

Crisis Communications



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The Minnesota Department of Agriculture strongly recommends that facilities handling agricultural chemicals have a Crisis Communications Plan in place in the event of an emergency.

A Crisis Communications Plan aids quick response, clear thinking and inclusiveness under pressure. It works hand-in-hand with the Incident Response Plan to prevent or reduce the damage or impact from an emergency. The image of your business can be positively or negatively impacted by public perceptions of the handling of the incident. Creating the plan in advance of the crisis will allow your business to respond promptly, accurately and confidently during an emergency and in the hours and days that follow.

The goal is to gather all critical information in one place, so you won't have to search for it during the actual event. Another goal is to ensure your message is consistent.

If your business does not have a communications specialist, identify who will assume these responsibilities during a crisis. Some companies establish a Crisis Communications Team comprised of the CEO and senior management.

Resources for Crisis Communications

Resources should be available within your primary business site and provisions should be made to set up similar capabilities within an alternate site in case the primary site cannot be occupied. For additional guidance on creating a plan for your facility, look at www.ready.gov/business/implementation/crisis

Here are some basic steps to creating a crisis communications plan:

1. Identify all potential audiences that will need information about the crisis (customers, distributors, suppliers, etc.)
2. Develop and maintain a contact list of key individuals in these audiences
3. Establish documented procedures for notifying these audiences
4. Include protocols for notifying management and regulators
5. Determine who will be your company's spokesperson(s) during the incident
6. Identify potential risk scenarios (accidents that injure employees or others; property damage to facility, etc.) and develop pre-scripted messages to address them
7. Determine and document how the plan will change as you move from immediately responding to the incident to managing the incident
8. Create checklists of do's and don'ts for specific audiences (media, customers, etc.)
9. Review key parts of the plan with employees
10. Review the Communications Plan annually and make appropriate changes