



## **Communications Plan- Crises and Issues Management**

### **INTRODUCTION**

A crisis can be anything from a policy challenge or decision in our organization to a natural disaster in your community. All crises have victims and can affect the reputation of our organization. The first minutes and hours of a crisis are the most critical. It is during this timeframe that public and media scrutiny will be at its peak and communication will be particularly important. This period is when our local council leadership must demonstrate that they are acting responsibly and decisively to resolve the situation. We will coordinate messaging with all involved parties to unify internal and external communications.

### **CRISIS AND PREPAREDNESS**

#### **LEVELS OF PREPAREDNESS PLANNING**

Crisis incidents can range from minor—those that generate little to no attention—to severe, that may threaten the council's reputation and ability to achieve its business and youth service goals.

There are four basic levels of preparedness planning that affect both Erie Shores Council (Council) and the National Council, each of which has the potential to significantly affect the reputation of the Boy Scouts of America. The following outline includes the levels of preparedness and the general actions required of Erie Shores Council and national communications teams.

#### **THE CRISIS TEAM**

During a crisis it is important to have identified and engaged a response team – include the board president (Jim Wilson), Scout Executive (Ed Caldwell, cell: 419-704-5561, email: ed.caldwell@scouting.org), and up to three other Scout leaders as necessary.

Responsibility of crisis team:

- Update management and support team members
- Recommend action or engage with National Council
- Consider legal, operational, and reputational implications
- Determine the message, audience, and channel(s) of distribution
- Manage the distribution of the message
- Select a BSA spokesperson – Erie Shores Council (Scout Executive) or National Council.

#### **SITUATION EVALUATION**

The following are general questions may be used to evaluate the crisis:

- What are the facts about the situation?
- What has the BSA (local/national) done to date? In the past?
- What key stakeholders will be impacted?
- What key messages are prepared for them? (statement, talking points, or Q&A)
- What corrective or remedial actions might be appropriate?

Levels of Preparedness Planning			
Level	Situation	Suggested Erie Shores Council Response	Suggested National Council Response
<b>Level 1</b> Warning	<p>The BSA's reputation is positioned against an event that may impact or require Erie Shores Council to take action</p> <p><i>Ex. A local volunteer is arrested on youth protection charges</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform the National Council crisis communications team of the situation and any media inquiries they received</li> <li>• Discuss strategy with National Council crisis communications team</li> <li>• Inform key management of the issue or crisis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the situation</li> <li>• Discuss and provide strategic recommendations</li> <li>• Draft materials for use by Erie Shores Council, as needed</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2</b> Caution	<p>The BSA's reputation is put at risk by events that fall outside of the council's control. <i>Ex. Several Scouts at a camp are isolated for cases of whooping cough.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide report to the National Council</li> <li>• Scout Executive or other key member of Erie Shores Council leadership to serve as spokesperson</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide strategic counsel and reactive materials</li> <li>• Brief executive, legal, and/or risk management teams</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3</b> Hazard	<p>The BSA's reputation is under intense scrutiny by organization members, employees, and/or members of the media</p> <p><i>Ex. A national media launches a prolonged investigative report on the BSA's land management practices, profiling a local council's misuse of resources</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide regular updates to the National Council.</li> <li>• Scout Executive or other key member of Erie Shores Council leadership to serve as spokesperson</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing strategic counsel and reactive media materials</li> <li>• Provide regular updates to the executive and legal teams</li> </ul>
<b>Level 4</b> Severe	<p>The BSA's reputation is directly challenged and the organization's ability to achieve its mission is hampered</p> <p><i>Ex. A tornado strikes a Scout reservation killing four Scouts; or, four adult volunteer leaders are killed at the national jamboree while conducting an activity.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide updates to the National Council crisis communications team</li> <li>• Execute aggressive media relations through support of the National Council</li> <li>• Request spokesperson/on-site assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct strategy</li> <li>• Develop media relations materials</li> <li>• Work directly with the executive and legal teams</li> <li>• May provide spokesperson/on-site assistance, and engage additional resources as necessary</li> </ul>

National Council Issue criteria:

- Will this issue effect other Scouting organizations?
- Is national media involved or would they likely become involved?

