


A large, stylized graphic of a flame or fire, rendered in a light yellow color against a dark red background. The flame is composed of several curved, overlapping shapes that create a sense of movement and heat. It is positioned on the left side of the page, extending from the top to the bottom.

Atlantic Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

CRISIS MANAGEMENT GUIDE

Bermuda Conference
Greater New York Conference
New York Conference

Northeastern Conference
Northern New England Conference
Southern New England Conference
Atlantic Union College



Atlantic Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

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Additional copies available upon request.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Understanding Crisis/Purpose of a Crisis Plan 8

II. Principles for Operating During Crisis 9

III. Crisis Typology..... 10

IV. Crisis Kit Checklist..... 11

V. Stages of a Crisis..... 12

VI. When Crisis Occurs . . . Action Steps 13

VII. Target Audiences/Communication Methods..... 15

VIII. Message Points..... 16

IX. Do’s and Don’ts of Emergency Public Relations 18

X. Atlantic Union Crisis Team Directory..... 19

XI. Forms 21

Daily Log Form

Interview Preparation Form

Organizational Directory Form

What to Say/What Not to Say Form

XII. Resources/Organizations..... 26



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST
CHURCH

Atlantic Union Conference

**Headquarters for the
Northeast States & Bermuda**

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Dear Colleagues:

A crisis is a reputation-defining event in the life of an organization that will likely occur when least expected. No organization—including a religious one—is immune from experiencing crisis.

Within the Atlantic Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists there are six conferences, 69 schools, one college, one healthcare facility, almost 562 churches, and 102,377 members. As administrators serving in this part of God's vineyard, it is our responsibility to be prepared to effectively manage crises. Planning, teamwork, and communication are key to this process.

This crisis management guide is designed to help us operate effectively and on one accord. It includes our guiding principles for operating during a crisis, the types of crises we should be prepared for, message points about the Adventist Church, contact information for each entity in the Atlantic Union, the stages of a crisis, and action steps that will help us know how to respond.

Please review it periodically with your team, keep it handy, and in the event of a crisis—use it.

In His Service,

Ednor A. P. Davison

Assistant to the President for Communication

I. UNDERSTANDING CRISIS

A crisis is a reputation-defining event in the life of your organization. It's an unpredictable event that thrusts your organization into the spotlight. It presents danger that threatens the organization, and at the same time, opportunity that can strengthen and infuse new life into the organization.

Purpose of a Crisis Plan

Why Plan for Crisis?

- If we fail to plan, we essentially plan to fail.
- If we don't manage the crisis, the crisis will manage us.
- If we don't work together in a united effort, divided we will fall.
- If we don't act, we will be forced to react.
- If we're not prepared to play offense, we will end up on defense.

Get the picture?

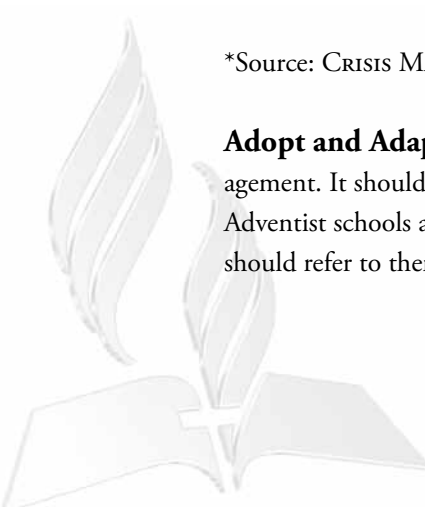
Benefits of Planning*

In compliance with General Conference and North American Division requests, this plan has been developed to help Adventist organizations in the Atlantic Union Conference responsibly and effectively manage crisis situations as necessary. It provides basic, yet clear information, guidelines, and action steps that will help us:

- Protect our name and reputation in the community
- Prevent or reduce a crisis situation
- Reduce and avoid probability of litigation
- Control damage from false information, critics, or negative news
- Get the positive message out about the Adventist Church
- Establish an infrastructure and working plan for managing a crisis
- Operate from a team approach
- Be prepared!

