

Mississippi Arts Commission
Emergency Preparedness Planning
(February 2008)

WHAT IS A CRISIS?

Any situation that threatens the safety, the integrity, reputation or funding of your organization and its business.

IF A CRISIS HAPPENS TOMORROW –

- Do you know what your crisis response plan is?
- Do you have a crisis response team with roles and job descriptions?
- If key personnel are away, can you track them down?
- Once the crisis hits, it's too late to start deciding who's in charge of what.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN?

A Crisis Communication Plan is a pro-active document to give your organization a specific plan to follow during a crisis. A realistic crisis management plan doesn't have the answer to every question; it merely fills the gap between how our brain works normally and how it works during a crisis.

WHY YOU SHOULD PLAN AHEAD – Your organization's Crisis Plan allows you to:

- Lower your vulnerability and create strategies to deal with a full range of problems you might encounter.
- Move from a reactionary mode to one taking pro-active steps that aid in agency and community healing and helps put you back in control.
- Show full transparency (Openness, honesty).
- Build networks and relationships before a crisis strikes.
- Establish communication channels capable of reaching critical audiences quickly.
- Maintain your good reputation. A mishandled crisis can quickly ruin an organization if not handled properly.

“THE READINESS IS ALL”Hamlet

Traps to avoid and common mistakes in a crisis:

- Denial, siege mentality, panic, agency myopia, analysis paralysis, and aggressive defensiveness.
- Slow to respond, invisible leadership, no credible spokespersons, limited communication make for permanent image damage for the organization.
- Update crisis plans and practice regular simulation exercises. Determine what went right, what went wrong, and how plan can be improved.

BEFORE THE CRISIS:

Step One: LIST possible crises that could affect you organization by importance.

- Natural Disasters (hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, etc.)
- Manmade Disasters (terrorism, fires, other criminal acts)
- Budget Cuts from Funding Sources
- Layoffs

- Loss of Executive Director
- Difficulties Due to Improper Employee Behavior
- Lawsuits Against Organization
- Inappropriate Reaction by Employee in the Public Eye

Step Two: GATHER Contact Information. (Separate Agency Plan)

- Entire Staff Contact Information, including Home and Cell Phone Numbers and all Email Info.
- Appoint Crisis Team Members, Assign Responsibilities, and Post Contact Info
- List Back-up Team Members, Accountability Partners, and Contact Info
- All Board Members' Contact Info

Step Three: LIST Your Organization's Target Audiences (internal and external).

- Staff
- Board of Directors
- Governor and Legislature
- Constituents and Grantees
- The Public

Step Four: NAME Your Organization's Head Spokesperson to Handle All Media Relations During the Crisis.

- Post Contact Info in Prominent Place
- Assign Back-up Spokesperson with Contact Info

Step Five: GATHER Pre-Produced Materials.

- Your Organization's Key Messages
- Customized Press Releases
- Talking Points
- Fact Sheets, Bios
- Checklists and Crisis Drill Scenarios

Step Six: PRACTICE Periodically.

- Review Contact Sheets for Updated Info
- Review Overall Plan and Discuss Possible Changes
- Review Emergency Area Personnel Contact Info

DURING A CRISIS:

Step One: First Alert

- Calmly alert Executive Director, Deputy Director and PR Director.
- Begin to fill out incident fact sheet.
- Inform employees on site that all calls are passed to designated spokesperson.

Step Two: Collect the Facts

- Utilize incident fact sheet
- Record dates, times, sources, etc.

Step Three: Assess Situation Quickly and Inform Key Groups

- Internal audiences are critical – inform staff, Board, Governor’s office, and immediate constituents affected by the crisis.
- Continue communications with these audiences regularly.

Step Four: Create Action Plan/Prepare for Media

- Be sure media spokesperson has plan.
- Keep a list of resources at hand.
- Develop talking points.
- Start media contact record sheet – date, name, town, phone, email, etc.
- DO NOT give out any personal information.
- Anticipate media questions, review guidelines, assemble important background literature.
- USE the WEB SITE.

