



*We all live downstream.*

# **Crisis Communication Plan**

## **Retail Store Guidelines**

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# Purpose

This crisis communication plan will provide policies and procedures for each retail store location to follow in order to effectively communicate internally among management, team leaders and associates and also externally with the media, customers, the community and other stakeholders in a situation that can be defined as either an emergency or a threat the Bass Pro Shops.

A crisis is defined by an emergency or adverse act, either internal or external, that poses as a threat to Bass Pro's reputation or employee, customer or stakeholder safety. The crisis must possess the potential to cause long-term effects to the corporation's integrity.

It is the responsibility of each Bass Pro Shops retail store location to provide factual information to the local media. Each location will help the media by providing them with the information they need in timely manner that is appropriate for the situation at hand. Each retail store must also keep the best interest of the entire corporation in mind and position each store as a reliable retail location with an image based on strong family values and "world class customer service."

It is the goal of the crisis communication plan to provide each retail store with guidelines for managing communication in the event of a crisis. This toolkit should not be used as an overall plan for crisis management. It is not intended to answer all questions, but it does provide a framework to develop a crisis management plan that is specific to each store and each crisis. If handled correctly, the damage from any crisis can be minimized.

## Objectives

- Prepare Bass Pro Shops managers to factually evaluate crises and determine the plan of action based on the severity of the event.
- Help managers respond in a professional manner that emphasizes the integrity and loyalty of Bass Pro to both internal and external publics.
- Mold a unified message that is shared with the entire staff of each retail location so that each employee understands Bass Pro Shops' position and their role in the crisis.
- Manage the communication of the message and distribution of crucial information to the public.

# Possible Crises

The possible crises that could occur at any Bass Pro Shops retail store location can be divided into five basic categories. These categories are defined to anticipate the possible crises that could occur and enhance the preparation. These examples are not all encompassing but rather are designed to give retail stores an idea of the types of situations that will require the use of this crisis communication plan. The goal of Bass Pro Shops is to ensure that each retail store is aware of the possible crisis that could affect their location specifically.

## **I. Natural Disasters**

- a. Examples: tornado, flood, hurricane, wildfire, etc.

## **II. Criminal and Legal Actions**

- a. Examples: employee is charged with a crime, sexual harassment lawsuit, wrongful termination lawsuit, failure to comply with ATF policies and procedures, failure to meet ??? standards for securing personal information and credit card data, customer is injured in a retail store

## **III. Violent acts and demonstrations**

- a. Examples: movements against Bass Pro Shops, employee injured or killed during work related activities, hostage situation, robbery by external forces

## **IV. Perceived crises**

- a. Examples: misinterpretation of Bass Pro Shops position the Second Amendment and animal rights along with other actions (intentional and unintentional) related to political and social issues, failure to maintain relationships and gain support from other community businesses and other organizations

## **V. Financial crises**

- a. Examples: embezzlement by any employee, illegitimate merchandise returns made by customers, fraudulent cash, credit/debit card or check utilized in transactions by customers or employees, profit margins decreasing rapidly

# Internal Crisis Communication Plan Roles

The crisis communication plan should be shared with all employees during orientation. A majority of the responsibilities will be shared between the General Manager, Operations Manager, Merchandising Manager and all General Sales Managers (GSMs), but team leaders and sales associates must be informed and understand that they represent the Bass Pro Shops' corporation.

## The Crisis Communication Team

A Crisis Communication Team is essential to identify the actions that need to be taken in the event of each crisis. The Crisis Communication Team will consist of the following:

- General Manager
- Operations Manager
- Promotions Manager
- Office administrator
- At least one other General Sales Manager

If the crisis is specific to one area of interest, that GSM would be required to join the Crisis Communication Team. For example, if the crisis was in result to the gun control debate, the Hunting GSM would join the Crisis Communication Team.

The first and foremost goal of the Crisis Communication Team is to protect to integrity and reputation of Bass Pro Shops. To achieve this goal The Crisis Communication Team must:

- Ensure that the staff of the entire is store is consistently informed and reminded of their roles in the situation
- Designate a primary spokesperson that will represent the store and the corporation, make official statement and answer media questions and address public concerns
- Determine the retail store's position and how to mold an appropriate message
- Provide media with information needed to reestablish Bass Pro Shops' credibility
- Evaluate the crisis plan that was implemented following the event of each crisis

# Policies for Crisis Communication

All crises should be reported to the General Manager, Operations Manager, Merchandising Manager, or GSM immediately.