*Source: CRISIS MANAGEMENT SEMINAR TRAINING MANUAL (2002), General Conference

Adopt and Adapt – This plan is designed as a template that provides general guidelines for crisis management. It should be adapted to each unique situation, tested and practiced, and updated annually. Also, Adventist schools and healthcare facilities have specialized and more extensive crisis plans in place and should refer to them.



II. PRINCIPLES FOR OPERATING DURING CRISIS

The following should be characteristic of our organizations all the time. During a crisis, be especially mindful to display:

Openness – What have you got to hide? At times, there is sensitive and confidential information that should not or cannot be disclosed for legal reasons, but otherwise it's better to appear helpful and informative than silent and secretive.

Integrity – Honesty is the best policy; otherwise you can be sure your sins will find you out! Consider the affects on everyone involved, protect privacy, and show genuine care and concern. This isn't just a story or an event; for someone, this is devastating and painful.

Accuracy – Check and double-check facts before going public. If you make a mistake, point that out before it's brought to your attention so integrity will not be questioned.

Consistency – Once you learn what has occurred and what you can disclose, share your story and stick to it. Nothing can hurt more than changing your tune, facts, and information. Keeping a detailed record of the information, designating one spokesperson, and distributing the same statement to all your publics can help.

Flexibility – Be accommodating to the people—media, staff, inquirers—who can actually help get the story you want told to specific target audiences or the general public. Work with them—not against them. Be a reliable source of appropriate information.

Appearance – Be mindful of what you wear, how you speak, and how you come across to others. Don't appear defensive or afraid. Be appropriate to the situation and appear confident, sincere, and helpful. Also, don't wear white or checkered clothing for television.

Fairness - Building relationships with key publics in times of peace will help when crisis situations arise, but don't play favorites during a crisis. Don't let your guard down or speak off the record to anyone. Treat all inquiries equally and respond to each in a timely and professional manner.

III. CRISIS TYPOLOGY

Every organization should prepare for crisis. Here's a list of the types of crises our organizations should prepare for and what could trigger them:

Organizations

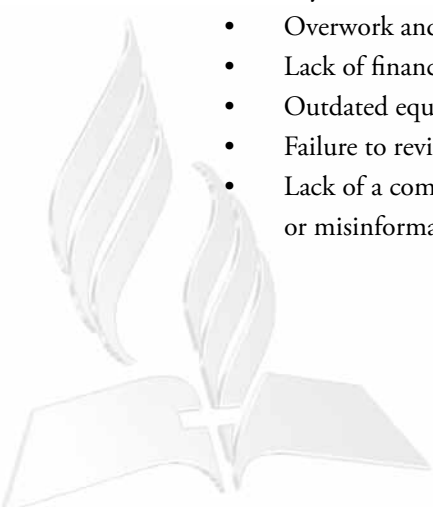
- Conferences
- Union Office
- Churches/Members
- Schools/Colleges
- Healthcare Facilities
- Community Service Centers

Possible Crises

- Layoffs or institution closing
- Employee, administrator, pastor, volunteer, or student accused of sexual misconduct, abuse, theft, or other crime
- Property arson or vandalism
- Natural disaster or terrorist attack
- On-site hostage situation or attack
- Death of employee or student
- Law or media investigation of the church, church official, program, institution, or agency
- Confrontation between church, school, hospital, and government
- Litigation against the organization or employee
- Unauthorized use of church name in negative advertising campaign
- Media confuses church with another organization
- Member, pastor, or church ministry leader engages in illegal activity (i.e. polygamy, murder, domestic violence, embezzlement)
- Escalating conflict at office, church, or school

