



CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

#5-01

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POLICY

North Island College will attempt to provide accurate information to the public by subscribing to a pro-active crisis communication plan based on candid communication between the institution and the media.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide the College with crisis communication guidelines which, in times of institutional crisis, minimize the potential public relations problems and liability risks to both the College and its employees. Institutional crisis generally hits without warning and can take many forms which are often tragic and unexpected. Crisis may include: death or physical injury, disasters (e.g. earthquake, chemical spill), fire, explosions, hostage-taking, bomb threats, riots, vandalism, health problems (food poisoning or epidemics), etc. Crisis incidents draw immediate media attention and public scrutiny. Such incidents often result in inaccurate information about an institution.

GUIDELINES

The Office of College Relations will develop a written Crisis Communication Plan which will be widely distributed, regularly updated and periodically evaluated. The Crisis Communication Plan will work in conjunction with a *crisis response plan* and help manage information during a crisis and therefore better manage the crisis.

The key elements in crisis communication fall into four (4) areas: before a crisis, during a crisis, after the crisis and follow-up. The keystone to the plan is a single spokesperson.

1. Official Spokesperson

The President, or his/her designate, is the official spokesperson for information during times of crisis.

The official spokesperson will clearly represent the institution with defined and specific responsibilities.

The spokesperson will state the location, type of incident, when it occurred, why it happened (if possible) and who is involved. Names of all injured people are to be withheld until families have been notified.

College employees contacted by the media to provide information and/or opinions on a College crisis incident will refer all inquiries to the Director of College Relations.

2. Before a Crisis

The Crisis Communication Plan will set forth a general framework for the College's reaction to a series of identifiable situations. The plan will set-in-motion certain communication processes as outlined in Appendix A.

3. During a Crisis

When in crisis, the need to communicate accurate information through the news media begins immediately. The appropriate regional/Campus Administrator/designate will immediately notify the Office of the President of a crisis situation or potential crisis situation.

4. After the Crisis

The Crisis Communication Plan will outline the follow-up work required after the crisis. The Office of College Relations will continue to release information on the crisis incident as a means of summation and closure.

5. Evaluation

The Crisis Communication Team (as outlined in Appendix A) will meet following a crisis, to de-brief and evaluate the crisis communication plan.