Only the designated spokesperson from the Crisis Communication Team will speak to the media or respond to any external inquiries about the retail store's position in the event of a crisis. All other staff members should professionally direct any media or public inquiries to the spokesperson. They are prohibited to providing any information.

All Bass Pro Shops' retail stores will respond to media attention with strong statements that are composed of factual information in a professional and delicate manner that will reestablish the credibility of the store and the entire corporation.

Retail stores should be proactive in delivering responses to the media. A lack of response will only trigger a more adverse reaction from the public.

Personal information will always remain confidential.

Relationships with the media are crucial during a time of crisis. Bass Pro Shops' retail stores are required to maintain these valuable relationships to effectively relay messages to the public that regain confidence in the Bass Pro Shops' corporation.

# Pre-Crisis Preparation

- **Phone/email list-** A phone and email chain should be established to ensure that all members of the Crisis Communication Team are made aware of the situation (see appendix, page 12)
- **Documentation system:** Create means of documenting potential crises and an organization system. This system will help retail stores plan potential outcomes of a crisis and plan resolutions based on like crises from the past.
  - Accident Report (see appendix, page 13)
- **Identify and train the spokesperson-** This will most likely be the retail store's General Manager.
  - Training can be found on Bass Pro Shops' "Downstream." Under the "Education and Training" tab a series of webinars can be found that will train the spokesperson on public speaking techniques, answering questions, and the do's and don'ts of speaking with the media.
- **Update media list and other contacts' information-** Have a media list and fact sheet prepared in advance. The media list will make it easier and quicker to contact the local media during a crisis. The fact sheet will provide the basic information on the organization that the media will need to formulate a story.
  - Examples: television news stations, local publications, local radio stations, government officials, landlord (if applicable), law enforcement
  - Fact Sheet (see appendix, page 14)
- **Mission Statement-** all key messages and positioning statements should reflect Bass Pro Shop's mission statement. In the event of a crisis, any messages formed should be based on strong family values, wildlife preservation and the corporation's dedication to "world class customer service."
  - Positioning Statement Guidelines (see appendix, page 15)
- **Preapproved Statements-** the Crisis Communication Team should prepare responses for common media inquiries.
- **Establish Resources and meeting center-** acquire and organize materials that may be useful in the state of crisis. Determine a location in each retail location that can be used for the crisis management center. (i.e. a Conservation Room or conference room)
- **Staff Awareness Meetings-** the first full week of each month will be dedicated to educating the entire staff on a variety of different crisis. The topics will include possible incidents, preparation and prevention. Several short and efficient meetings will be held each day. Every associate is required to attend one meeting.
  - Examples: Tornado safety procedures, associate purchases, archery/gun range safety, etc.

# Crisis Management Checklist

This list is a brief overview of the steps for crisis management. Each retail store should review these steps and adjust let to meet the needs of their store and the crises that occur.

- Ensure safety.** Call 911, if needed.
  - Complete accident form if, applicable. (See page 11)
- Notify a member of the Crisis Communication plan immediately.** Then, the Crisis Communication Team needs to notify all members that are not on site.
- Document crisis and determine fact.** The Crisis Communication Team should review the facts and predict the potential reaction to the crisis before addressing the rest of the staff or the public.
- Inform all staff members of the situation.** If necessary, contact base camp to inform the corporate managers of the crisis.
  - Determine what information should be shared with the staff and what details should not.
- Preparation to address the public:**
  - Evaluate the situation
    - Determine all of the issues surrounding the crisis
    - Evaluate the media's level of interest and tone
    - Is the government involved?
    - Create a frequently asked questions sheet to prepare for public questioning.
  - Determine the audience
    - Identify the groups that are affected by the situation and what concerns they have
  - Determine appropriate response and action
    - Identify what the retail store plans to achieve through communication
    - Examples: stronger reputation, forgiveness, public awareness, etc.
  - Develop a plan of action for internal and external communication
  - Construct transparent and detailed key messages that address the severity of the crisis and guarantees that the retail store will be proactive in resolving the situation
    - Formulate a focused message
    - Address the concerns of the affected publics
    - See positioning Statement Guidelines (appendix, page 15)

- Prepare talking points and message system for the phone operator
  
- Determine specifics of how the message will be communicated to the public
  - Plan a press release, if it is necessary
  - Place the spokesperson in valuable media opportunities
  - Request that base camp update website/page frequently
  - Inform government officials, if necessary
  