If Erie Shores Council determines that the National Council should be informed of an issue, the following representatives will serve as point of contact:

**Effie Delimarko**

Director of Communications, Boy Scouts of America, National Council

Office: (972) 580-7848

Mobile: (214) 505-8341

Email: [effie.delimarko@scouting.org](mailto:effie.delimarko@scouting.org)

**FleishmanHillard**

Public Relations Crisis/Media Support

Crisis Hotline: (855) 870-2178

Email: [PR@scouting.org](mailto:PR@scouting.org)

**MEDIA INQUIRY RESPONSE PROCEDURE**

Erie Shores Council can refer to the following guidelines for communicating with media and the public for both positive media encounters and in crises:

Media Inquiry Procedure*			
Situation	Affiliation	Nature of question	Action
Incoming call	Non-media but affiliated with Scouting or a concerned citizen	A general, non-issues oriented question	Direct the call to the appropriate department at Erie Shores Council
Incoming call	The person is with a traditional or digital media outlet	A general, non-issues oriented question	The Scout Executive or communications manager vets the inquiry and replies to the outlet as needed
Incoming call	The person is with a traditional or digital media outlet	An issue or crisis-oriented question	The Scout Executive or communications manager vets the inquiry and replies to the outlet as needed
Incoming call	The person will not disclose their affiliation	Treat this individual as if they are a member of the media.	The Scout Executive or communications manager vets the inquiry and replies to the outlet as needed;
On-site visit	The person is with traditional or digital media	An inquiry of any kind	Employees should inform the media that they are not the appropriate spokesperson and take down the information to pass it on to the director

## MEDIA INQUIRY LANGUAGE FOR EMPLOYEES

- Only designated Erie Shores Council or National Council spokespersons are authorized to speak to the media on behalf of the organization.
- Incoming calls, if the individual is not with the media, direct the person to the appropriate department.
- If the individual is with the media and asks a general BSA or non-issues-related question, take down their information for the appropriate spokesperson.
- If the individual is with the media and asks about an issue or a crisis, take down their information and provide it to the Scout Executive urgently.
- If a member of the media appears on-site, inform him/her that you are not the appropriate spokesperson and that you will take down their information and provide it to the contact immediately.

## MEDIA INQUIRY RESPONSE GUIDELINES

As Erie Shores Council engages in issues and crisis communications or public discussions, the following policies should be kept in mind:

- The BSA does not comment on issues that are not directly related to its programs or its membership, such as political or social debates.
- Due to member confidentiality, the BSA will not provide personal information about minors or adults, except to confirm an individual's name after it has been released by local, state, or federal authorities. This confirmation will only take place if that individual has an official relationship with the BSA, including youth members, adult volunteer leaders, and personnel.
- The BSA's public statements follow a pattern to ensure message consistency.
  - First, demonstrate concern and compassion for the people involved. Always provide reassurance that the health and safety of members, volunteers, and professionals is Erie Shores Council's top priority.
  - Second, address relevant facts associated with the crisis, with due consideration to privacy and legal issues. Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? The BSA will not speculate or engage in a discussion of any hypothetical situation.
  - Third, address what the BSA is doing to resolve the situation and to ensure an expeditious return to normal operations. The organization will not initially attempt to attribute responsibility for an incident.

## LOCAL SPOKESPERSONS

The role of a local spokesperson in a crisis is to effectively deliver the BSA's core messages with the ultimate goal of resolving the situation fairly and compassionately while preserving integrity and reputation. This applies to communication with all stakeholders, including media, youth members, Scouting parents, adult volunteer leaders, employees, business partners, and the community. The local spokesperson represents Erie Shores Council, BSA and is not speaking on behalf of National BSA.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA ISSUES MANAGEMENT**

During a crisis, online community members may post comments to Erie Shores Council or council-owned property (e.g., Camp Miakonda or Camp Frontier) social media pages, and Erie Shores Council will have to make a decision on whether or not to engage the individual, and, in certain cases, whether to delete the post.

It is advised that Erie Shores Council will post community guidelines or house rules for adding content on the “About” pages of the Council, Camp Miakonda, or Camp Frontier’s Facebook page. Erie Shores Council will state that they appreciate the thoughts provided by the Scouting community and beyond, but that there are some things that may be removed to keep the conversation fair and civil.

