



LEADING *the* JOURNEY

An E-newsletter on *EXCELLENCE in Leadership*

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CRISIS MANAGEMENT

NAD Principals' Handbook

The principal must ensure that the school has a crisis-management plan. The following suggestions can help guide the process of preparing the plan:

- Align the plan with accepted guidelines and incorporate applicable governmental regulations.
- Consult local first-responder agencies.
- Attach building floor plans to the crisis-response plan.
- Establish a crisis-management team with specific responsibilities for members to address immediate needs and follow-up activities necessary to reestablish safe school operations.

Read more <http://adventisteducation.org/principals-handbook/>



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READY TO RESPOND?

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It can happen in an instant or it can be the result of something hidden for an extended period of months or years; but when it breaks, you have a crisis that must be handled properly. The challenge for an administrator is being prepared for numerous unforeseen scenarios that can place lives, professional careers, school finances or business survival at risk. Having a well-prepared crisis management plan in place requires three elements: careful planning, training and practice drills. The question: how will your organization respond in the event of an emergency or crisis?

CAREFUL PLANNING

The challenge of crisis management is not knowing what type of situation the administrator will be called upon to address at any given time. "Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would not permit his house to be broken into." Luke 12:39 NLT Careful risk assessment is required by the administrative team to identify the type of crisis covered by the scope of the plan. This means there needs to be a crisis management plan broad enough to address numerous scenarios such as fire, natural disasters, serious accident, workplace violence/active shooter, notification of alleged child abuse, fraud/embezzlement and other potential loss situations. Appoint a crisis management planning team comprised of representatives from school administration, board members, teaching staff and parents to develop each potential scenario by asking these questions:

1. What would we do if _____ happened at our school?
2. How should we respond? (Actions to take, procedures to follow, notifications required and public

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COMMUNICATING IN A CRISIS

*Chris Johnston, Chair, Board of Trustees
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Crises, by their very nature, involve an element of the unknown. That is, it is not possible to plan for every contingency of a crisis, including how to communicate during and about the crisis. Nevertheless, some general principles can be adopted and followed to guide effective communication during a crisis. The following principles have been borne out of experience—hard-learned lessons—in working through various crises.

Be Truthful. This sounds like common sense, but sometimes common sense seems rather uncommon, particularly in the heat of a crisis. In a crisis, the best communicators share factual information when it is available. It is best to refrain from speculation and resist the urge to make sweeping generalizations like "everything is okay" or "there is really nothing to worry about here."

Be Consistent. An inconsistent message creates uncertainty and fear. Consistency of message is very difficult to maintain, and increases significantly with the number of individuals relaying the message. Designating a specific spokesperson, usually in advance of any crisis, helps to maintain consistency, and thereby, avoid confusion. It should be clear throughout the organization who the appropriate spokesperson is and who it is not.

Be Brief. Short factual statements work best in communicating during a crisis.

Be Relevant. Stay on point. A crisis may lend some to think they have come across their "15 minutes of fame." A crisis is not that opportunity. Avoid the temptation to market one's school or program or talk about all the great things being done. During a crisis, it is

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communication of the school's response to the situation.)

3. What kind of special equipment is needed to implement the crisis plan?
4. How will the school recover and resume normal operations?
5. Review the team's findings; seek advice and comment from legal counsel and local emergency first responders.

Document your discussions, review your findings and then develop a written plan that provides specific steps and instructions for each situation.

TRAINING

Once the written crisis plan is completed, training and equipping those responsible for implementation is critical. Begin with the administrative team and assign areas of responsibility. Some members may be responsible for different aspects of the plan depending on the type of crisis. Then, share the plan with staff members again, assigning responsibilities and outlining required actions, procedures, and required notifications. Finally, share appropriate elements with parents and students, so they will understand how to respond in the event of an emergency. After the initial training as been completed and responsibilities are assigned, conduct a "table top" role play of each situation as an effective training tool. This provides administration the opportunity to receive feedback on the crisis plan and gauge the level of understanding.

PRACTICE DRILLS

No crisis plan is complete unless the school conducts regular practice drills so everyone on campus knows what actions to take in the event of an emergency. Practice drills are serious business and all staff members should be required to comply and participate in the drill. In most crisis situations, time is of the essence. For example, a fire evacuation should be completed in under two minutes; active shooter situations often end in less than five minutes; and storm-related emergencies

may strike without warning. Therefore, it is critical for administration, staff members, and students to all practice their training so the appropriate action is taken when a crisis occurs on campus.

"DO NOT TAKE COUNSEL OF YOUR FEARS"

These words by General George S. Patton remind us that we cannot allow fear to dictate and control our actions. Administrators and organizations must be prepared to respond to crisis situations quickly and appropriately at a moment's notice.

Consider these helpful resources that can assist in developing a crisis management plan for your school:

- Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operation Plans. https://rems.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf
- Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities. <http://rems.ed.gov/docs/PracticalInformationonCrisisPlanning.pdf>
- Crisis Boot Camp - How to Handle Communication During a Crises. Celeste Ryan Blyden, ©2013 North American Division Seventh-day Adventists. www.adventsource.org

To assist you in developing emergency/crisis management plans, visit www.azurehillsriskmanagement.info.

*In crisis management,
be QUICK with the FACTS,
SLOW with the BLAME.*
-Leonard Saffir

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be QUICK to LISTEN, slow to speak, and SLOW to get ANGRY.

James 1:19 (NLT)

*By failing to PREPARE,
you are preparing to fail.*

- Benjamin Franklin

COMMUNICATING IN A CRISIS

important to speak only to the facts surrounding the crisis.

Be Timely. When people are desperate for information—particularly during a crisis—they will go to whatever source provides information. It is crucial to provide accurate information to appropriate audiences as soon as it is available with frequent updates.

Be Understandable. As with any communication, understanding the audience is important. During a crisis, it is often difficult to determine who the entire audience might be. For this reason, all messages should be simple to understand. A good rule of thumb for written communication: assume the audience has a sixth-grade level of reading comprehension.

Be Prepared. Although it is impossible to plan a complete detailed response to a specific crisis, it is worthwhile to plan a general response with assigned roles. The determination of what triggers the plan and who is responsible for communication should be determined in advance of any crisis.

Be COUNSELED. Administrators are often called upon to provide answers in difficult times. It is a mistake, however, to "go it alone." The prudent administrator seeks counsel from other administrators, colleagues, legal counsel, and even members of the school board, when appropriate.

Be Flexible. Although it is important to have a clear message, sometimes the message must change as new facts come to light. Do not be so set on a specific message that it is impossible to adjust as new information becomes available.

Be Professional. It is not just what one says, but how those words are said. In a crisis, the primary communicator must engender confidence and trust through effective, articulate communication.