
21. Ensure office has adequate phone ports for phone bank through MEC office manager
22. Dispatch a local communications volunteer to site (if practical)

Extended explanation of this checklist begins on page 66.

Mechanical Incident

Extended Explanation and Direction

Initial Response (0-12 hours)

1. Determine if there are any fatalities: Designated Communications Volunteer

Whether or not crewmembers survive a mechanical incident, the union's priority remains focused on the representation of those pilots involved—both individually and as representatives of the entire pilot group. However, the direction of the communication department changes dramatically depending on fatalities of the crewmembers as well as passengers—both in message and in focus. For example, if there are fatalities, the communications group might provide additional focus to the families. If there are survivors, the communications group might help protect those individuals from the media and act as their “spokesperson.”

Contact the company, union officers, pilot investigators, local law enforcement or any other official party in the investigation to determine fatalities.

2. Obtain a list of crewmembers on board: Designated Communications Volunteer

Obtaining the names of crewmembers on board the aircraft helps the communications group formulate statements, prepare background information and concentrate on other communication initiatives. Names of crewmembers can be obtained through the airline's computer system. This information should be obtained as quickly as possible because the company will blank out the information—sometimes as quickly as within the first hour after the incident.

The names of crewmembers are extremely sensitive. Do not, under any circumstances, release this information to anyone, including fellow pilots. The names should ONLY be released after they are officially released by the Red Cross.

3. Identify acceptable sources of information

A variety of individuals will provide the communications team with "inside information" regarding the crisis. Rumors are widespread during this time and although some of the sources might be useful, only the following sources, until otherwise indicated, are trusted and accepted sources of information for possible dissemination.

- ALPA National
- MEC Safety Committee
- White House
- Local/State government
- Military
- NTSB
- FBI

4. Contact ALPA National Communications Department: Internal Communicator

The Internal Communicator should contact the director of ALPA's communication department and the communications supervisor assigned to their specific airline. Brief them on the facts of the incident, explain tentative communication plans and ask for any direction, advice or modification of the plans.

5. Contact local law enforcement, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should call the sheriff and/or police department local to the incident site. Explain who you are (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information obtained from local officials could include evolving facts in the case, names of victims, etc.)

6. Contact the NTSB, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB) is the primary investigative branch of the Dept. of Infrastructure and Interior (formerly the Department of Transportation) in charge of accident investigation. The board investigates and submits a report to the FAA regarding the cause of the mechanical incident. They also make recommendations stemming from their investigation relating to aircraft construction, flight safety procedures, etc.

Since the NTSB is involved in any incident that occurs in United States, it is important that the Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual contact the board, explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information from the NTSB can be valuable. For example, during the investigation of the crash of TWA's Flight 800, the NTSB gave a press briefing everyday. Establishing contact with the board might afford the opportunity to attend these briefings and gather updated information.

Note: If the incident occurs in a country other than the U.S., the NTSB will not be the primary investigators. Contact the safety board specific to that country.

7. Contact the FAA, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with the Principal Operations Inspector (POI) for their carrier or other liaison in order to share information. (Each airline has an FAA representative or POI assigned to work

- 10 primarily with that carrier.) Inquire whether there is any possibility or discussion regarding actions taken against the pilots.

Developing a relationship with the FAA is important in a crisis situation, especially if there is any chance of an action or violation taken against a pilot. As the administrative branch of the aviation community, the FAA is concerned with pilot-related issues during any kind of incident including the determination of negligibility or pilot error. For example, many times a number of factors or causes for an incident are explored (such as pilot error and/or criminal act) before mechanical incident is determined. Any information obtained before the actions occur could help the union prepare for the representation of the pilots and communication of events to the membership.

8. Contact the aircraft manufacturer, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the aircraft manufacturer, explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information obtained might be diagrams of the aircraft and specific structural information.

9. Contact the component manufacturer (if applicable, establish liaison and gather information): Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the manufacturer of a specific component if it is in question or is a source of discussion regarding the incident. Establish contact with a liaison and offer to share information. Information that could be obtained is detailed mechanical information, testing and historical usage facts.

10. If incident occurred in or around an airport, contact the airport manager's office, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should call the manager's office at the airport at or around where the incident occurred. Explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information obtained from the airport in a mechanical incident could include runway diagrams, airport security personnel contact, initial information from those individuals first on the scene, etc.

11. If incident occurred in a foreign country or over international waters, contact the U.S. State Department and consider translators: Emergency Communications Manager

A mechanical incident in a foreign country or over international waters poses different guidelines and challenges. The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the U.S. State Department to establish liaison and gather information. If necessary, elicit help from pilot group via the telephone hotline for translators or consider assistance from a Language of Destination (LOD) flight attendant. (Most airlines have flight attendants who speak the language of international destinations called LODs.) The Emergency Communications Coordinator should coordinate an LOD by contacting the company.

12. Distinguish between public and non-public information: Internal Communicator

As the pilots' union, ALPA's primary goal is to represent any crewmember involved in the crisis and act as an advocate of the pilot group as a whole. To this end, the communications team should provide as much clear, honest and timely information to the pilots as possible. However, some information is non-public and therefore cannot be

disseminated to the pilot group as a whole—even through “private” channels. In a major mechanical incident, ALPA is considered an official “party to the investigation.” Therefore, the union cannot provide any information that could jeopardize their participation in the investigation. The union cannot speculate or provide any information that is not deemed as public facts by the NTSB. If they do, ALPA will be banned from the investigation.

Although some information cannot be disseminated to the pilots, it is the communications team’s responsibility to explain what the union can and cannot say and why. This provides pilots with the most information possible and builds trust within the union.

Below are some of the many items that the union is prohibited from disseminating. As a general rule, if there is a question whether or not the information is public, do not release the information until it has been approved by a contract administrator, ALPA National and/or MEC an officer.

NON-PUBLIC

- Names of crewmembers
- Names of passengers
- Special incident circumstances
- Facts known by “insiders” to the investigation/situation
- Any speculative information

13. Record telephone hotline message with basic public facts: Internal Communicator

The telephone hotline, sometimes referred to as the “Code-a-Phone,” is an effective tool to disseminate timely, non-sensitive information to the pilot group and “tell our story” to the public and press who regularly call the hotline. Pilots should know to call the hotline if there is any type of emergency.

The Internal Communicator should write the hotline message and have it approved by the Emergency Communications Manager and/or an MEC officer. The Internal Communicator should record the telephonic message.

Schedule: Special hotline messages should be recorded frequently during a crisis situation to disseminate breaking news or keep the pilot group updated on the situation. Hotline messages should give basic facts regarding the crisis, tell pilots how ALPA is involved, thoroughly and honestly explain answers to frequently asked questions (received by communication volunteers manning the phones) and give pilots an idea of when the hotline will be updated again. If possible, the communications team should also continue to maintain the regular schedule of hotline updates.

Tips to remember: *Although the hotline is an opportunity to talk directly to the pilot group, be wary of any sensitive information and the wording of the hotline. The press regularly quote directly from the update.*

Regardless of the message, every hotline message during a crisis should:

1. Give the facts immediately
2. Bring up any issues of importance to the pilots to mitigate any questions and maintain an open communication policy (Tell the pilots what you do not know and why)
3. Explain what ALPA is doing
4. Tell pilots when the next update will occur

EXAMPLE HOTLINE:

Give the facts immediately: Your MEC has learned through contact with the FAA and company officials that a Trans Global MD80 was forced to make an emergency landing at St. Louis Lambert Field this afternoon (May 19, 1999). The

aircraft reportedly had trouble with the air conditioning system and the captain decided to make an unscheduled landing. The aircraft, originating from San Jose, California, was bound for Orlando, Florida. ***Acknowledge information not known at the time:*** At this time, we have confirmation that there have been injuries as a result of the evacuation after landing but we do not know the extent of those injuries. We also do not know the cause of this problem ***What is ALPA doing:*** but ALPA is currently working with the FAA, NTSB, and company to investigate this situation. ***Tell when next update will occur:*** We expect additional information from the NTSB within the next few hours and will update this hotline at 5 p.m. CST (approximately two hours) to provide an update on new information.

Trans Global MEC Communications

3:05 p.m. (CST)

14. Send a Mass Email message: SysOp

The mass email system should not be used as primary means of communication, but rather should supplement almost every other communication effort. Any telephone hotline message, newsflash, press release and Letter To All Pilots should also be sent via mass email immediately. Mass emails can also notify pilots of events such as press conference times or special union meetings and point them to additional information such as expanded reports on the website.