Triggers/Indicators

- Major gatherings (i.e. graduations, camporees, class trips, camp meetings, retreats, summer camp, road trips, church services)
- Disgruntled members, employees, students
- Layoffs, dismissals, suspensions, poor evaluations or grades at school or work
- Overwork and extreme exhaustion that could cause accidents or conflicts
- Lack of financial accountability, regular evaluations, or procedural reviews
- Outdated equipment and dilapidated buildings
- Failure to review and practice safety procedures regularly
- Lack of a communication infrastructure and regular communication within the organization; or misinformation



IV. CRISIS KIT CHECKLIST

Communication Materials - Gather the following materials and set them aside in a designated location for use during a crisis. The crisis team coordinator should keep copies at home and the office:

- A copy of this planning guide and additional pertinent information
- A list of the organization's crisis team members with office, home, e-mail, and cellular contact information
- A current list of the organization's employees with contact information
- A current list of the organization's target audiences with contact information
- A current contact list of public media in your community
- A current contact list of police, fire, emergency, health, poison control, and disaster response officials in the community and the area your organizational members will be visiting (notify officials prior to group's arrival)
- A copy of the fundamental beliefs of the Adventist Church (available online)
- A list of the topics the Adventist Church has voted official statements about (i.e., marriage, human cloning, gambling, same sex unions, sexual abuse, etc.), or the book that contains them, *ADVENTIST STATEMENTS AND GUIDELINES* (visit www.adventist.org)
- A copy of the Adventist Church's mission statement and that of your organization

Travel Items - Keep a bag packed with the following items or gather them immediately when crisis occurs. As the crisis management coordinator for your conference or school, you may have to travel (i.e. to your conference campground or a church):

- Communication materials listed above
- Extra cell phone charger
- Pads of paper and pens
- Camera, laptop computer, and other equipment
- Conference, school, church, and public media directories
- U.S. Atlas and a large, detailed map of the state where the organization is based
- A Bible
- Water and nutritious snacks
- Change of clothes, comfortable shoes, and travel-size toiletries
- Organization banner with logo

Designated Locations – Determine where you will 1) meet, 2) work, and 3) give briefings during a crisis. Regardless of the location of the crisis, members of the crisis management team should know the designated meeting location and convene there immediately after a crisis occurs to share information and coordinate efforts. Your designated working location should be equipped with a television, radio, computer, Internet and e-mail access, fax machine, and a telephone with multiple lines. Hold briefings outdoors or in a location with pleasant lighting. If the event is positive for your organization (i.e. assisting in disaster relief efforts), have the spokesperson interviewed against a backdrop of your logo or people wearing your logo (i.e. Pathfinders). If the event is negative, do not use nor allow your logo to be used as a backdrop.

V. STAGES OF A CRISIS

There are several phases of a crisis—before the crisis, during the crisis, and after the crisis. Here is a summary of what to do during each stage:

Before the Crisis – A crisis is unpredictable, but not unexpected. There are trigger events, indicators that something is wrong, and situations or settings that should put you on alert. Unless you are experiencing a crisis situation, you are perpetually in this phase:

- Plan for crisis and prepare suggested materials
- Watch for warning signs and take the concerns expressed by others seriously
- Stay on top of developing situations, don't brush them off
- Designate and train a crisis management team and a spokesperson
- Establish reliable communication vehicles (e-mail list, speed fax)

During the Crisis – Chaos, confusion, fear, and lack of control all characterize the initial crisis situation. This is the time to take action and work to establish control of the situation (read additional details on pages 13 and 14):

- Determine the level of crisis, what actions to take, and how to respond
- Seek counsel and determine when to speak and when to be silent
- Manage the crisis by following established guidelines, cooperating with authorities, and keeping relevant target audiences informed
- Don't allow the crisis to spiral out of control or continue indefinitely
- Determine the crisis climax and begin to move the organization toward normal operations

After the Crisis – Things are calming down and getting back to normal; people are grieving and moving on. Now is the time to turn the grieving into a healing and learning phase:

