

Be prepared: The government communicator's mantra

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Overview

- Risk and crisis planning
- Strategies: Using team approach and other ideas
- Elements of planning: Capture your roles and strategies here
- Requirements
- In the appendix: Apologies, holding statements, pre-written news releases

Types of crises (imagination)

- Employee layoffs/firings
- Lawsuits
- Police-involved shootings
- Allegations of harassment or discrimination
- Product/service defects
- Violent threats by residents/employees
- Data breach/ransomware
- On-the-job accidents
- Damaging rumors
- Sudden death of official/manager
- Gov't or police investigations
- Damage from weather/fire
- Protests
- Failure in technology
- Death on the premises (parks, pools, libraries, city hall)

Crisis planning and communication

- Risk assessment (starting small first with 5/5 method)
- Planning (what roles and building a team)
- Response (holding statements)
- Recovery and learning for the future (ongoing discussion and training)

Risk assessment: Getting your city ready for crisis

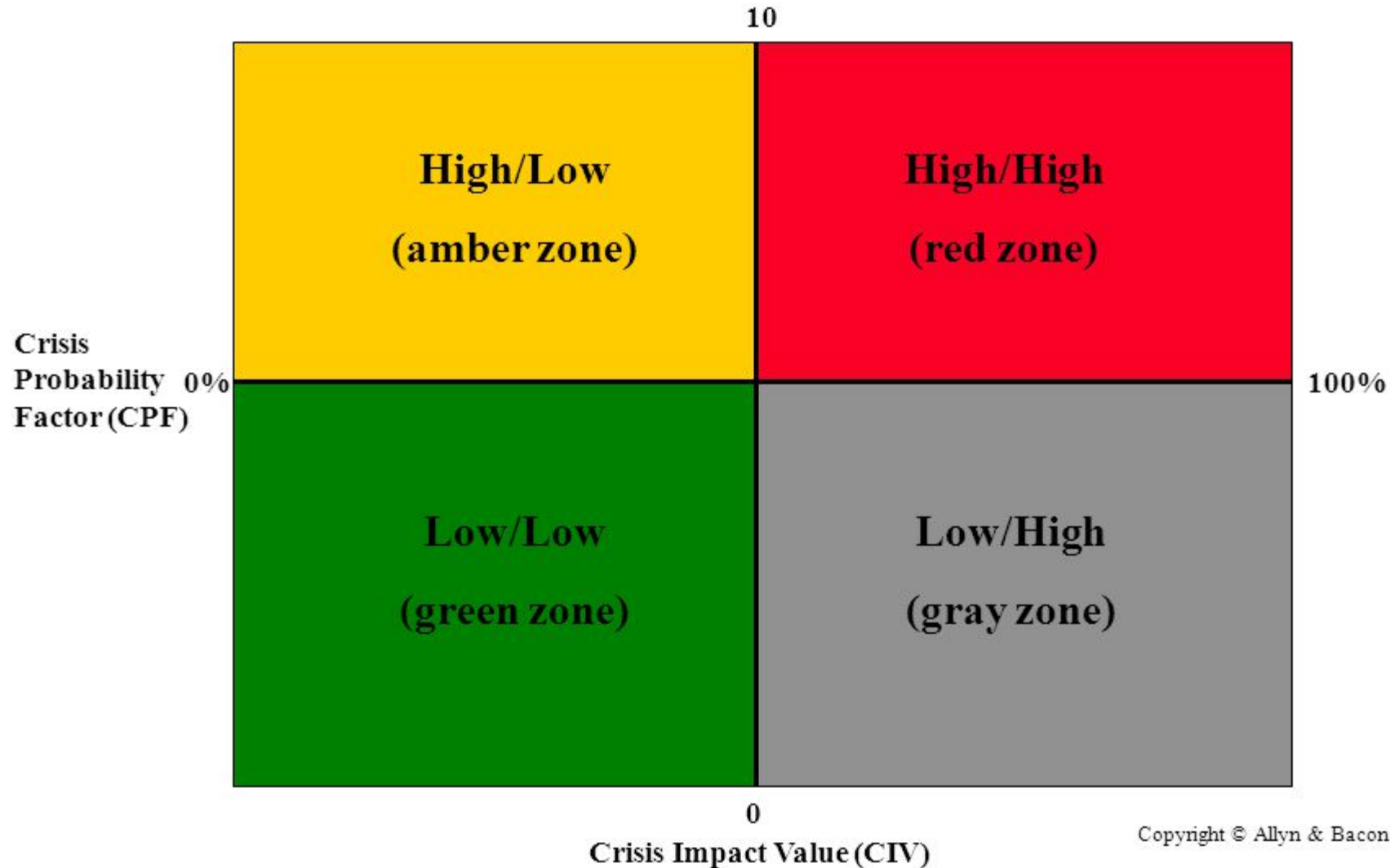
Five most likely crises

- Start list of your own and create and triage this with your team

Five most devastating crises

- Start list of your own and create and triage this with your team

The Crisis Plotting Grid



After risk planning, then strategy
decisions for your team to follow



BE HUMAN | PUT THE PUBLIC FIRST | DON'T SPECULATE

Team approach: Roles for 2-6 team members

- Lead (connects team to operations and approvals)
- Media and external relations (creates statements, connects with journalists)
- Website and social media coordinator (provides support for handling communication in these platforms)
- Internal comms (connects and communicates with internal stakeholders: council, employees, department heads)
- Intelligence (monitors media and social media, call center, 911)
- Press conference planner/content creator

Strategy: Teams are important

- Each person knows role and is trained to role
- Backups necessary for key people