At this stage of the crisis, the Internal Communicator should direct a SysOp to mass email the text of the hotline message. If a SysOp is not available, the Internal Communicator should mass email the message.

15. Update website with message: SysOp

One of the greatest obstacles of the communications team during a crisis is to be as open and honest as possible and not disseminate any unlawful information as a “party to the investigation” or legal insider.

All items posted on the website should be considered public information. The “pilots private” side of the website should be reserved for more sensitive information but be aware of the probability that anything posted on the website might be given to the press.

Post all hotline messages, news flashes, press releases, Letters To All Pilots and publications on the website. Additional pictures or graphics that might add meaning to the incident can be posted as well.

The public side of the website may also be used to provide information to the press. For example, complicated, lengthy, or non-sensitive background information of interest to the press during this time (such as pilot training history, history of the airline, etc.) should be posted on the web to save time.

At this stage of the crisis response, the Internal Communicator should direct a SysOp to update the website with the text of the hotline message. If a SysOp is not available, the Internal Communicator should update the website.

16. Begin a list (using form—Appendix A2) of media calls: Phone Bank Volunteers and/or MEC office staff

During the first few hours after a mechanical incident, the media will primarily be concerned with gathering basic facts from the company, incident site coordinators, local law enforcement, etc. (the who, what, when, where and why of a crisis.) Therefore, the MEC office usually does not receive as many media calls in the first 12 hours following a crisis as it does in the days after. Regardless of the number of calls, begin using the media form immediately. Besides helping the media coordinator later on to prioritize calls and prepare for interviews more efficiently, the form will track media inquiries from the beginning of a crisis and get those answering the phones in the habit of using the form.

Provide a media form to each staff member and volunteer who is apt to take a message from a reporter. Through this form, the following information should be recorded:

- The date
- The reporter's name and time of call,
- Their news organization,
- The deadline they are working under,
- The general premise of the story (if possible).

17. Develop simple statement to press: Media Coordinator

If possible, the Media Coordinator should prepare a simple, factual statement to the press in the first few hours after a major incident. This message should be in line with the direction of the MEC chairman and reviewed by the Emergency Communications Manager.

When preparing a statement to the press, begin by answering the questions, "What do you want to accomplish?" and "Who is your audience?" Do not deviate the message from these goals. Remember, the message is not supposed to "create" news. It is only intended to be responsive to the press by providing factual information and representing the interests of the pilot group. Other factual messages can be

given to the press to clarify information such as who releases the names of victims, what parties are involved in the investigation, etc.

This statement will continually change as events occur or more information is made available. Update this statement with facts from the fact sheet.

Use these tips as a general rule:

- Keep it simple.
- Stick only to the facts. Do not speculate on any aspect of the investigation. Provide only public facts in a clear, understandable manner.
- Always put pilots' interests first. Speak as a representative of the pilots.
For example, "The pilots are dedicated to the task of uncovering the mechanical events that led to this incident. As leaders of safety of the industry, we..."
- Be honest and open; share as much public and verified information as possible—even if it's bad news.
- Explain what ALPA is doing to help
For example, "The pilots are currently assisting the NTSB in the investigation of this incident to help ensure that the safety of both passengers and crewmembers are addressed in this case."
- Always check the legality of the written press response with a contract administrator.

If a contract administrator is not available, have someone at ALPA National's legal department review the statement.

- If there are any verified fatalities, injuries or inconvenience to passengers, be sympathetic. For example, "The pilots of XYZ Airlines are sympathetic to those whose family

members have been lost in this tragedy. We too have lost XX of our crewmembers and friends. We are dedicated to assisting the NTSB in the investigation of this incident.”

Note: *Do not base messages on supposed facts. Ensure the fatalities, injuries, etc. have been proven before disseminating this message.*

18. Deliver union message to press: Spokesperson(s)

Spokespersons should be well prepared before speaking to any reporter or press contact—even on “background.”

Spokespersons should participate in mock interviews with the media coordinator and others to brainstorm possible questions and practice answers. All answers to reporters’ questions should revert back to the union “message.”

Spokespersons should not deviate from the message.

The Media Coordinator should carefully consider the benefits of doing on-camera interviews at this time. The only information ALPA can provide the press is public facts and should avoid “getting out ahead” of the information. However, if no other sources are providing factual information, if the facts continue to be misrepresented or if the situation requires ALPA to visibly represent the pilot group’s interests, on-camera interviews might be beneficial. If there is any question regarding on-camera interviews, contact ALPA National.

Below are two important rules to follow while participating in interviews. Spokespersons should review ALPA’s guidelines on dealing with the press (page D2).

- Never say “no comment”
“No comment” connotes guilt. If a reporter asks a difficult question or one that you cannot answer, go back to the original message or defer to “party of investigation” excuse if necessary. Explain to the reporter why you cannot answer the question directly due to ALPA’s status as a

“party to the investigation” while still maintaining rapport with the reporter and bringing out what ALPA is doing to help in the investigation.

- Do not speculate
If a reporter is asking you to speculate on any unverified facts, explain only the public facts you know and can comment on. Do not, under any circumstances, speculate on the incident.

19. Develop talking points for those answering telephones of non-media calls and for possible media inquiries that relates to possible dynamics of a major mechanical incident: Media Coordinator and/or Internal Communicator

From the fact sheet, the Internal Communicator and/or Media Coordinator should develop talking points for incoming telephone calls to the MEC office from fellow pilots and friends or family of pilots. These talking points should be approved by the Emergency Communications Manager and/or an MEC officer. They should also be reviewed by the MEC contract administrator.

Some of these talking points can also be used for discussions with the media. The talking points anticipate questions that these individuals might ask—providing the pilot group with adequate information and preparing for unseen questions so as not to pass on incorrect or legally damaging information. The talking points are the “official” position of the union. Some questions the talking points might address are as follows:

- What happened?
- Why can't you tell me anything? I'm a dues-paying member!
- Has there been any injuries?
- Am I in jeopardy in flying a similar aircraft?
- What is the maintenance history on the aircraft?

- 21. • Are there any survivors?
- When will names be released? Who will release them?
- Do you know if _____ was on the flight?
- What was the number of the aircraft?

Phone bank volunteers should adhere to the following rules:

DO:

- Identify yourself as a representative of the Air Line Pilots Association,
- Require the caller to identify himself/herself and provide a payroll number, confirm that the individual is an XYZ pilot through the pilot roster,
- Refer to the talking points,
- Forward any calls requiring immediate attention to the Phone Bank Supervisor, and
- Record any questions you cannot answer and note the best way to get back in touch with the pilots (email, etc.).

DON'T:

- Respond to questions from anyone other than an XYZ pilot,
- Don't freelance answers,
- Don't make commitments on behalf of ALPA or XYZ airlines, and
- Don't bring your personal views into the process.

Phone bank volunteers should be prepared for emotional calls and should be cautioned NOT to speculate on any information that has not been verified as fact.

20. Contact press contacts local to incident site: Media Coordinator

The Media Coordinator should call and establish contact with the press local to the incident site. Explain who you are and what information you can provide throughout the crisis. These calls are not meant to generate media attention, but rather to ensure accuracy of reports at a time when rumors are rampant. Expect the press to report incorrect information often during this time.

21. Ensure office has adequate phone ports for phone bank through MEC office manager: Emergency Communications Manager

In anticipation of the phone bank, the Emergency Communications Manager should ask the MEC office manager to ensure that enough free phone ports are available to adequately answer pilot calls in the office. Depending on the size of the pilot group and the incident, phone stations should range from 3-10+ ports.

22. Dispatch local communications volunteer (On-Site Liaison) to site: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager, with the approval of an MEC officer, should dispatch a volunteer spokesperson to the site temporarily to divert media attention away from the investigators/crewmembers. This On-Site Liaison should act as a spokesperson by providing the media the union's message from the talking points. This volunteer should also gather information to pass on the communications group.

Mechanical Incident

12–48 Hours Following the Incident Page 81–86

Follow the checklist below after the “Initial Response—Mechanical Incident” (page 64) is completed.