- Addressing the public:**
  - Contact critical internal audiences (staff, base camp, etc.)
  - Begin media outreach
    - Construct a media list of all media outlets you need to contact
    - Make Fact Sheet easily accessible to the media (appendix, page 14)
  - Evaluate the message effectiveness
    - Determine how the combination of the message, the spokesperson, and the channels used were either success or unsuccessful
  - Constantly update staff, stakeholders, and the public as the situation progresses
  - Provide examples of solutions and changes that will be implemented in the future to prevent further crises and restore the Bass Pro Shops' image
    - Determine, if community relations efforts are needed
  - Continue to communicate post-crisis

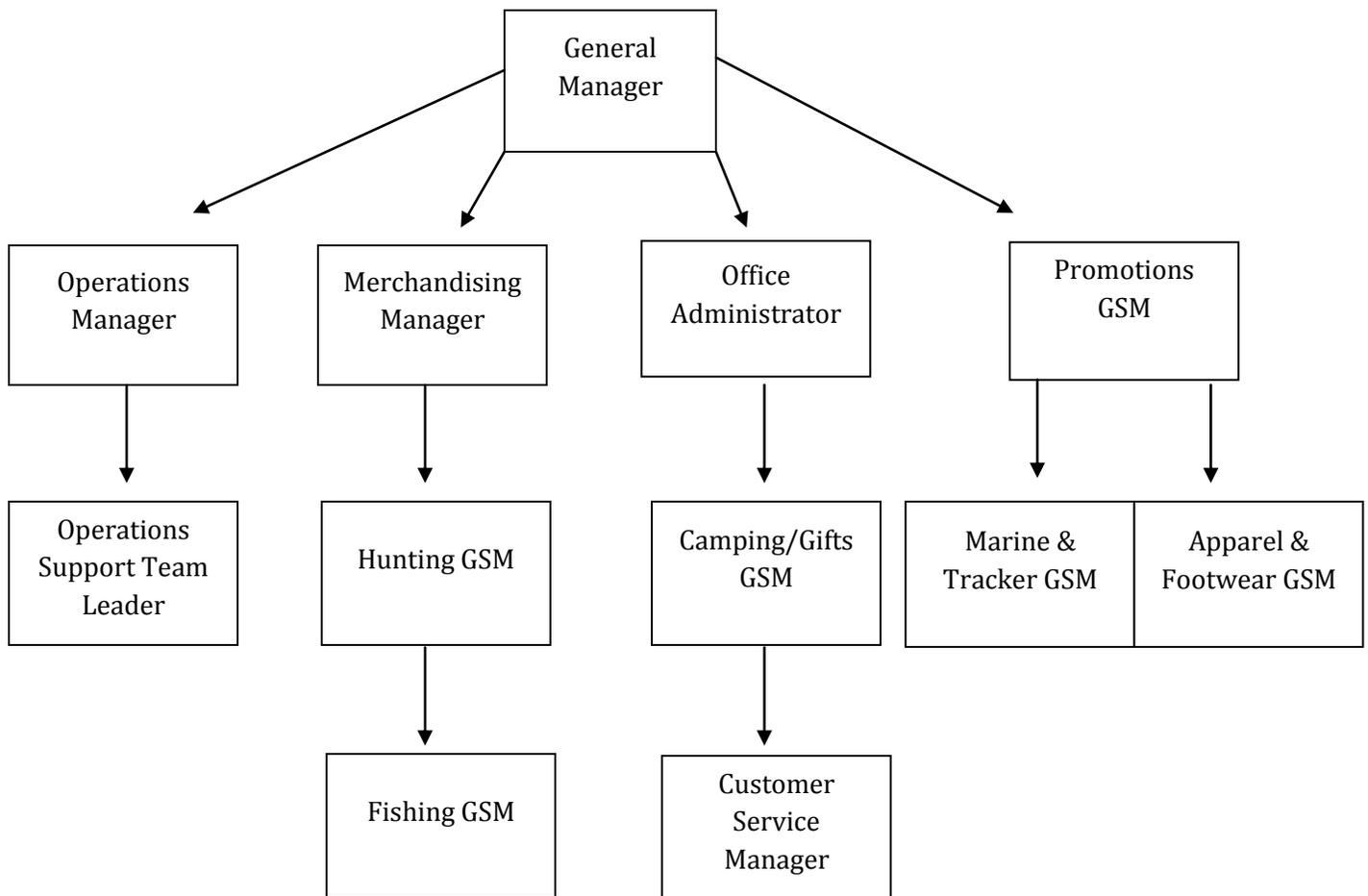
# Crisis Management Evaluation

- I. Ensure that crisis is solved completely**
  - a. Communicate the resolution and plan to move forward with the public
  - b. Review all media inquiries. All should be contacted for a final time
- II. Crisis communication review**
  - a. Determine whether or not the reaction was effective and timely
  - b. Determine whether or not the positioning statement appealed the public or not and if any support was gained in result to it.
  - c. Conclude on what means of communication did not meet expectations and why
  - d. Make plan for future based on revisions due to the current crisis
- III. Media coverage assessment**
  - a. Ensure that the message was consistent
  - b. Analyze number of media inquiries
  - c. Determine the first reaction from the public. Was it positive or negative?
  - d. Determine the public's opinion upon the time of resolution and in the aftermath of the crisis
- IV. File and correct errors**
  - a. File all data from crisis
  - b. Revise the crisis plan if necessary
  - c. Compose final report and present the crisis management process to base camp



# Appendices

# Sample Phone Chain



This phone chain will be used each time that a crisis occurs. If the crisis is specific to a department then the General Manager is required to call that GSM. The general manager should notify the other members of the phone chain that the particular GSM has already been contacted. When each store creates their phone chain, the phone numbers of each staff member should be included in their square. This chain is only a model and should be adjusted to meet the needs of the store.

# Accident Report

**Instructions:** All store-related accidents require this form to be completed by a member of management of the Operations Support team. The injured should NOT complete the report. The report must be completed, reviewed for accuracy, and signed within 24 hours of the accident. The report will then be filed by the Operations Manager and cannot be obtained without his/her authorization.

**Section I:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name (If the injured is a minor): \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address (Include Number/Street, City, State & Zip): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Employee

Customer

Other Visitor