- Surge and relief teams if crisis continues
- Leader needs to be visible
- Can team function without technology?
- Multilingual, cultural, disability: can you do good outreach to these groups? Need team members who can. These groups are usually disproportionately affected.

Strategy: Understand the infosphere (FEMA)

- What is it?
- How to impact it?
- Coordinate, integrate, synchronize
- Work with other influencers and stakeholders
- Use a drumbeat of information
- Expect misinformation and disinformation
- Plan with the infosphere in mind
- What is important to the infosphere?

Strategy: Realistic talking points

- Think of audience's concerns
- Think of your organization's values and mission
- Keep news releases or social media statements brief, but use enough detail to resolve basic questions
- Refrain from commenting on your opposition
- Tell your side of the story simply, honestly
- Speak directly to residents, employees, opinion leaders, public
- Repeat

Strategy: Use a whole community approach (External relationships/partnerships)

- Feds
- State
- Local partners (school district, county, regional authorities)
- Private sector
- Academics/universities
- NGOs
- Faith-based groups
- General public

Strategies: Other ideas

- Response is command and control (where does the buck stop?)
- Recovery is collaborative
- Imagery is powerful (don't defer to news media)
- Say it, then show it
- Presence is a kind of communication
- Before messaging, must think of culture, access, available tech, pets, babies, elderly, disabled, kosher, vegetarians

Other strategies

- Identify constituencies (maybe just media; maybe just opinion leaders or social media influencers)
- Establish credibility with fast honesty
- Follow up with messages of reassurance
- Release bad news yourself
- Evaluate when things are quiet

Apologies as rituals—if you don't follow the ritual, public won't accept what you say as an apology

... “between two parties in which one party, the offender, acknowledges responsibility for an offense or grievance and expresses regret or remorse to a second party, the aggrieved.” (Lazare, 2004)