Checklist

1. Set up, staff and schedule phone bank
2. Continue updating evolving facts on fact sheet
3. Continue to update communication channels including telephone hotline, website and mass email, giving specifics of what kind of communication pilots can expect in next few days
4. Continue using media list form to organize press calls
5. Continue to fine-tune key union message
6. Prepare primary spokesperson
7. Deliver union message to press
8. Contact crewmembers who survived
9. Contact the hospital if survived crew is under medical care, establish liaison and gather information
10. Set-up conference call with main pilot investigator (or designee)
11. Dispatch a communications volunteer to incident if one hasn't been dispatched already (if appropriate)
12. Plan CIRP debriefings for communication volunteers and staff

Extended explanation of this checklist begins on page 82.

Major Mechanical Incident

Extended Explanation and Direction

12-48 Hours Following the Incident

1. Set up, staff and schedule phone bank: Emergency Communications Manager

Review with the office manager the number of phone ports available in the office for use by the phone bank. The number of available ports and the demand for calls determine the number of phone bank volunteers working at any given time. Do not schedule more volunteers than available phone ports.

Schedule phone bank volunteers in shifts so as not to “run down” volunteers. Shifts should be approximately one half of a day in length, with ample time for breaks. Keep volunteers to the schedule even if they want to do “extra” work to ensure proper rest time. Talk to each volunteer often. Inquire about their emotional and physical state before scheduling them for more volunteer work. (See CIRP entry in this section—page 86.)

2. Continue updating evolving facts on fact sheet: Internal Communicator

Events change quickly in a crisis and even though you may know the latest verified information, do not assume everyone else does. To eliminate confusion regarding the situation and to help ensure consistent messages, the Internal Communicator or designated individual should continue updating the fact sheet as new information is learned and verified.

3. Continue to update communication channels including code-a-phone, website and mass email, giving specifics of what kind of communication pilots can expect in next few days: Internal Communicator

The Internal Communicator or designated individual should continue to provide pilots consistent and accurate information through all communication channels. It is essential to maintain frequent communication during this time. Reinforce messages. Do not assume every pilot knows the latest information. If possible, provide pilots an overview of what kind of communication they can expect in the next few days (hotline update every day or twice a day, review of company press conference held on Tuesday, etc.)

4. Continue using media list form to organize press calls: Phone Bank Volunteers and/or MEC office staff

During the days after a crisis situation, the MEC office will be inundated with media calls. The use of the media form is very important during this time to reduce confusion and help the media coordinator prioritize calls and help prepare for interviews more efficiently. Anyone apt to take a message from a reporter should continue to record the following information on the form:

- The date
- The reporter's name and time of call,
- Their news organization,
- The deadline they are working under,
- The general premise of the story (if possible).

5. Continue to fine-tune key union message: Internal Communicator

As events occur and additional information is made available, the union's message will change. Use the fact sheet to continually fine-tune the message to reflect recent developments.

6. Prepare primary spokesperson: Media Coordinator

During the 12-48 hours following a major mechanical incident, the media have already gathered the basic facts of the incident (the who, what, when and where) and are beginning to speculate on the cause of the incident. They are

also trying to find out who all the “players” are in the crisis, trying to follow up on rumors, and tracking down the crew and family.

As the message and focus of the press changes, the spokesperson(s) must continually prepare for these new issues in the interviews. The Media Coordinator should conduct mock interviews with the spokesperson(s), anticipating new questions or issues and developing concise responses that are aligned with the key union message. Any responses that set union policy or that deviate from the key union message should be approved by an MEC officer if necessary. The spokesperson(s) should also practice taking control of the interview and shifting the focus back to the key union message. (See Appendix D2 for ALPA’s tips on dealing with the media)

7. Deliver union message to press: ALPA Spokesperson(s) and Media Coordinator

Spokesperson(s) should deliver message to the press as practiced with the Media Coordinator. The Media Coordinator should schedule interviews that would be advantageous to the situation. (This does not mean scheduling interviews that will only give positive press.)

Interviews that would be beneficial to the situation would clarify misinformation, provide information to reassure the public of the work being done and provide the public sympathy and goodwill on behalf of the pilot group. These comments should not interfere in any way with the investigation.

8. Contact crewmembers who survived: MEC Officer and/or Emergency Communications Manager

Before attempting to contact crewmembers or their families, research the situation and establish his or her condition such as injuries or extreme emotional trauma. Approach each crewmember with sensitivity. Do not be pushy.

The crew, and the union representative accompanying them, are usually sequestered after a major incident. Contact the MEC Safety Committee chairman or union officer to find out their location—usually in a hotel or airport room. Offer (either directly or through the union representative) the crew your assistance and warn the pilots of possible media attention. Advise them not to speak to the press, but to direct inquiries to the media coordinator instead of saying “no comment.” Discuss the necessity of sending a communications volunteer to thwart media attempts.

9. Contact the hospital if survived crew is under medical care, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the hospital where the survived crew is under medical care. Explain who you are (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information obtained from the hospital during the aftermath of a major mechanical situation could include the medical status of the crew, security information to keep out media interference, etc.

10. Set-up conference call with main pilot investigator (or designee): Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should establish a system with the investigation team to share information possibly every few hours during an initial crisis situation. Although the accident investigation team will be extremely busy during this time, stress the importance of receiving good information in order to correct misleading news stories and provide the pilots and others accurate and up-to-date information. Conference calls can be set up through the MEC office manager.

11. Dispatch a communications volunteer to incident site if one hasn't been dispatched already

If a communications volunteer has not already been dispatched to the incident site, the Emergency Communications Manager should dispatch someone to be the On-Site Liaison at this time. This individual must be able to follow specific duties and be able to speak to the press.

The On-Site Liaison should work behind the scenes to make the investigators' jobs easier and provide information to the MEC office. The On-Site Liaison should divert media attention away from the pilot investigators and any surviving crewmembers. He or she should also act as a conduit of information by receiving information from the MEC Safety Committee chairman and passing it on to the communications group or Internal Communicator.

While at the site, the On-Site Liaison should monitor the local news media and inform the MEC office and MEC Safety Committee chairman of the coverage, faxing pertinent newspaper articles to the communications group.

12. Plan CIRP debriefings for communication volunteers and staff: MEC Office Manager

Discuss with the MEC office manager the need for Critical Incident Response Program (CIRP) debriefings and assistance for the entire MEC office staff and pilot volunteers. A CIRP team should be dispatched to the MEC office and incident site to help those dealing with the incident.

At the training, the Emergency Communications Manager should discuss with the team signs to recognize in the communications group of emotional fatigue. The Emergency Communications Manager should put communications volunteers and staff members' health first and allow for ample "time off" away from the communications response if necessary.

Mechanical Incident

48+ Hours Following the Incident

By the 48th hour following a crisis situation, the communications group should have an effective and efficient system of internal and external communication established. Roles should be assigned and carried-out and a schedule of volunteers should be set. In the days and even weeks following a major mechanical incident, this system of communication should be maintained. The communications group should continue to focus on providing consistent, factual and frequent communication to pilots using all communication vehicles maintained during the initial response to the crisis. Additional focus may also be put on external communication with the media and various government officials. At this time, ALPA will have more information to provide these outside sources although all external communication should remain based on facts only.

During this time, the communications group should also evaluate what additional communication efforts are needed depending on the unique circumstances of the crisis situation. For example, the pilot group might want the union's perspective on the crisis, further details, or questions answered. Possible communication tools to consider during this time are Letters To All Pilots (Appendix C5), special publications (Appendix C8) press releases and press conferences (Appendix C6, C7). These tools should be carefully examined before use to determine if using these tools will further the MEC's goals. For more information and explanation of these communication tools, see the corresponding appendix.

Pilot Incident

Initial Response (0–12 hours) Pages 88–104

Follow the checklist below after the “All Crises Initial Response Checklist” (page 3) is completed and “Pilot Incident” is identified as the cause of the crisis.