**Section II: Accident Data:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (AM/PM)

Briefly explain the accident: (If the accident resulted in an injury, explain the following: activities happening when the injury occurred, the tools or other equipment being used at the time, what caused the injury and what is the injury or illness)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe the action taken: (Indicate whether first aid or other care was administered by a Bass Pro Staff member and whether or not 911 was contacted)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe action taken to prevent this accident from occurring again:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

# Sample Fact Sheet

The sample fact sheet should be distributed to the media and made easily accessible during the time of a crisis.

## Retail Store Name

(Include name as it is known to the public. Do not include store numbers)

Address

Phone

Fax

Website

General Manager

Operations Support Manager

Merchandising Manager

Office Administrator

(Designate one of the Crisis Communication Team members to the contact person for the retail store)

Retail store business hours

Mission Statement: To be the leading merchant of outdoor recreational products, inspiring people to love, enjoy, and conserve the great outdoors

Boiler Plate: About Bass Pro Shops, [insert retail store name here]:

# Positioning Statement Guidelines

This worksheet should be used as a means to formulate a positioning statement during a crisis. The rhetorical strategies are to be chosen based on the crisis at hand. Always include facts, do not falsify information and reflect on the wrong-doing of the retail store or corporation. Give the public hope by promising to improve conditions to prevent future crises.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

- I. Describe incident**
  - Only present facts
  - Do not share any personal information
- II. Explain primary concern**
  - Examples: Safety, Accountability, transparency, community member, wildlife preservation, family values, etc.
- III. Reassure that the issue is being addressed**
  - If possible, tell the public what the actual plan is to resolve the issue, fix the damage, and prevent the crisis from occurring again.
- IV. Confirm details and add any other essential information**
  - Reassure public that the details are true.
- V. Conclusion**
  - Promise that the retail store will stay in contact with the public and keep the media updated.
  - Provide contact information

## Rhetorical Strategies:

- **Bolstering**
  - Compare to other similar organizations
    - Example- Cabela's, Gander Mountain, Dick's Sporting Goods
  - Redefine problem and support with facts
  - Focus on the good that has emerged throughout the crisis
    - Example: Customer fell in a retail store and the staff reacted quickly, assuring his/her well-being and calling professional help

- **Identification**
  - State that the retail store was acting on behalf of the public
    - Example: Bass Pro Shops produced a controversial advertisement featuring the Second Amendment to show their support of the customers' right to bear arms
  - Refer to partners in good standing
    - Examples: Kevin Van Dam, Boy Scouts of America, Ducks Unlimited, Bank of America, etc.
- **Transcendence**
  - Stress the importance of one area over the other
    - Example: The importance of safety over quick service in the archery range.
- **Victim**
  - Examples:
    - Of Media
    - Of vandalism, burglary or other deviant behavior
    - Of Changing times
- **Corrective Action**
  - New programs
  - New commitments and priorities
  - Refunds/discounts
- **Expressed Regret**
  - Humiliation, shame, distress
  - Sorrow for circumstances beyond control