It's not a simple process

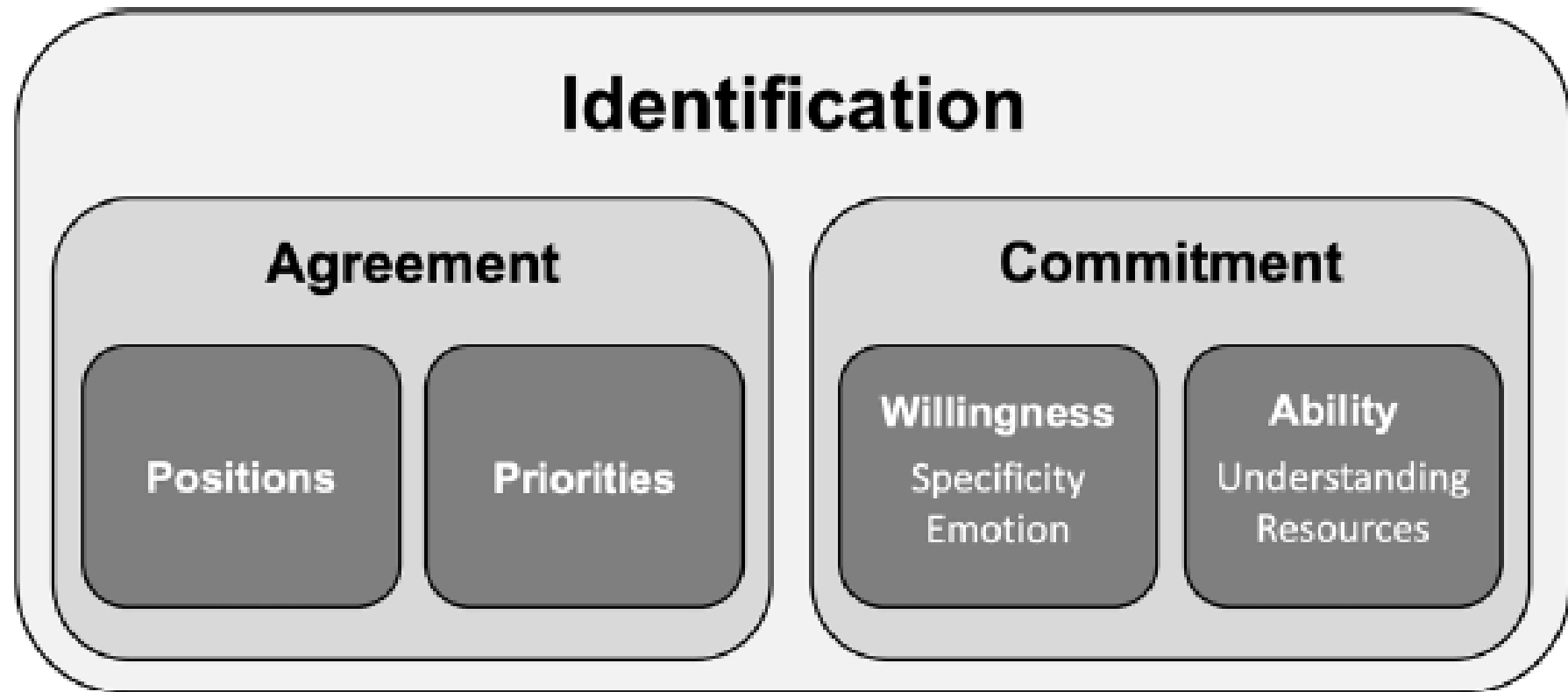


Fig. 1. The Apologies as Identification Management Model (AIMM).

The steps

Agreement

- Position: “The offender takes (or claims to take) the same position on an issue as the offended stakeholder.”
- Priorities: The offender offers evidence that on this position, it shares the same priorities as the offended stakeholder(s).

Commitment

- “Assent (by the offender) ... that one ought to act in a certain way” ... and that one is committed to acting that way.
- Willingness: not to repeat or to repair damage.
- Ability: explanations of self-reflection, plus commitment of resources for solutions and prevention.



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Public Relations Review

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/pubrev



Full Length Article

Apologies as identification management: A theoretical model

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Crisis communication
Apology
Rhetoric
Identification

ABSTRACT

Apology research within public relations tends to focus on how to *craft* effective apologies. Research in psychology and other disciplines offers explanations for how changes in people's *state of mind* lead them to forgive their offenders. This study uses rhetorical theory to bridge the gap between how apologies are constructed and how they produce psychological changes in recipients. We posit that identification, the concept of aligning oneself with the values, goals, or beliefs of another, explains this phenomenon. Effective apologies communicate to key stakeholders that offenders agree with their values and are committed to upholding those values in the future, thus establishing identification. We use three examples to illustrate our theoretical model: Donald Sterling's ban from the NBA, United Airlines' mistreatment of a passenger, and Urban Meyer's mishandling of an employee involved in domestic violence.