Checklist

1. Determine if there are any fatalities
2. Obtain a list of crewmembers on board
3. Identify acceptable sources of information
4. Contact ALPA National Communications Department
5. Contact local law enforcement, establish liaison and gather information
6. Contact the FBI, establish liaison and gather information
7. Contact the NTSB, establish liaison and gather information
8. Contact the FAA, establish liaison and gather information
9. If incident occurred in or around an airport, contact the airport manager’s office, establish liaison and gather information
10. If incident occurred in a foreign country, contact the state department and consider translators
11. Distinguish between public and non-public information
12. Record telephone hotline message with basic public facts
13. Send a mass Email message
14. Update website with message
15. Begin a list (using form) of media calls
16. Develop simple statement to press
17. Deliver union message to press
18. Contact press contacts local to crash site
19. Develop talking points for those answering telephones of non-media calls

Pilot Incident

Extended Explanation and Direction

Initial Response (0-12 hours)

1. Determine if there are any fatalities: Designated Communications Volunteer

Whether or not crewmembers or passengers survive an incident, the union's priority remains focused on the representation of the pilots involved—both individually and as representatives of the entire pilot group. However, the direction of the communication department changes dramatically depending on fatalities of the crewmembers as well as passengers—both in message and in focus. This is especially true if the incident allegedly involves pilot. For example, if there are fatalities, the communications group might give additional focus on the families. If there are survivors, the communications group might help protect those individuals from the media and act as their “spokesperson.”

Contact the company, union officers, pilot investigators, local law enforcement or any other official party in the investigation to determine fatalities.

2. Obtain a list of crewmembers on board: Designated Communications Volunteer

Obtaining the names of crewmembers on board the aircraft helps the communications group formulate statements, prepare background information and concentrate on other communication initiatives. Names of crewmembers can be obtained through the airline's computer system. This information should be obtained as quickly as possible because the company will blank out the information—sometimes as quickly as within the first hour after the incident.

The names of crewmembers are extremely sensitive. Do not, under any circumstances, release this information to anyone, including fellow pilots. The names should ONLY be released after they are officially released by the Red Cross.

3. Identify acceptable sources of information

A variety of individuals will provide the communications team with "inside information" regarding the crisis. Rumors are widespread during this time and although some of the sources might be useful, only the following sources, until otherwise indicated, are trusted and accepted sources of information for possible dissemination.

- ALPA National
- MEC Safety Committee
- White House
- Local/State government
- Military
- NTSB
- FBI
- Anti-Terrorist Team

4. Contact ALPA National Communications Department: Internal Communicator

The Internal Communicator should contact the director of ALPA's communication department and the communications supervisor assigned to their specific airline. Brief them on the facts of the incident, explain tentative communication plans and ask for any direction, advice or modification of the plans.

5. Contact local law enforcement, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should call the sheriff and/or police department local to the incident site. Explain who you are (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information

obtained from local officials could include evolving facts in the case, names of victims, general information on the pilots, etc.

6. Contact the FBI, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The FBI, the investigative branch of the federal government, is in charge of criminal investigations involving airline incidents. The FBI can be an important contact when forming communication responses to pilots in a crisis situation. The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the FBI, explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. The FBI can give ALPA a "heads up" on information or events in order to allow ALPA to prepare a communications response. In return, ALPA can provide the FBI necessary information such as general facts regarding the crew, etc.

7. Contact the NTSB, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB) is the primary investigative branch of the Dept. of Infrastructure and Interior (formally Department of Transportation) in charge of the investigation. The board investigates and submits a report to the FAA regarding the cause of the incident. They also make recommendations stemming from their investigation relating to aircraft construction, flight safety procedures, training, etc.

Since the NTSB is involved in any incident that occurs in the United States, it is important that the Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual contact the board, explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information from the

NTSB can be valuable. For example, during the investigation of the crash of TWA's Flight 800, the NTSB gave a press briefing everyday. Establishing contact with the board might afford the opportunity to attend these briefings and gather updated information.

Note: *If the incident occurs in a country other than the U.S., the NTSB will not be the primary investigators. Contact the safety board specific to that country.*

8. Contact the FAA, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with the Principal Operations Inspector (POI) for their carrier or other liaison in order to share information. (Each airline has an FAA representative or POI assigned to work primarily with that carrier.) Inquire whether there is any possibility or discussion regarding actions taken against the pilots.

Developing a relationship with the FAA is important in an incident in which pilots are directly involved, especially if there is any chance of an action or violation taken against a pilot. As the administrative branch of aviation community, the FAA is concerned with pilot-related issues during an incident including the determination of negligibility or pilot error. Any information obtained before the actions occur could help the union prepare for the representation of the pilots and the communications group to prepare for the communication of events.

9. If incident occurred in or around an airport, contact the airport manager's office: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should call the manager's office at the airport at or around where the incident occurred. Explain who you are (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information obtained from the airport in a crisis situation could include information such as airport and runway diagrams, airport security personnel contact, initial information from those individuals first on the scene, etc.

10. If incident occurred in a foreign country or over international waters, contact the U.S. State Department and consider translators: Emergency Communications Manager

A pilot incident in a foreign country or over international waters poses different guidelines and challenges for the communications group. The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact the U.S. State Department to establish liaison and gather information. If necessary, elicit help from the pilot group via the telephone hotline for translators or consider assistance from a Language of Destination (LOD) flight attendant. (Most airlines have flight attendants who speak the language of international destinations called LODs.) The Emergency Communications Coordinator should coordinate an LOD by contacting the company.

11. Distinguish between public and non-public information: Internal Communicator

As the pilots' union, ALPA's primary goal is to represent any crewmember involved in the crisis and act as an advocate of the pilot group as a whole. To this end, the communications team should provide as much clear, honest and timely information to the pilots as possible. However, some information is non-public and therefore cannot be disseminated to the pilot group as a whole—even through "private" channels. In a crisis situation, ALPA is considered an

official "party to the investigation." Therefore, the union cannot provide any information that could jeopardize their participation in the investigation. They also should not provide any information that could jeopardize their legal representation of the pilots involved. The union cannot speculate or provide any information that is not deemed as public facts by the NTSB. If they do, ALPA will be banned from the investigation.

Although some information cannot be disseminated to the pilots, it is the communications team's responsibility to explain what the union can and cannot say and why. This provides pilots with the most information possible and builds trust within the union.

Below are some of the many items that the union is prohibited from disseminating. As a general rule, if there is a question whether or not the information is public, do not release it until it has been approved by a contract administrator, ALPA National and/or an MEC officer.

NON-PUBLIC

- Names of crewmembers
- Names of passengers
- Special crisis circumstances
- Facts known by "insiders" to the investigation/situation
- Any speculative information

12. Record telephone hotline message with basic public facts: Internal Communicator

The telephone hotline message, sometimes referred to as the "code-a-phone," is an effective tool to disseminate timely, non-sensitive information to the pilot group and "tell our story" to the public and press who regularly call the hotline. Pilots should know to call the hotline if there is any type of emergency.

The Internal Communicator should write the hotline message and have it approved by the Emergency Communications Manager and/or an MEC officer. The Internal Communicator should record the telephonic message.

Schedule: Special hotline messages should be recorded frequently during a crisis situation to disseminate breaking news or keep the pilot group updated on the situation. Code-a-Phone messages should give basic facts regarding the crisis, tell pilots how ALPA is involved, thoroughly and honestly explain answers to frequently asked questions (received by communication volunteers manning the phones) and give pilots an idea of when the hotline will be updated again. If possible, the communications team should also continue to maintain the regular schedule of hotline updates.

Tips to remember: Although the hotline is an opportunity to talk directly to the pilot group, be wary of how the hotline is worded and what information is disseminated. The press regularly quote directly from the update.

Regardless of the message, every code-a-phone message during a crisis should:

1. Give the facts immediately
2. Bring up any issues of importance to the pilots to mitigate any questions and maintain an open communication policy (Tell the pilots what you do not know and why)
3. Explain what ALPA is doing
4. Tell pilots when the next update will occur

EXAMPLE HOTLINE:

Give the facts immediately: Your MEC was notified by the U.S. State Department and company officials late this afternoon that a B767 cockpit crew have been arrested in Tripoli, Iran after making an emergency landing at the Tripoli

airport for unspecified mechanical problems. The Iranian government is holding the pilots on alleged espionage charges. Trans Global Flight #209 left London Heatherow airport at approximately 3:45 a.m. CST, bound for Delhi, India. *Acknowledge information not known at the time:* At this time, we have no further details on the situation. *What is ALPA doing:* However, ALPA will continue to be in contact with the State Department and is preparing to send representatives of the pilot group to assist company officials on this matter. *Tell when next update will occur:* We expect additional information this afternoon and will update this hotline no later than 6:00 p.m. CST.

