

# ***Crisis Response Tabletop Exercise***

***Utah Spring Risk Conference***

***March 28, 2018  
West Jordan, Utah***

## **Agenda**

- 8:30 a.m. Best Practices in Crisis Management & Communications**
- 9:00 a.m. Crisis Response Tabletop: Guidelines and Move One**
- 9:20 a.m. Crisis Response Tabletop: Guidelines and Move Two**
- 9:40 a.m. Team Reports**
- 9:50 a.m. Lessons Learned and Summary**

## Overview

This facilitated, scenario-based tabletop exercise will encourage participants to work through a realistic crisis situation to validate existing crisis management and emergency management policies or define new policies, and identify opportunities to strengthen crisis management programs. The exercise includes questions designed to promote interaction among team members and discussion of decision-making, response actions and communication processes.

## Objectives

- To demonstrate the interdependent nature of operational elements when dealing with an incident or threatening issue.
- To practice existing crisis policies and upward notification triggers as well as responsibilities, timing and other related issues.
- To strengthen crisis management skills that will ultimately help protect the reputation of your organization and community.

## Ground Rules and Tips for Participants

While this situation is purely hypothetical and for workshop purposes only, please treat it as a real event. Participate openly. Asking questions and sharing thoughts, ideas and concerns within your separate teams is strongly encouraged and will enhance the exercise experience. Keep the objectives in mind throughout the tabletop exercise.

As you review the two moves, please consider what actions are appropriate based on the following:

- Background information provided
- Community issues
- Current economic and political conditions in your respective cities
- Implications of each action you take on key stakeholders/influencers
- Principles of effective Crisis Management and Emergency Response planning and execution

## Background

It is Monday morning, July 7. Commuters in your city are just getting back to work following the long four-day holiday weekend. Because of extended vacations for some of your regular public works employees, the department has been forced to put the remaining group on overtime schedules and hire a few temporary, contract workers to respond to service calls.

Your water system has been under pressure lately because the recent rollout of a new water use monitoring system has had some hiccups. There have been some issues with unexpectedly high water bills as well as some questions about leaks and increased water usage in the community. Stories about these issues have been picked up in the local news media.

City administrators are facing heat from the city council as councilmembers get heated calls from the public to get to the bottom of the problems. There have been several internal meetings to discuss the specifics of the problem and the need to increase customer service efforts to show the community the city is being responsive.

# 1

# MOVE

*Do not turn page until instructed.*

## MOVE 1

At approximately 8:15 on Monday, July 7, at the heights of rush hour, a public works truck pulling an excavator has just exited I-95 on Market Avenue to take an alternative route around congested traffic. The alternate route, which the driver was unfamiliar with, takes he and the crew through an intersection and immediately over railroad tracks. Driver Bob Smith sped up to get through a caution light, but didn't see an oncoming freight train. The truck and trailer did not make it all the way across the tracks and was hit by the oncoming train.

A driver in a nearby car who saw the accident called 9-1-1. Police responding to the scene have called transit dispatch saying they had a report of a truck-train accident on Market Avenue just off I-95.

Issues:

- Notification
- Activation of team(s)
- Operational actions
- Communications

## **MOVE 1** - Questions

How would you expect to be personally notified of this situation?

How would that notification happen?

Who else should be notified of developments?

What team(s), if any, should be activated at this time?

Who is responsible for that activation?

Where would that group meet and how quickly?

Who are the most important stakeholders, which of those will you notify and why, and who will be responsible for doing so?

Who else, if anyone should be notified?

If that person is not available, who is notified next?

What decisions need to be made?

What immediate actions need to be taken?

Who decides that?

Are there written or otherwise understood protocols for this?

How serious of a situation is this for your public works department?

Is this a crisis?

What issues should be considered/discussed in the next 12 hours?

**2**

**MOVE**

*Do not turn page until instructed.*



## MOVE 2

It is now 8:45 a.m.

Police, fire rescue, EMS and other first responders are now on the scene. Two radio stations with traffic helicopters are now hovering over the scene and giving first-hand live accounts on multiple radio stations. The train appeared to hit the back of the truck at the hitch sending the truck spinning on one side of the tracks with the trailer and excavator smashing into several passenger cars on the other side of the crossing. There are multiple injuries and some fatalities.

Because of traffic, no one from public works has yet arrived on the scene. A local newspaper reporter is there taking pictures with his phone and may be doing a Facebook live on the paper's Facebook page. The city has received a few calls from the family members of employees in public works. People are demanding information and answers on what happened.

Because this is the middle of summer vacation season, you've had to call in contract workers to fill shifts in public works. Bob Smith is one of those temps, today being his first day driving a public works truck following his hiring. In addition, Jane Doe, Director of Public Works for the city, took off about 30 minutes ago on a 4-hour flight to Washington and a national utilities conference. She will be unreachable for at least the next four hours.

Issues:

- Escalation procedures
- Emergency response coordination
- External stakeholder notification
- Crisis communications support and response
- Crisis management team structure and operations
- Emergency response
- Customer/Partner relations
- Humanitarian assistance
- Media relations

## **MOVE 2** – Questions

How will you address the accident scene?

Are there other notifications that should be made within the city? If the Crisis Management Team (CMT) hasn't already been activated, should it be now? Who is responsible for making that decision, and alerting CMT members?

Should this information be escalated to anyone else inside the public works department? Who is responsible for this expanded notification?

What do you do next? Has the Emergency Response Center been activated?

What communication do you provide to victims and their families? Who is responsible for that communication?

What should the driver's role be? Does he have written guidance and/or training on how to secure the truck, help his co-workers, etc.?

What messages should be delivered to key stakeholders? Who are the identified stakeholders at this point? Who will deliver those messages?

Based on the current information, what additional actions be taken and what issues should the CMT be considering over the next 24 hours?

### **Group Activity:**

Using the Message formula discussed in the presentation, Message = Emotion, Situation, Action, write a brief opening statement for a press conference with the media. Elect a spokesperson from your group to read the statement out loud.