- Evaluate actions and procedures to determine what worked well or did not
- Debrief with crisis management team, employees, authorities, and consultants
- Prepare report/case study for administrators
- Update crisis plan and replenish crisis kit



VI. WHEN CRISIS OCCURS . . . ACTION STEPS

This provides a basic guideline of what needs to be done the moment you become aware of a crisis. The first four steps may occur simultaneously and interchangeably, but all eight steps are important and should be followed:

Step 1 – Gather the facts

- Who, what, when, where, why, how?
- Contact information for those involved

Step 2 – Alert and convene crisis management team

- Brief the team
- Determine the type of crisis (internal or external) by asking “Who cares?”
- Determine the level of crisis (involves your organization only, involves conference or union, involves local or national community)
- Decide if you need legal counsel, risk management, pastoral counsel, or to alert the authorities or health officials, etc.
- Identify which target audiences (internal and external) you’ll need to brief
- Determine who should brief which target audiences (i.e. the police or hospital physicians may brief the media, while you may brief parents, students, employees, and church members)
- Make a list of what you can and cannot say (i.e., you may release facts but not names)
- Choose a spokesperson appropriate to the level of crisis and the specific situation

Step 3 - Draft a statement that includes:

- The facts and pertinent information
- What you’re doing about it
- Incorporate the four crisis message points (see box)
- Organizational message points that are relevant to the situation
- What the Adventist Church has voted about this type of incident or crisis (i.e. statements on various issues, etc.)
- Identify sources of information (contact person, phone number, Web site)

CRISIS MESSAGE POINTS – WHAT TO SAY IMMEDIATELY

1. Express Concern – of shock or sadness at the news
2. Assure Cooperation – with authorities and officials
3. Promise Updates – to keep concerned audiences informed
4. Provide Contacts – to direct inquirers to your official spokesperson

Step 4 – Consult with the Atlantic Union communication director and other administrators (such as the president, legal counsel, or the department directors) as needed:

- Tell them what happened and what you're doing about it
- Share the statement
- Identify the official spokesperson
- Discuss next steps

Step 5 – Brief your immediate staff and key support people:

- Tell them what happened and what you're doing about it
- Distribute the official statement
- Identify the official spokesperson
- Ask staff to support your efforts to end this crisis and review how they should respond to inquiries
- Promise to update them throughout the situation
- Answer questions

Step 6 – Release statement to identified target audiences:

- Answer all inquiries
- Stay on top of the details
- Provide periodic updates

THE “NO COMMENT” COMMENT

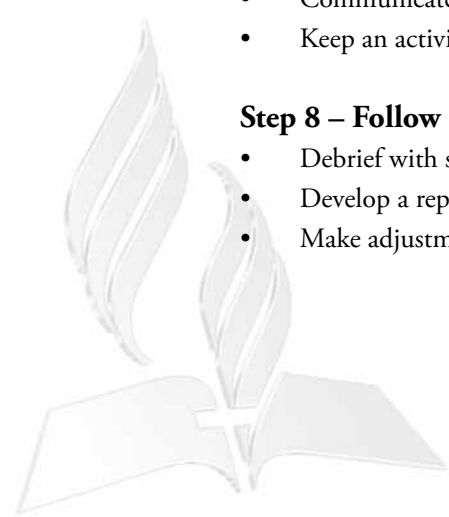
Saying “no comment” makes you sound like you're hiding something (AKA, admitting guilt). If you're not the designated spokesperson for the crisis, it's best to forward the inquirer the statement and promise to have someone who is knowledgeable about the situation return their call shortly or before deadline.