Trans Global MEC Communications
12:05 p.m. (CST)

13. Send a mass Email message: SysOp

The mass email system should not be used as primary means of communication, but rather should supplement almost every other communication effort. Any telephone hotline message, newsflash, press release and Letter To All Pilots should also be sent via mass email immediately. Mass emails can also notify pilots of events such as press conference times or special union meetings and point them to additional information such as expanded reports on the website.

At this stage of the crisis, the Internal Communicator should direct a SysOp to mass email the text of the hotline message. If a SysOp is not available, the Internal Communicator should mass email the message.

14. Update website with message: SysOp

One of the greatest obstacles of the communications team during a crisis is to be as open and honest as possible and not disseminate any unlawful information as a “party to the investigation” or legal insider.

All items posted on the website should be considered public information. The “pilots private” side of the website should be reserved for more sensitive information but be aware of the probability that anything posted on the website might be given to the press.

Post all hotline messages, news flashes, press releases, Letters To All Pilots and publications on the website. Additional pictures or graphics that might add meaning to the incident can be posted as well.

The public side of the website may also be used to provide information to the press. For example, complicated, lengthy, or non-sensitive background information of interest to the press during this time (such as pilot training history, history of the airline, etc.) should be posted on the web to save time.

At this stage of the crisis response, the Internal Communicator should direct a SysOp to update the website with the text of the hotline message. If a SysOp is not available, the Internal Communicator should update the website.

15. Begin a list (using form—Appendix A2) of media calls: Phone Bank Volunteers and/or MEC office staff

During a crisis situation involving a pilot incident, the MEC office will be inundated with media calls—possibly even during the first few hours after the crisis occurs. To reduce confusion, provide a media form to each staff member and volunteers who is apt to take a message from a reporter.

Through this form, the following information should be recorded:

- The date
- The reporter's name and time of call,
- Their news organization,
- The deadline they are working under,
- The general premise of the story (if possible).

This information will help the media coordinator prioritize calls and help prepare for interviews more efficiently.

If the media needs immediate information, the individual answering the phone can pass the call to a designated spokesperson volunteer(s). These individuals should be media-trained and are able to speak effectively and responsibly on background. The volunteer can read a pre-scripted factual message to the reporter. The phone bank volunteer should not, however, answer any questions or speculate on the incident. Even though he or she might feel they know the correct answer or message, facts of the situation and the union's position on those facts change quickly. If the reporter needs additional information, the phone bank volunteer should notify the media coordinator.

16. Develop simple statement to press: Media Coordinator

If possible, the Coordinator should prepare a simple, factual statement to the press in the first few hours after an incident. This message should be in line with the direction of the MEC chairman and reviewed by the Emergency Communications Manager.

When preparing a statement to the press, begin by answering the questions, "What do you want to accomplish?" and "Who is your audience?" Do not deviate the message from these goals. Remember, the message is not supposed to "create" news. It is only intended to be responsive to the press by providing factual information and representing the

interests of the pilot group. Other factual messages can be given to the press to clarify information such as who releases the names of victims, what parties are involved in the investigation, etc.

This statement will continually change as events occur or more information is made available. Update this statement with facts from the fact sheet.

Use these tips as a general rule:

- Keep it simple.
- Stick only to the facts. Do not speculate on any aspect of the investigation. Provide only public facts in a clear, understandable manner.
- Always put pilots' interests first. Speak as a representative of the pilots.
For example, "ALPA is actively researching the accusations brought against the pilots of Flight #XX. We are providing full assistance to get to the bottom of this matter and representing our pilot group's interests in every way."
- Be honest and open; share as much public and verified information as possible—even if it's bad news
- Explain what ALPA is doing to help
For example, "The pilots are fully assisting the NTSB in the investigation of this incident. We are relieved that no injuries occurred regarding this situation and are working closely with all parties involved to resolve this situation successfully."
- Always check the legality of the written press response with a contract administrator.
If a contract administrator is not available, have someone at ALPA National's legal department review the statement.

- If there are any verified fatalities, injuries or inconvenience to passengers, be sympathetic. For example, “The pilots of XYZ Airlines are sympathetic to those whose family members have been lost in this tragedy. We too have lost XX of our crewmembers and friends. We are dedicated to assisting the FBI in the investigation of this incident.”

Note: Do not base messages on supposed facts. Ensure the fatalities, injuries, etc. have been proven before disseminating this message.

17. Deliver union message to press: Spokesperson(s)

Spokespersons should be well prepared before speaking to any reporter or press contact—even on “background.”

Spokespersons should participate in mock interviews with the media coordinator and others to brainstorm possible questions and practice answers. All answers to reporters’ questions should revert back to the union “message.”

Spokespersons should not deviate from the message.

The Media Coordinator should carefully consider the benefits of doing on-camera interviews at this time. ALPA should be viewed as being open to the public regarding the situation but be wary that the only information ALPA can provide the press is public facts and should avoid “getting out ahead” of the information. Spokespersons should be carefully prepared for these interviews. If spokespersons are not adequately prepared, postpone interviews until that time. If there is any question regarding on-camera interviews, contact ALPA National. Spokesperson(s) should review ALPA’s guidelines on dealing with the press.

Spokespersons should also follow these two important guidelines:

- Never say “no comment”
“No comment” connotes guilt. If a reporter asks a difficult question or one that you cannot answer, go back to the original message or defer to “party of investigation” excuse if necessary. Explain to the reporter why you cannot answer the question directly due to ALPA’s status as a “party to the investigation” while still maintaining rapport with the reporter and bringing out what ALPA is doing to help in the investigation.
- Do not speculate
If a reporter is asking you to speculate on specific details of the incident or any other unverified facts, explain only the public facts you know and can comment on. Do not, under any circumstances, speculate on the situation.

18. Contact press contacts local to incident site: Media Coordinator

The Media Coordinator should call and establish contact with the press local to the incident site. Explain who you are and what information you can provide throughout the crisis. These calls are not meant to generate media attention, but rather to ensure accuracy of reports at a time when rumors are rampant. Expect the press to report incorrect information often during this time.

19. Develop talking points for those answering telephones of non-media calls and for possible media inquiries that relates to possible dynamics of a pilot-related crisis situation: Media Coordinator and/or Internal Communicator

From the fact sheet, the Internal Communicator and/or Media Coordinator should develop talking points for incoming telephone calls to the MEC office from fellow pilots and friends or family of pilots. These talking points should be approved by the Emergency Communications Manager and/or an MEC officer. They should also be reviewed by the MEC contract administrator.

Some of these talking points can also be used for discussions with the media. The talking points anticipate questions that these individuals might ask—providing the pilot group with adequate information and preparing for unseen questions so as not to pass on incorrect or legally damaging information. The talking points are the “official” position of the union. Some questions the talking points might address are as follows:

- What happened?
- Why can't you tell me anything? I'm a dues-paying member!
- Has there been any injuries?

Have there been any arrests?

- Are there any survivors?
- When will names be released? Who will release them?
- Was _____ the captain of the flight?
- What was the number of the aircraft?

Phone bank volunteers should adhere to the following rules:

DO:

- Identify yourself as a representative of the Air Line Pilots Association,
- Require the caller to identify himself/herself and provide a payroll number, confirm that the individual is an XYZ pilot through the pilot roster,
- Refer to the talking points,
- Forward any calls requiring immediate attention to the phone bank supervisor, and
- Record any questions you cannot answer and note the best way to get back in touch with the pilots (email, etc.).

DON'T:

- Respond to questions from anyone other than an XYZ pilot,
- Don't freelance answers,
- Don't make commitments on behalf of ALPA or XYZ airlines, and

Pilot Incident

- Don't bring your personal views into the process.

Phone bank volunteers should be prepared for emotional calls and should be cautioned NOT to speculate on any information that has not been verified as fact.

**20. Ensure office has adequate phone ports for phone bank:
MEC Office Manager**

In anticipation of the phone bank, ask the MEC office manager to ensure that enough free phone ports are available to adequately answer pilot calls in the office. Depending on the size of the pilot group and the incident, phone stations should range from 3-10+ ports.

**21. Dispatch local communications volunteer (On-Site
Liaison) to incident site: Emergency Communications
Manager**

The Emergency Communications Manager, with the approval of the MEC officer, should dispatch volunteer spokesperson to the site temporarily to divert media attention away from the investigators/crewmembers. This On-Site Liaison should act as a spokesperson by providing the media the union's message from the talking points. This volunteer should also gather information to pass on the communications group.