Crisis Communications Planning

What's required

What's good to have in your toolbox

Each city is required by the state to prepare, maintain and distribute an emergency management plan

- Texas Government Code 418.106(a)
- If a city doesn't have an emergency management office, they may participate in a county emergency management agency and plan
- Annexes of the EMP cover all levels of emergency preparedness, planning and recovery (evacuation, resource management, etc.)
- Annex I is Public Information – designates the PIO for emergencies

ANNEX I

Public Information

Pros and Cons of the state EMP

Pros

- Provides overview of operations and coordinates all aspects of city operations and its staff
- Forces the city to think about emergency management and crisis communications

Cons

- Annex I is formatted specifically by the state and does not allow for deviations and customization
- Doesn't necessarily apply strong strategic communication principles

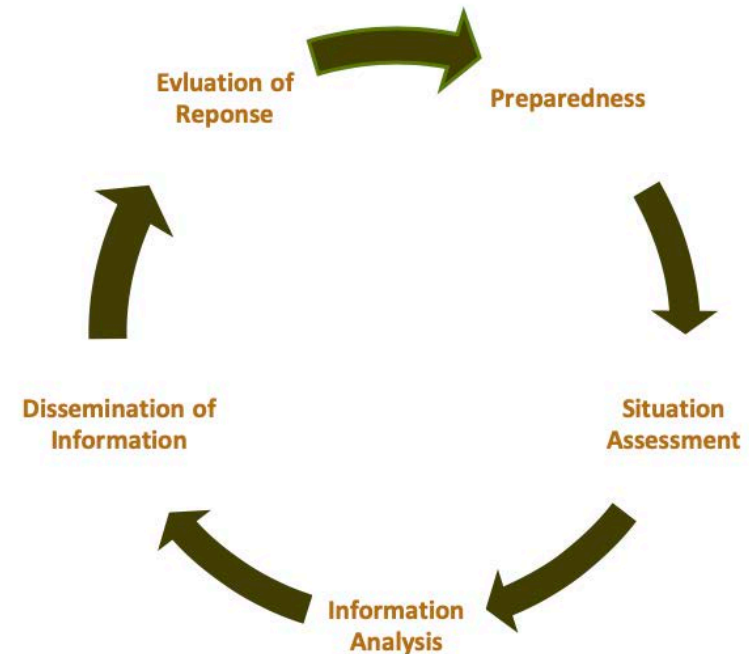
Drafting your own crisis communications plan



- Tailored specifically to your organization, staffing and community
- Consistent with communication procedures and policies of your department
- Provide content to be used in emergency and crisis situations for public dissemination

What should your plan include?

- Articulate the purpose and goals of the plan, focusing specifically on communication and information
- Detail your procedures that include:
 - Preparedness
 - Situation assessment
 - Information analysis
 - Dissemination of information
 - Evaluating your response



What should your plan include?

IV. RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

The city administrator, in consultation with the mayor, will determine if any official statement from the City should be prepared and released. The administrator and mayor will work with the communications specialist to draft all official communications as well as develop responses to media questions and inquiries. Once approved, the communications specialist will disseminate information. The mayor (or their designee) will serve as the primary spokesperson

During emergencies and incidents, information will be disseminated by the communications specialist to the media and the public once it has been deemed appropriate by public safety and administration in accordance with law enforcement investigative policies and laws of the State of Texas.

The communications specialist will disseminate information based on the time of emergency using the following criteria:



High-Level Emergency (natural disaster, bomb threat, active shooter, child abduction, mass casualty event)

- Mass Notification - emergency alert system, email blast, website, social media, news release.
- Media Command Center - determine whether the magnitude of the crisis merits establishing a Crisis Communications Media Command Center for media briefings. Location to be determined.



Low-Level Emergency (high profile investigations, protests, criminal activity, street closures, public works emergencies)

- General Notification - website, social media, email blast.

- Response protocols that are tailored to your organization's management and staffing, as well as the role of elected officials
- Address procedures that will be ongoing during the crisis as well as develop post-crisis procedures

What should your plan include?