Step 7 – Monitor and manage the crisis:

- Provide outlets for people to express grief or respond in positive ways (send cards, hold a prayer service, provide counseling, provide daily briefings)
- Determine when the situation has reached a climax or is essentially over
- Work to return operations to normal and get employees back to work
- Don't allow internal individuals to exacerbate the situation
- Communicate with all target audiences regularly
- Keep an activity log (date, who you spoke to, and what was said)

Step 8 – Follow up:

- Debrief with staff, handle concerns, and thank everyone for working together
- Develop a report/case study and debrief with crisis management team
- Make adjustments to your crisis plan



VII. TARGET AUDIENCES

There are two types of audiences you may need to communicate with during a crisis—internal and external. Here's a potential list to choose from—each crisis will determine which audiences to target:

Internal Audiences

- Pastors
- Church members
- Students
- Alumni
- School principals and teachers
- Employees
- Board members
- Constituents
- Conference and union administrators
- Risk management
- Conference and union attorneys
- Volunteers

External Audiences

- Law-enforcement, fire, and emergency officials
- Public media
- Nearby businesses or schools
- Other religious organizations
- Community leaders/officials

Communication Methods

The type and level of crisis and your relationship with the various target audiences will determine how you communicate with each during crisis. Here are some appropriate methods:

- Statement
- Letter
- E-mail
- Web site postings
- Press conference
- Interviews
- Article or special edition of newsletter
- Town hall or prayer meetings
- Sermons or messages
- Personal phone calls

VIII. MESSAGE POINTS

Relevant statements that you want to communicate about your organization should be developed, memorized, and shared genuinely and consistently. Here are several that can be adapted to specific situations:

Seventh-day Adventist Church

- The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a mainstream, protestant denomination with 15 million members worldwide. More than 102,377 members live in the northeast region and Bermuda and are active in almost 562 congregations.

Beliefs

- Seventh-day Adventists are Bible-believing Christians who base our faith, hope, and future in Jesus Christ.

School

- Our school (use the name) has been educating students in this community for more than ___ years. We will continue to provide quality educational services to this community in the years to come.
- The safety of our students is our highest priority and we take seriously our responsibility to protect them each and every day. Every concern is taken seriously and investigated.
- These are good kids. They work so hard in school and the majority of the time they do great work. This was an unfortunate and rare situation and we will work to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Church

- We are so proud to be a part of this community. Our church (use the name) has been here for more than ___ years and our doors are always open to help the community.
- Children are the most valuable resource of our church and society. We want to protect them in our schools, in our youth groups, and in all our ministries with children.
- Our hearts and prayers go out to all who have been hurt.
- Anytime there is pain, we hurt as well, and we pray for God's healing to touch those in pain at this difficult time.

Healthcare

- Seventh-day Adventists value human life. We do not condone the taking of life, nor provide assistance in doing so. This was an isolated and unfortunate incident.



Accusations

- Sexual harassment is not tolerated at (name of organization). We value our employees and have adopted a tough policy in regard to this issue. Each concern is taken seriously and investigated.
- We train leaders of children and youth to spot abuse and never to abuse children nor allow it.

Issues

- Domestic violence is a serious issue in America today. We offer counseling and sponsor numerous workshops to help people build strong marriages and healthy families. We'll continue to pray for this family and see them through this difficult time.
- You're right when you say we don't condone the practice of homosexuality. As Bible-believing Christians, we stand by our conviction to adhere to Bible principles. But that same Bible also calls us to love one another. Therefore we also, without judging, uphold that principle.

SAMPLE STATEMENT**Tragedy in Fresno, California**

For Immediate Release

Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
March 15, 2004

We grieve with all of Fresno – and all of the United States. At this time of tragedy, we pray that God will comfort those who have been hurt deeply by these senseless events.

Some news reports have referred to Marcus Wesson as being a Seventh-day Adventist. That is incorrect. We cannot find any record of Mr. Wesson's being a member of any Seventh-day Adventist church.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a mainstream Protestant Church with more than 13 million members in more than 200 countries worldwide.

Again, we are praying for the families and the community who are affected by this horrible tragedy.