Pilot Incident

12–48 Hours Following the Pilot Incident Page 105–111

Follow the checklist below after the “Initial Response—Pilot Incident Checklist” is completed (page 88).

Checklist

1. Set up, staff and schedule phone bank
2. Continue updating evolving facts on fact sheet
3. Continue to update communication channels including telephone hotline, website and mass email, giving specifics of what kind of communication pilots can expect in next few days
4. Continue using media list form to organize press calls
5. Continue to fine-tune key union message
6. Consider disseminating a press release
7. Prepare primary spokesperson
8. Deliver union message to the press
9. Contact crewmembers who survived
10. Contact the hospital if survived crew is under medical care, establish liaison and gather information
11. Dispatch a communications volunteer to incident if one hasn't been dispatched already (if appropriate)
12. Set-up conference call with main pilot investigator (or designee)
13. Plan CIRP debriefings for communication volunteers and staff

The extended explanation of this checklist begins on page 106.

Pilot Incident

Extended Explanation and Direction

12–48 Hours Following the Incident

1. Set up, staff and schedule phone bank: Emergency Communications Manager

Review with the office manager the number of phone ports available in the office for use by the phone bank. The number of available ports and the demand for calls determine the number of phone bank volunteers working at any given time. Do not schedule more volunteers than available phone ports.

Schedule phone bank volunteers in shifts so as not to “run down” volunteers. Shifts should be approximately one half of a day in length, with ample time for breaks. Keep volunteers to the schedule even if they want to do “extra” work to ensure proper rest time. Talk to each volunteer often. Inquire about their emotional and physical state before scheduling them for more volunteer work. (See CIRP entry in this section—page 110.)

2. Continue updating evolving facts on fact sheet: Internal Communicator

Events change quickly in a crisis and even though you may know the latest verified information, do not assume everyone else does. To eliminate confusion regarding the situation and to help ensure consistent messages, the Internal Communicator or designated individual should continue updating the fact sheet as new information is learned and verified.

3. Continue to update communication channels including code-a-phone, website and mass email, giving specifics of what kind of communication pilots can expect in next few

days: Internal Communicator

The Internal Coordinator or designated individual should continue to provide pilots consistent and accurate information through all communication channels. It is essential to maintain frequent communication during this time. Reinforce messages. Do not assume every pilot knows the latest information. If possible, provide pilots an overview of what kind of communication they can expect in the next few days (hotline update every day or twice a day, review of company press conference held on Tuesday, etc.)

4. Continue using media list form to organize press calls: Phone Bank Volunteer and/or MEC office staff

The media interest and inquires in the MEC office in days after the crisis will most likely continue to be heavy. Continue to use the media form during this time as in the first few hours after the incident. This will reduce confusion and help the Media Coordinator prioritize calls and help prepare for interviews more efficiently.

5. Continue to fine-tune key union message: Internal Communicator

As events occur and additional information is made available, the union's message will change. Use the fact sheet to continually fine-tune the message to reflect recent developments.

6. Consider disseminating a press release (if appropriate): Media Coordinator

If the union's message during the crisis situation will have a direct effect on the lives, careers or reputation of pilots in the public and/or press, the Media Coordinator should consider disseminating a press release to get the message out. Review the appropriateness of a press release with ALPA National communications if necessary. (See Appendix C6 for instructions.)

7. Prepare primary spokesperson: Media Coordinator

During the 12-48 hours following an incident, the media has already gathered the basic facts of the incident (the who, what, when and where) and are beginning to follow up on rumors. They are also trying to find out who all the "players" are in the crisis and tracking down the crew and family.

As the message and focus of the press changes, the spokesperson(s) must continually prepare for these new issues in the interviews. The Media Coordinator should conduct mock interviews with the spokesperson(s), anticipating new questions or issues and developing concise responses that are aligned with the key union message. Any responses that set union policy or that deviate from the key union message should be approved by an MEC officer if necessary. The spokesperson(s) should also practice taking control of the interview and shifting the focus back to the key union message. (See Appendix D2 for ALPA's tips on dealing with the media)

8. Deliver message to press: ALPA Spokesperson(s) and Media Coordinator

Spokesperson(s) should deliver message to the press as practiced with the Media Coordinator. The Media Coordinator should schedule interviews that would be advantageous to the situation. (This does not mean scheduling interviews that will only give positive press.) Interviews that would be beneficial to the situation would be ones that clarify misinformation, provide information to reassure the public of the work being done, and provide the public sympathy and goodwill on behalf of the pilot group. These comments should not interfere in any way with the investigation.

9. Contact crewmembers who survived: MEC Officer and/or Emergency Communications Manager

Before attempting to contact crewmembers or their families,

research the situation and establish his or her condition such as injuries or extreme emotional trauma. Approach each crewmember with sensitivity. Do not be pushy.

The crew, and the union representative accompanying them, are usually sequestered after a pilot-related incident. The MEC chairman, Emergency Communications Manager and/or designated individual should contact the Central Air Safety Chairman or union officer to find out their location—usually in a hotel or airport room. Offer (either directly or through the union representative) the crew your assistance and warn the pilots of possible media attention. Advise them not to speak to the press, but to direct inquiries to the media coordinator instead of saying “no comment.” Discuss the necessity of sending a communications volunteer to thwart media attempts.

10. Contact the hospital if survived crew is under medical care, establish liaison and gather information: Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager or designated individual should contact hospital where the survived crew is under medical care. Explain who he/she is (representative of the Air Line Pilots Association) and ask to establish contact with a liaison in order to share information. Information obtained from the hospital in a pilot-related incident situation could include the medical status of the crew, security information to keep out media interference, etc.

11. Dispatch a communications volunteer to incident site if one hasn't been dispatched already: Emergency Communications Manager

If a communications volunteer has not already been dispatched to the incident site, the Emergency Communications Manager should dispatch someone to be the On-Site Liaison at this time. This individual must be able to follow specific duties and be able to speak to the press.

The On-Site Liaison should work behind the scenes to make the investigators' jobs easier and provide information to the MEC office. The On-Site Liaison should divert media attention away from the pilot investigators and any surviving crewmembers. He or she should also act as a conduit of information by receiving information from the MEC Safety Committee chairman and passing it on to the communications group or Internal Communicator.

While at the site, the On-Site Liaison should monitor the local news media and inform the MEC office and MEC Safety Committee chairman of the coverage, faxing pertinent newspaper articles to the communications group.

12. Set-up conference call with main pilot investigator (or designee): Emergency Communications Manager

The Emergency Communications Manager should establish a system with the investigation team to share information possibly every few hours during a initial crisis situation. Although the pilot investigation team will be extremely busy during this time, stress the importance of receiving good information in order to correct misleading news stories and provide the pilots and others accurate and up-to-date information. Conference calls can be set up through the MEC office manager.

13. Plan CIRP debriefings for communication volunteers and staff

Discuss with the MEC office manager the need for Critical Incident Response Program (CIRP) debriefings and assistance for the entire MEC office staff and pilot volunteers. A CIRP team should be dispatched to the MEC office and incident site to help those dealing with the crisis.

At the training, the Emergency Communications Manager should discuss with the team signs to recognize in the communications group of emotional fatigue. The Emergency

Pilot Incident

Communications Manager should put communications volunteers and staff members' health first and allow for ample "time off" away from the communications response if necessary.

Pilot Incident

48+ Hours Following the Incident

By the 48th hour following a crisis situation, the communications group should have an effective and efficient system of internal and external communication established. Roles should be assigned and carried-out and a schedule of volunteers should be set. In the days and even weeks following a pilot incident, this system of communication should be maintained. The communications group should continue to focus on providing consistent, factual and frequent communication to pilots using all communication vehicles maintained during the initial response to the crisis. Additional focus may also be put on external communication with the media and various government officials. At this time, ALPA will have more information to provide these outside sources although all external communication should remain based on facts only.

During this time, the communications group should also evaluate what additional communication efforts are needed depending on the unique circumstances of the crisis situation. For example, the pilot group might want the union's perspective on the crisis, further details, or questions answered. Possible communication tools to consider during this time are Letters To All Pilots (Appendix C5), special publications (Appendix C8) press releases and press conferences (Appendix C6, C7). These tools should be carefully examined before use to determine if using these tools will further the MEC's goals. For more information and explanation of these communication tools, see the corresponding appendix.