- Everything you will need at access during a crisis/emergency situation:
 - Complete list of your information channels
 - Contact list of key staff
 - Contact list of media
 - Media relations best practices

APPENDIX D – MEDIA CONTACTS

NEWSPAPERS

Community Impact Newspapers - North San Antonio

3522 Paesanos Parkway, Suite 304
San Antonio, Texas 78231
sanantonio@communityimpact.com

New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung

549 Landa Street
New Braunfels, Texas 78130
830-625-9144 (main)
830-358-7931 (newsroom)
news@nbtxhz.com

Executive Editor - Chris Lykins
830-358-7931

Reporter - Catherine Wilson
830-358-7941

San Antonio Express News
P.O. Box 2171
San Antonio, Texas 78205

Metrol Editor - Nora Lopez

TELEVISION

KSAT-TV (ABC)

1408 N. St. Mary's Street
San Antonio, Texas 78215
210-351-1200 (Main)
210-351-1269 (Newsroom)

News Director - Bernice Kearney

KENS-5 (CBS)

5400 Fredericksburg Road
San Antonio, Texas 78229
210-366-5000 (Main)
210-366-2002 (Newsroom)

WOAI-TV News4 San Antonio (NBC)

4335 NW Loop 410
San Antonio, Texas 78229
NewsDesk@news4sanantonio.com

210-366-1129 (Main)
210-442-6397 (Newsroom)

Don't forget these for the appendix?

Pre-written news releases, holding statements, sequence of work, apology guidance

American Airlines®

For Release Within 15 Minutes Of Notification

CONTACT: Name
Corporate Communications
Fort Worth, Texas
817-967-1577
corp.comm@aa.com

FOR RELEASE: (Day of Week, Month, Day, Year)

**AMERICAN AIRLINES STATEMENT REGARDING FLIGHT _____
Release #1 @ xx:xx (am/pm) Central Time**

FORT WORTH, Texas -- Flight _____, an American Airlines _____ aircraft en route from _____ to _____ was involved in an accident today near _____ airport. There are no other details available at this time.

As information becomes available, American will be posting and updating the latest information on its Web site, and also will be posting a number that family members or loved ones of those onboard Flight _____ can call for immediate assistance. In addition, company representatives will be available to respond to media inquiries.

###

*Current AMR Corp. news releases can be accessed on the Internet.
The address is: <http://www.aa.com>*

American Airlines®

CONTACT: Name
Corporate Communications
Fort Worth, Texas
817-967-1577
corp.comm@aa.com

FOR RELEASE: (Day of Week, Month, Day, Year)

AMERICAN AIRLINES PROVIDES CREW INFORMATION Release #9 @ xx:xx (am/pm) Central Time

FORT WORTH, Texas -- American Airlines is able to provide the following information concerning the crew of Flight _____.

American cannot confirm who was at the controls of the aircraft at the time of the accident. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) will determine that during its investigation. The NTSB will release that information at the appropriate time.

"Our thoughts and our prayers go out to the passengers and crewmembers onboard Flight _____ and to their loved ones," said Gerard J. Arpey, American's Chairman and CEO. "We are marshaling our family assistance CARE teams to immediately help those touched by this tragedy. Along with various disaster relief agencies, we will remain focused on this commitment in the days and weeks ahead.

"American's pilots and flight attendants are the finest in the industry, and they are very much on our minds in this difficult time," Arpey said.

Flight _____, a _____ aircraft, was flown by a crew of _____.

Cockpit Crew

Captain (Name)

Joined American Airlines in (Month/Year)

Has a total of ____ Hours Flying the (Aircraft Type)

Has a total of ____ Hours in the (Aircraft Type) as Pilot in Command

(Pertinent previous experience)

Status: (Uninjured/Injured/Presumed Deceased)

-- more --

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

Hour by Hour Crisis Action Sequence

Hour #1

Media

- Assemble Media Response Team
- Access WebEOC Procedures for Handling Releases
- Issue Initial Release in First 15 Minutes
 - Confirming Release and Release with Added Details ASAP
- Issue Media Advisory Directing Media to HDQ Cafeteria
- Determine Who Does Local and Network TV Interviews
- Begin Doing TV Interviews at HDQ
- Establish Strong Liaison between Chief Media Spokespersons and Director-Media Coverage and Director-Crisis Content & Spokesmanship
- Prioritize Documents/Ensure Proper Content

