

Farm Crisis Plan & Responding to Media

Darrell McCauley
Winnebago County UWEX
Agricultural Agent

Discussion Points

- Crisis Management Plan Components
- Communications
- Message
- Media Interviews

Farm Crisis Plan

Defining a Crisis: What is it?

- Any situation that threatens the integrity or reputation of your farm, and is usually brought on by adverse or negative media attention.
- Any kind of legal dispute, theft, accident, fire, flood, or manmade disaster that can be attributed to your farm.
- A situation where in the eyes of the media or public, your farm did not react to a situation in an appropriate manner.

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The Goal:

In a crisis is to have spokespeople ready to:

- tell it all
- tell it fast
- tell the truth.

Minimize the situation.

Handle the situation correctly so that any potential damage can be minimized.

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The Crisis Communication Team:

- Identify what actions should be taken and emphasize who the spokesperson should be.
- Answering media calls promptly is essential.
- As soon as possible, write a prepared statement.

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Criteria for spokesperson, backup spokesperson and crisis communication expert.

- Preferably, skilled in handling media
- Able to speak without jargon
- Respectful of the role of the reporter.
- Knowledgeable about the organization.
- Sincere, straightforward, and believable.
- Able to remain calm in stressful situations.

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Positioning: When writing a statement

- Step out of your role in the farm
- Put yourself in the situation of the person who is involved in the crisis
- View the crisis from the eye of the public.

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Prepared Statements:

Communicate immediately to maintain the greatest opportunity to control events.

The first news release will always include -- at a minimum the who, what, when and where of the situation. It will be available at the time of any prepared statement.

The first press interaction, must show concern for the public and our employees

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These statements will include:

Express remorse for those involved without talking about responsibility.

Fill the information vacuum.

Resolve to fix the problem.

Share only what is known and never speculate.

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Things to think about:

- Admit a mistake up front, and begin doing whatever is possible to re-establish credibility with internal and external audience.
- The first and foremost goal is protecting the integrity and reputation of your farm.
- Never try to lie, deny, or hide your involvement.
- Do not ignore the situation, it will only get worse

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Media Policies and Procedures:

Media Center Location: (this location should be the only location that media can be permitted to interview or visit on the farm.)

If there is a visual (fire or rescue operation) the media center will not be remote site from where the media can't see what is going on.

If it is not in view, because the media may lose their confidence and feel you are hiding something.

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Media Policies and Procedures:

- It is best to restrict all interviews to the primary spokesperson, back-up spokesperson or technical expert .
- Reporters have the right to interview anyone, particularly when those individuals leave our farm property
- All media should be treated equally. What is given to one (such as access to an area affected by the crisis) should be available to all media
- The media, as normal, are required to be escorted during a crisis
- Special circumstances that would require them to be escorted in a manner different from the normal, such as a safety hazard, they should be advised of this up front

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Contact Log:

Record all phone calls from the media

Other parties inquiring about the crisis

Help insure call backs are completed on a timely basis.

Assist in post crisis analysis.

Spokesperson Presentations:

When speaking:

- Stand straight and direct voice toward the audience
- Speak loudly, slowly, and distinctly
- Establish eye contact (or appear to do so) with audience from time to time.

Spokesperson Presentations:

When answering questions:

- Remain friendly, cool-headed and confident
- Make certain any needed materials are distributed to the group

What to avoid:

- Winging it
- Speaking too loudly
- Wandering away from your prepared text
- Becoming defensive or emotional

Conducting Newspaper Interviews:

Responding during an interview

- Begin the interview by making your major points in statement form
- Don't let the reporter wear you down
- Set a time limit in advance
- Do not speak "off the record"
- Remember, the interview lasts as long as a reporter is there

Post interview

- You can ask to check technical points, but do not ask to see advance copy of the story
- Do not try to go over the reporter's head to stop a story

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Questions?

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Template Available

- Dairy Team Website
<http://fyi.uwex.edu/dairy/>
- Winnebago County UWEX – Agriculture page
<http://winnebago.uwex.edu/agriculture/>
- Email request copy:
darrell.mccauley@ces.uwex.edu

Call: Darrell McCauley 920-232-1975