IX. DO'S AND DON'TS OF EMERGENCY PUBLIC RELATIONS*

Before an emergency, a basic list of appropriate actions and inappropriate actions should be spelled out for all to know and understand. Some of these include:

By All Means Do*

- Release only verified information
- Promptly alert press of relief and recovery operations
- Escort the press everywhere on the emergency site
- Have a designated spokesperson
- Keep accurate records and logs of all inquiries and news coverage
- Try to find out and meet press deadlines
- Provide equal opportunities and facilitate for print and electronic media
- Have a clear idea of what can and cannot be released
- Carefully coordinate planning and implementation of public relations activities with other aspects of your emergency plan

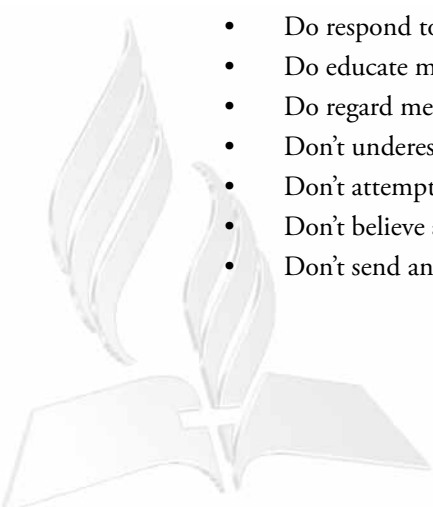
By All Means Don't*

- Idly speculate on the causes of the emergency
- Speculate on the resumption of normal operations
- Speculate on the outside effects of the emergency
- Speculate on the dollar value of losses
- Interfere with the legitimate duties of news people
- Permit unauthorized spokespersons to comment to the media
- Attempt to cover up or purposely mislead the press
- Place blame for the emergency

*Source: General Conference Office of Communication

Keep Adventists in the Loop

- Do include Adventists when considering how to communicate with your audiences
- Do develop communication methods that can be used to keep Adventists members informed with relevant news and information, especially when a crisis occurs
- Do communicate the Adventist angle of the story (i.e., Was there a member involved in the accident? Was a member accused of the crime? Was the victim a member?)
- Do respond to members who inquire about the crisis
- Do educate members about official views or statements on societal issues
- Do regard members as allies who can help spread your message points
- Don't underestimate the existence of the "Adventist grapevine"
- Don't attempt to hide any negative news or situation from members
- Don't believe anything is "off the record" or "for your information only"
- Don't send anything via e-mail that you don't want forwarded or repeated



X. ATLANTIC UNION CONFERENCE CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM DIRECTORY**Atlantic Union Conference**

400 Main Street
 South Lancaster, MA 01561
 Phone: (978) 368-8333
 www.atlantic-union.org

Core Crisis Management Team/Disaster Recovery Committee

This team has responsibility for the general oversight of crisis management and disaster recovery.

Donald G. King, President
 Carlyle C. Simmons, Secretary
 Leon D. Thomassian, Treasurer/Office Manager
 Ednor A. P. Davison, Communication Director
 Russell Wecker, Information Technology Director

Crisis Communication Team

This team handles communication with media and other target audiences.

Ednor A. P. Davison, Crisis Communication Team Coordinator

Crisis Control Team Leaders

The crisis control team leaders are responsible for immediate hands-on operational response. Members of this team will be selected to assist in the control of a crisis based on the type of crisis.

Leon D. Thomassian, Office Manager
 Astrid Thomassian, Office of Education
 Louis Métellus, Haitian Ministries/Adventist Disaster Response
 Dionisio Olivo, Hispanic Ministries
 Bill Wood, Youth, Pathfinder, Adventurer
 David Keith, Physical Plant

Key Message Point for the Atlantic Union Conference

The Atlantic Union Conference coordinates the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the northeast region of the United States and Bermuda, where every Saturday, more than 102,377 members gather for worship in more than 562 congregations.

ORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATORS

The individuals listed should be the initial point of contact in the event of a crisis.