Operations

- Activate GoGoGo Alert
- Alert Roger and Rick
- Lisa Singleton Goes to SOC to Begin Assisting CEO Arpey
- Arrange Weber Shandwick Coverage at Site until Go Team Arrives
- Rick Goes to Office to Direct Staff Response
- Roger Goes to Office to Oversee Media Response and Officer Liaison Activities
- Appoint Media and Ops Directors
- Mobilize Corp Comm Team
- Assign SOC Coverage ASAP
- Assign CARE Coverage
- Designate Go Team Members
- Order Setup of HDQ Cafeteria Briefing Area and Dining Room
- Assign Passenger List Coordinator
- Alert Weber Shandwick
 - Identify WS Work Area
- Assign Origin and Destination City Coverage (Staff or WS)
- Designate Writing Team
- Alert Speechwriting Team
- Activate Dark Web Site
- Call Rob Britton - Pull Advertising
- Identify Flight and M&E Subject Matter Experts
- Coordinate with Labor Unions
- Assign Liaison to Linked Organizations
- Issue Initial CEO Statement
- Create Staff Coverage Schedule
- Arrange Cafeteria Phones through Merita Cox of IT
- Coordinate with Domestic and International Field Offices
- Establish Open Line to SOC

Hour #2

Media

- Issue Follow-Up News Release with Status Update
- Prepare CEO For Media Briefing
- Issue Media Advisory about CEO Briefing
- Ensure HDQ Cafeteria Is Ready for Media
- Ensure Cafeteria Dining Room is Ready for Media
- Begin Monitoring/Analyzing News Coverage (Help from WS)
- Decide Who Coordinates 2nd Day Coverage
- Continue TV Interviews at HDQ, as Appropriate
- Ensure Media Response in High Gear
- Ensure Strong Liaison between Chief Media Spokespersons and Media Director
- Begin Considering Network TV Requests

Operations

- Decide Time for CEO Briefing
- Go Team Readies for Launch
- Determine Where Corp Comm Go Team Will Set Up at Site
- Ensure Origin and Destination Cities Properly Covered
- Determine Status of Passenger List
- Complete Drafting CEO Statement for Media Briefing
- Arrange Food for HDQ Team
- Finalize and Post Corp Comm Work Schedule For 24/7 Coverage: HDQ & SOC
- Ensure SOC Desk Properly Equipped
- Determine If and When CEO Goes to Site
- Update Crisis Web Site
- Ensure Flight and M&E Experts are Available
- Ensure Coordination with Linked Organizations, Individual Labor Unions
- Ensure CARE Properly Covered
- Arrange Technical Experts for Corp Comm at HDQ and Site — Flight/M&E
- Continue Open Line to SOC
- Keep Field Domestic and International Offices Updated

Hour #3

Media

- Conduct CEO Media Briefing in HDQ Cafeteria
- Issue A Follow-Up News Release with Latest Details, as Appropriate
- Watch for Disturbing Media Trends
 - Prepare to Counter
- Check on Status of Media Response Effort
- Continue Strong Liaison between Chief Media Spokespersons and Media Director

Operations

- Establish Corp Comm Coverage at Origin and Destination Cities
- Determine Status of Passenger List - when Partial or Full List Can Be Released
- Draft CEO Statement for Site Visit, if Appropriate
- Update Crisis Web Site
- Check on CARE Coverage
- Keep Domestic and International Field Offices Informed
- Continue Open Line to SOC

Hour #4 and Beyond

Media

- Monitor Local and Network Coverage
- Do Local and Network TV Interviews
- Address Network News Show Requests (Nightline, etc.)
- Deal with 2nd Day Story Issues
- Begin Countering Negative Media Story Lines
- Continue Strong Liaison between Chief Media Spokespersons and Media Director
- Issue Follow-Up Releases, as Appropriate, including Release of Passenger Lists

Operations

- Go Team Arrives at Site
 - Sets Up Command Center
 - Establishes Media Contact
 - Establishes NTSB Contact
- Go Team Feeds Info to Corp Comm HDQ
- Determine Status of Passenger List - when Partial or Full List Can Be Released
- Continue CARE Coverage - Feeding Latest Info to CARE
- Ensure Origin/Destination Cities Properly Covered
- Determine CEO Plans for Site Visit
- Begin Thinking About Eventual Need for Memorial Services - Logistics
- Begin Thinking About How to Thank Local Organizations for Their Support
- Determine Longer-Term Corp Comm Staffing Needs — HDQ, Site and Origin-Destination Cities
- Maintain Open Line to SOC as Appropriate
- Continue Update Crisis Web Site
- Keep Domestic and International Field Offices Informed

Debrief