## **HOW TO ENGAGE DIGITAL POSTINGS ON SOCIAL CHANNELS**

If the Council decides to reply or engage with an individual on social media, it should treat the individual in much the same way as it might a reporter, using talking points or a statement to help guide a response. Whenever possible, the council should offer to connect with the individual via phone rather than take the conversation online.

## **ONLINE THREATS**

In the event that someone posts a message to a council social page or digital channel that exposes a potential threat to the health and safety of one of the BSA members, present or past, the team will forward that posting to the Scout Executive for review and appropriate action.

## **EVALUATION**

Erie Shores Council will review crisis afterwards to better prepare for future crises. Consider the following questions:

- How did the crisis impact key stakeholders?
- How did the crisis affect the reputation of Erie Shores Council? National Council?
- What was the extent and tone of media coverage surrounding the crisis?
- Are there any apparent misconceptions by the public or media about the organization?
- Are there any lingering concerns?

## **MEDIA FOLLOW UP [IF NECESSARY]**

Focus on providing updates to the media, as necessary, correcting any misconceptions, and addressing any reputational damage. A succinct and informative statement, set of talking points, Q&A, press release, or digital posting—together with media spokespeople—can be used to conduct media outreach.

## **STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH [IF NECESSARY]**

It is important to contact stakeholders to keep them informed of the impact of the crisis and the actions being taken to minimize any potential damages. If needed, follow-up communications to stakeholders should be completed as soon as possible.

## POST-CRISIS REPORT

Erie Shores Council will consider preparing a report documenting the crisis, its impact, lessons learned, and any process or organizational changes made because of the crisis. The report should be shared with key players in Erie Shores Council and filed for future internal use.

## A CRISIS RESPONSE CHECKLIST

Response Guide Checklist	
<b>Level 1</b> Warning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate the situation, reviewing all relevant information</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Discuss the issue with the authorities or other relevant stakeholders</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Initiate media and digital monitoring</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Alert and involve key volunteer leadership and relevant support team members</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop needed communications materials, including a statement and talking points</li></ul>
<b>Level 2</b> Caution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Approve all communications materials, as needed</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Work with proper authorities to determine the scope of the situation and to provide ongoing support</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Direct media requests to the pre-approved spokesperson</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Initiate stakeholder outreach, as necessary</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide regular updates regarding the situation to the national media support team</li></ul>
<b>Level 3</b> Hazard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Establish a communications command center, as necessary</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Recommend Erie Shores Council, BSA officials—or national representatives—dispatch family or volunteer support teams, as necessary</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Prepare additional National Council staff to address incoming calls</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Determine if on-site National Council support is needed</li></ul>
<b>Level 4</b> Severe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Engage a phone response team to address inquiries, as necessary</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Monitor the situation and release additional statements, as necessary</li></ul>

## EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Emergency Numbers			
Camp Miakonda DeVilbiss Scout Reservation		Camp Frontier Pioneer Scout Reservation	
EMERGENCY SERVICES DIAL 911		EMERGENCY SERVICES DIAL 911	
Poison Control	1-800-222-1222	Poison Control	1-800-222-1222
Sylvania Twp. Fire	419-882-0022	Pioneer Fire Department	419-737-3129
Sylvania Twp. Police	419-882-2055	Williams County Sheriff	419-636-3151
Promedica – Flower Hospital Sylvania, Ohio	419-824-1444	Community Hospitals – Williams County - Montpelier	419-485-3154
Contacts			
Miakonda Ranger: Brandon Bailey	419-308-7416	Camping Director: Chris Reynolds	419-392-5706
Program Director: Alan Lepard	419-481-3151	Frontier Ranger: Jeff Frastaci	419-392-7928
Council Staff			
Scout Executive: Ed Caldwell	419-704-5561	Scout Executive: Ed Caldwell	419-704-5561
Assistant Scout Executive: Andrew Curran	419-704-1223	Assistant Scout Executive: Andrew Curran	419-704-1223
Council Officers			
Council President: Jim Wilson	419-392-2822	Council President: Jim Wilson	419-392-2822
Council Commissioner: Alan Bernard	567-218-8722	Council Commissioner: Alan Bernard	567-218-8722
VP – Properties: Shawn Chowdhary	419-367-7900	VP – Properties: Shawn Chowdhary	419-367-7900

If you have any questions about any of the information include in this plan, please contact:

### **Effie Delimarko**

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America, National Council  
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