Bermuda Conference

41 King Street
Hamilton HM 19, Bermuda
(441) 292-4110
www.bermudaconference.org
Communication Director: Sheila Holder

Greater New York Conference

7 Shelter Rock Road
Manhasset, NY 11030
(516) 627-9350
www.gnyc.org
Communication Director: Alanzo Smith

New York Conference

4930 West Seneca Turnpike
Syracuse, NY 13215
(315) 469-6921
www.nyconf.com
Communication Director: Kim Kaiser

Northeastern Conference

115-50 Merrick Boulevard
Jamaica, NY 11434
(718) 291-8006
www.northeastern.org
Communication Director: Stephen Williams

Northern New England Conference

91 Allen Avenue
Portland, ME 04103
(207) 797-3760
www.nnec.org
Communication Director: Lynn Ortel

Southern New England Conference

34 Sawyer Street
South Lancaster, MA 01561
(978) 365-4551
www.sneconline.org
Communication Director: Frank Tochterman

Atlantic Union College

338 Main Street
South Lancaster, MA 01561
(978) 368-2000
www.auc.edu
Public Relations Director: Cindy Kurtzhals



XI. FORMS

The reproducible forms in this section may be copied for use by your organization.

Daily Log Form

Use the Daily Log Form to keep track of information on calls received pertinent to the specific crisis.

Interview Preparation Form

Jot down questions you could be asked regarding the situation and possible answers. Check with consultants about questions you aren't sure how to answer.

Organizational Directory Form

Use this form to identify the crisis team members, key message points, and statistics that are relevant to your organization. Keep these updated and close at hand.

What to Say/What Not to Say Form

What can you safely and legally say to your audiences regarding the crisis situation? Take notes as you discuss this with your crisis management team and legal consultants. Refer to it as you write the statement, give briefings, or do interviews.

DAILY LOG FORM

Date: _____ Time: _____

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Reason for Call: _____

Source of Information: _____

Type of Call (positive, negative, neutral): _____

Action Taken: _____

Message Taken By: _____

Notes: _____

ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTORY FORM

Name of Organization: _____

Crisis Team Members:

Key Message Points:

Organizational Statistics:

Churches _____

Schools: _____

ACS Centers: _____

INTERVIEW PREPARATION FORM

Name of Organization: _____

Crisis: _____

Questions We May Be Asked

Possible Answers

1. _____ _____	_____ _____
2. _____ _____	_____ _____
3. _____ _____	_____ _____
4. _____ _____	_____ _____
5. _____ _____	_____ _____
6. _____ _____	_____ _____
7. _____ _____	_____ _____
8. _____ _____	_____ _____
9. _____ _____	_____ _____
10. _____ _____	_____ _____

WHAT TO SAY/WHAT NOT TO SAY FORM

What Not to Say	What to Say
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name – because he’s a minor and all the family hasn’t been notified.• Who is to blame – don’t publicly place blame on anyone• Personal opinions – Don’t speculate on your suspicions, hearsay, or innuendo.	<p>Example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A 15-year-old male camper drowned in the lake this morning.• Authorities are still determining the time of death and other details related to the incident.

XII. RESOURCES

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FREE PUBLICITY, Crilley, Jeff (2003). Dallas, TX: Brown Books Publishing Group.

HOW SHALL THEY HEAR: A HANDBOOK FOR RELIGION COMMUNICATORS, (2000). Religion Communicators Council.

ONGOING CRISIS COMMUNICATION, Coombs, W. Timothy (1999). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

THE CRISIS COUNSELOR: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO MANAGING A BUSINESS CRISIS, Caponigro, Jeffrey R., (www.crisiscounselor.com)

ORGANIZATIONS

Society of Adventist Communicators – A Seventh-day Adventist organization for communicators in every area; benefits include a quarterly newsletter, Web site, annual convention with workshops, networking, and awards banquet. www.adventistcommunicator.org

Religion Communicators Council – An interfaith organization for communicators; benefits include a newsletter, Web site, annual convention, awards for members. www.religioncommunicators.org



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Communication Department**

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