Appendices

A. Forms

1. Fact Sheet
2. Press Contact/Message List

B. Contact Names and Numbers

1. Communications Response Team contact information
2. Pilot Officers, Representatives, Committee Volunteers and Office Staff Members contact information
3. Press Contacts
4. Other "Key" Parties Involved in an Incident (Airline Personnel, IAM, NTSB, ALPA National)
5. Support Contacts (PR Firms, Union Printers, etc.)

C. How To:

1. Leave a Telephone Hotline Message
2. Disseminate a Pilots' Mass Email Message
3. Update the ALPA MEC Website
4. Send a Letter To All TWA Pilots
5. Send a Press Release
6. Hold a Press Conference
7. Send a Special Publication

D. Background Information

1. Pilot Officer and Representative Bios
2. ALPA's Media Guide
3. ALPA/Pilot Group History
4. Pilots' Training Qualifications
5. Airline Pilots' Safety History

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

Having completed the written portion of the crisis communication manual for field offices of the Air Line Pilots Association, an explanation of various aspects of the manual is necessary to more fully understand the document itself, how it was created, and its intended use. This chapter focuses on aspects such as the manual's format, writing style and attention to detail (or lack thereof). It also explains the writing process and how consideration was given to the intended audience of the manual—unionized commercial airline pilots and the ALPA staff who work with them—by using these individuals as consultants on the project. Lastly, this chapter assesses the effectiveness of the document itself and its potential use within the Association.

The Written Manual

Format:

The crisis communication manual addresses four major possible crisis scenarios: airplane crash, criminal act, mechanical incident and pilot incident. It was grouped into these four sections after researching past incidents and accidents in the airline industry and reviewing these crisis situations with pilots. After

gathering the information and examining major characteristics or trends, it seemed as if each unique incident or accident fell into one of these four general categories.

It is necessary to have these different categories because response to and involvement with various types of airline crises differ dramatically. For example, the union's message to the media would be much different for an incident involving pilot error than for a mechanical error because the union has special representational obligations to those pilots. As the manual explains, however, there are times when a specific crisis situation may fall into more than one of these categories. For example, an airplane may have experienced a major mechanical error and subsequently crashed. However, it was apparent from the research that each of the four categories is different enough and necessitates different enough responses and considerations that separate categories were necessary.

The manual is formatted by using two distinct types of sections: the checklist and the extended explanation of the checklist. This format was used because it would be recognizable and easily understood by pilot volunteers in the event of a crisis situation. This format mirrors the flight manuals, called Jeppesen manuals, that pilots have been trained with and use every day to ensure that each flight procedure is followed correctly and any type of emergency is identified and controlled. They are accustomed to quickly completing a series of checklists and referring back to an extended explanation if necessary.

All Jeppesen manuals, consistent for every airline and type of aircraft, are formatted to fit a six-hole, 5 X 7-inch document and are kept in special six-hole

Jeppesen binders. The crisis communication manual will also be formatted in this size. Again, pilots will be more comfortable with a manual that is familiar to them and will be easy to carry and store.

The manual begins by guiding the user through a "general crisis" checklist. This checklist accomplishes four important things: 1) It helps the reader identify if use of the crisis manual is necessary, 2) It guides the user to contact the appropriate individuals immediately, 3) It helps the user create a communications team or structure to more effectively handle the crisis and 4) It aids the user in identifying the type of crisis situation and directs the user to the appropriate crisis-specific section of the manual.

The crisis-specific sections are broken into three time groups: Initial Response (0–12 hours), 12–48 hours after the crisis, and 48+ hours after the crisis. The manual was broken up this way to give the user an idea of response priorities, not to impose strict instructions. While interviewing a number of ALPA staff and TWA pilot volunteers who responded to the TWA Flight 800 crash, it was evident that certain tasks should be completed before others. For example, it was necessary to establish contact with certain individuals immediately so they could complete other tasks. On the other hand, sometimes it was important to wait until later in the response to begin a task. For example, the communications group could not schedule briefings with the accident investigators right away because the investigators had to have time to actually get to the scene and set up base operations. While these checklists can never presuppose the timing of every action, they can give general guidelines on how to prioritize responses to a

specific crisis and serve as a kind of “checks and balances” to ensure that the necessary procedures were not forgotten.

The actual time amounts (0–12 hours, 12–48 hours, and 48+ hours after the crisis) were also established through discussions with those ALPA staff and TWA pilot volunteers who were involved in the aftermath of Flight 800. These individuals described how they responded to the crisis, how they would change that response, and what tasks they would recommend be included in this manual. It seemed as if the recommended timing of those tasks fell into three general categories: those that must be completed right away, those that must be completed after the initial response is organized and initial contacts are made, and those that must be maintained in the days and weeks after the crisis. These general categories were assigned hourly time frames to give the manual more structure and allow for easier navigation. That is, the user might identify easier with the set, hourly time frames instead of subjective categories.

Although both the “Initial Response (0–12 hours)” and “12–24 Hours Following the Crisis” sections follow the general format of checklist and extended explanation, the “48+ Hours Following the Crisis” sections do not follow the same format. Instead of a checklist and extended summary, a narrative on what response efforts to maintain and actions to consider is included. This section was purposely not done in a checklist format because response to the crisis situation in the days after a crisis is more subjective. The individuals who need to be contacted have already been contacted and the appropriate communication efforts have been initialized. This is not to say that the work of the communications

group is done; rather, the role of the communications group is to maintain those contacts and continue communication efforts. A checklist of these "maintenance" items would be redundant. Therefore, the text is primarily a reminder for the communications group to continue the basic tasks established in the first 24 hours after a crisis and begin thinking of other problems and opportunities that may arise.

The Text:

The text of the manual was written as a practical tool for use within the Association, not as an academic paper. Therefore, as is standard with most manuals, no in-text citations were provided within the crisis manual and examples were used only when they would further the understanding of the reader. Any excess text was eliminated in order to present a simple, "clean" manual that could be easily navigated through if a crisis should occur.

The ability to navigate through the manual easily is of utmost importance. For this reason, careful attention was given to the amount of detail included. The instructions were written to give the user enough information to understand the intended direction, but not provide too much information so that it slows down the user from moving on to the next task.

The audience of the manual aided in this "balance" of detail and ease of use. The text itself was written for individuals involved in the communications group of an ALPA field office. This audience already has a basic knowledge of communication principles and terms. Therefore, specific detail regarding

communication vehicles did not have to be overly explained. The content of the appendices was intentionally left blank so individual field offices could provide additional detail specific to their airline if necessary.

Besides basic instructions, examples were provided within the text to more vividly explain previous crisis situations and act as an alternative means of communicating information. These real-world examples help the user visualize other similar situations and recognize possible pitfalls or opportunities. They also help the ALPA staff, in the event that pilots are not available during the aftermath of a crisis, to more clearly understand various pilot procedures that might wrongfully become a negative focus of the public and press in the aftermath of the crisis. Pilots are highly trained to respond to every kind of crisis—including those involving a criminal act. However, the pilots' response to these types of crises is not disseminated to the public for safety and public security purposes. For example, if crisis communication manuals available to the public outlined how a pilot is trained to deal with a terrorist attack, those individuals waging the attack would know how to succeed. The examples in the manual describing how pilots reacted to many different crisis situations attempt to generally educate the user on those trained procedures without detailing sensitive information.

The Process

Overview and Background:

Writing a crisis communication manual can be difficult because there is little, if any, templates from which to work. Crisis response manuals can be a very

intimate portrait of the organization for which they were created. For example, manuals explain how an organization specifically handles sensitive situations involving their constituents, customers or employees (which might not always be what the targeted audience wants to hear). They also provide personal contact information for individuals within the organization and presuppose accidents that might scare the public if widely disseminated. For this reason, organizations usually do not open their crisis response manuals for all to view.

Because most crisis response manuals are kept private, the crisis communication manual for ALPA was created by piecing together information from a number of different sources. This included using various books and articles on the subject of crisis communication which suggested general topics and/or sections to include in the manual. It also included drawing from personal education and experience in the communication field and within ALPA and its unique volunteer structure. This experience included dealing with the local and national media on pilot issues and other types of pilot crises such as negotiations, strike threats, and company bankruptcy. To supplement these sources, pilots and ALPA staff members reviewed various drafts of the manual and provided recommendations and guidance for possible changes.

Although a number of pilot volunteers and ALPA staff answered questions throughout the writing of the manual, one pilot volunteer and ALPA staff member, who were directly involved in the response to Flight 800 for the union, reviewed the text of the manual throughout the process. Although these individuals did not set the focus, tone or intent of the manual, they did point out

aspects of the crisis communication manual that worked well or were incorrect. These recommendations could only be found through those individuals who were actually involved in the aftermath of a similar crisis and knew the pilot profession first hand. They represent the individuals that the manual is written for and about. The input of these two individuals gave authenticity to the manual. It is the collection of not only personal education and experience in the communication field coupled with literature about the subject, but also the incorporation of failures and successes of one of the longest crisis response initiatives of an airline accident in history.

Building Outline and Text:

With the help of research, personal experience and pilot and ALPA staff input, the writing process began by creating a general outline for the manual. This skeleton outline separated the manual into the three different time frames (0–12 hours, 12–48 hours and 48+ hours) but did not separate it with respect to the four different types of crises. The outline identified each type of crisis only within the main body of text for each timeframe.

This initial outline changed dramatically once the writing process actually began. It became evident that the priorities, examples and considerations of each of the four crisis scenarios were different enough to necessitate four separate sections. As a result, the manual was split not only by time frames, but also by crisis type. In addition, a separate “general crisis” section was added to avoid redundancy. Every item in the general crisis section was initially included in each

separate crisis section and appeared in the same checklist order. By separating these items into their own section, it not only decreased repetition, but also facilitated easier navigation.

As the text was continually written, edited and refined, the format of the manual continued to change. Checklist items were added, deleted and rearranged. Further discussions with ALPA staff and pilot volunteers aided in the modification of text and addition of examples. The result was a final draft of the manual.

Evaluation and Recommendations

Project Weaknesses:

Some weaknesses have been identified in the final draft of this crisis communication manual that are opportunities for improvement as the manual is continually refined. Some of these improvements stem from the additional input from other professional staff and pilot volunteers within ALPA to gain a wider perspective, others focus on possible text enhancements or additions to the manual.

The input from various TWA ALPA staff members who responded to the crash of TWA Flight 800 was invaluable. These suggestions and recommendations gave inside information on how an ALPA field office responds to a major airline accident. However, these individuals only have the perspective of one specific field office, TWA's field office, and only have insight to its staff, procedures, and relationship with the company and political contacts. Although

few other field offices have dealt with a major crisis situation in the recent past of Flight 800's magnitude, input from ALPA staff members at other field offices would be helpful as well. Information gained from these individuals could broaden the manual to ensure it would "work" at any office within the Association.

The manual might also have been improved if all members of the identified "communications group" were involved in the writing process. Each member could give a unique perspective on obstacles and opportunities involved with a particular role. For example, if the attorney for each field office was involved in the actual writing process of the manual, he or she could provide additional information regarding the legal tasks associated with crisis response that might otherwise be overlooked. Even though the advice of a field office attorney was considered for the current manual, he was not involved in the writing process.

Since excess time and manpower were not available during the creation of this manual, this additional review process by staff members and pilot volunteers from other ALPA offices will have to be completed if the manual is published. Review from other ALPA professionals from the national communications department, legal department and accident investigation department would also be necessary.

Other additions to the document could also improve the manual's effectiveness in times of crisis. One aspect that is missing from the manual is a section to teach its users how to practice with the manual for response to a crisis.

Merely having a crisis communication manual does not necessarily mean that an organization or group is prepared to handle a crisis situation. Although no one can thoroughly prepare for a crisis because every situation is different, practicing the manual can increase its effectiveness. By recreating an actual crisis situation, the users get accustomed to their role in a crisis situation and the roles of others. This helps build confidence in the users so that if a crisis does occur, they will more likely know how to act. A section of the manual that not only explains the benefits of practicing, but also sets up guidelines to make practice easier, would be beneficial.

Another addition that could improve the manual is a section discussing the establishment of an agreed-upon role and relationship between the communications group and the pilot chairman or leader of the pilot group. The manual is built on a positive and trusting relationship between the two parties and if that relationship has not been established or even discussed, the manual will not be effective. A section of the manual explaining what points to discuss ahead of time, such as the approval process for communication to the media and pilots, will better prepare both parties if a crisis should occur.

Although the appendix section of the manual was intentionally left blank to allow individual field offices the opportunity to customize the appendix to their specific office, staff and unique communication vehicles, a sample of a field office-specific appendix would improve the usability of the manual. This sample appendix would provide an example of how contact names and numbers are given, what kind of information is included in the background history, and how to

provide instructions for the many communication vehicles. This sample would provide other field offices a template from which to work.

Lastly, the manual could be improved by adding additional crisis situations, different from major airline incidents and accidents, which threaten the airline industry everyday. These crises, which were not initially added to the manual due to time constraints, might include an airline merger, acquisition or company bankruptcy. The airline industry is currently in a state of consolidation and these events introduce a host of concerns for pilot groups. For example, if a pilot's airline entered into a transaction with another air carrier, seniority list integration, job stability and pay are all major concerns. Although these are not life-threatening events, they can be unexpected and extremely stressful situations for a pilot group.

Outside Evaluation:

Although the knowledge and advice of outside "consultants" made up of both ALPA staff and TWA pilot volunteers were gathered early in the research process and later included in the manual, Capt. Schwartz provided consistent review throughout the many drafts of the actual writing process. He advised on a number of issues including special circumstances and pilot procedures applicable to the manual, the importance and role of various government agencies in the airline industry, and the prioritization of tasks in the aftermath of an airline crisis. He reviewed the manual for accuracy and advised on its overall authenticity. Because his suggestions were included in the manual throughout the writing

process, there were not many suggestions for change in the final evaluation. However, Schwartz did provide a few comments for a final review of the manual.

Schwartz said that, having been through a response effort for such a devastating accident as Flight 800 without a written crisis plan, he believed the manual would be a very useful and needed tool for ALPA field offices. He said that this type of guidance during the first confusing days of the crisis situation would have made their response more efficient and less stressful.

One addition Schwartz suggested for future revision of the manual is the inclusion of information regarding new pilot officers. Having been an officer of the TWA branch of ALPA for two three-year terms, Schwartz said that the personalities and priorities of each pilot chairman and their officers widely vary. Therefore, he believes a suggestion should be provided in the manual that after each pilot officer election, the communications group should meet with the new officers to discuss implementation of the manual if a crisis should occur. It should be understood from the beginning that everyone agrees the manual should be followed as written. If the officers do not agree with aspects of the manual, changes should be made until everyone agrees.

This suggestion is similar to the already identified weakness of the document that it assumes a trusting and positive relationship between the communications group and pilot leaders. However, it is a reminder that the suggested step of discussing the relationship and trust between both parties be taken even further to ensure that each new slate of pilot officers agree with the

contents of the manual and alter it accordingly. Therefore, if a crisis should occur, regardless of who is in leadership at the time, response will be swift.

Personal Evaluation:

As a whole, I believe this project was very successful in laying solid groundwork for a crisis communication manual that can be immediately used at the ALPA TWA field office and later published for the entire Association. It provides a comprehensive plan and useful guidelines that are currently lacking in the Association. From initial conversations with communications colleagues and supervisors at the national office, I am hopeful that this manual will be implemented and possibly even expanded to include smaller pilot groups that do not have their own field offices.

As is necessary with any sensitive document, this manual will need to be reviewed by the individuals discussed earlier in the chapter. However, it was designed as a "work in progress." This manual should continually be reviewed, updated and improved upon. The purpose of the manual, though, is not to be perfect—the purpose is to be useful. It should prepare individuals for their role in the confusing aftermath of a major airline incident, providing a sense of confidence and concrete guidelines. I believe the manual accomplishes those goals.

Not having been part of a major airline incident, but having worked in a field office with ALPA staff and pilot volunteers for a number of years, I feel more capable of handling a major crisis situation just by working so closely on

this project. Although nothing can replace the emotions and adrenaline experienced in an actual crisis, just keeping the reality of a possible crisis situation in mind is the first step toward preparing for, and confronting it successfully. I am confident that this manual, if updated and practiced as expected, will help pilots and ALPA staff more successfully and confidently response to crises if they should occur in the future.

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