If necessary:

- Discuss media inquiry coordination with civil authorities involved.
- Designate separate telephone lines for incoming and outgoing calls.
- Consider using a free phone number with pre-recorded message containing latest factual information.

AFTER THE CRISIS:

Step One: Procedures for Debriefing: Learning from the Crisis

- What went well?
- What did not go well?
- What will be done differently in the future?
- Get feedback from all involved in the response effort and prepare for the next crisis.

Step Two: Recognition is Important

- Provide recognition both informally during the crisis and more formally after the crisis.
- Include those who didn’t work on the direct response process.
- Thank anyone from outside the organization who contributed to the crisis response.

Step Three: Celebrate Success and Capitalize on Goodwill

- At the appropriate time after the crisis, celebrate the hard work done in the response.
- Capitalize on the public profile from a job well done.
- Follow up with key audiences soon after the crisis ends.

Step Four: Media Follow-Up

- Check with media about follow-up stories.
- Communicate with media about future stories, especially on milestone dates.

Professional and Personal Preparedness
Mississippi Arts Commission
2008

General Thoughts in the Event of Professional/Personal Crisis:

1) Staff Member Incapacitated:

- Create a plan to execute a major initiative or program in their absence
- Appoint back-up team for programs
- Accountability partners who have authority to contact staff members, families, etc.
- Keys to offices, files, and computer access?

2) Personal Perspective:

- Support Group Plan; Finances, Illness, Personal Tragedy, etc.
- Authority to Contact Family in Extraordinary Circumstances
- List of Ambulance and Hospital Numbers
- Personal Health Information, Doctors' Names/Numbers, Emergency Phone List, House Key Locations
- Office First-Aid Coordinator, First-Aid Training and Update
- CPR, Choking, Fainting, etc. General Fact Sheet
- Emergency Team in Woolfolk Building?

Additional Notes/Thoughts:

**Agency Emergency Plan
Mississippi Arts Commission
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Agency: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **Fax:** _____ **Email:** _____

All levels of government and other response system officials advise being prepared for an emergency and the ability to operate on your own for at least 72 hours. The following outline and information will help your organization plan and prepare to meet the needs of your staff and your constituents.

Please perform a quick review of this plan every 6 months to ensure it stays current.

Emergency Coordinator: _____

Date Completed: _____

Agency Emergency Plan

1: Preparing Staff for Emergencies

The following primary positions depend on the scope of the incident and the availability of staff. All of the functions may be assumed by the same single staff person or may be distributed among staff and volunteers, as needed.

- **Management Team:** This is the person(s) who will lead.

Responsible Person: _____ Alternate: _____

Work: _____ Home: _____ Work: _____ Home: _____
Cell: _____ Email: _____ Cell: _____ Email: _____

- **Operations Team:** This person will do the fieldwork.

Responsible Person: _____ Alternate: _____

Work: _____ Home: _____ Work: _____ Home: _____
Cell: _____ Email: _____ Cell: _____ Email: _____

- **Planning Team:** This person will do the planning and keep everyone updated.

Responsible Person: _____ Alternate: _____

Work: _____ Home: _____ Work: _____ Home: _____
Cell: _____ Email: _____ Cell: _____ Email: _____

- **Logistics Team:** This person will get the resources.

Responsible Person: _____ Alternate: _____

Work: _____ Home: _____ Work: _____ Home: _____
Cell: _____ Email: _____ Cell: _____ Email: _____

- **Finance/Administration Team:** This person will track all activities and costs.

Responsible Person: _____ Alternate: _____

Work: _____ Home: _____ Work: _____ Home: _____
Cell: _____ Email: _____ Cell: _____ Email: _____

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General Information:

- **Assign staff the following duties:**
 - 1) Safety and Security for Staff and Facility:**
 - Secure facility for evacuation.
 - Have petty cash (coins) ready for pay phones in case phones are down and post location of nearest pay phones.
 - Post facility evacuation plan in area accessible to all.
 - Keep radio with extra batteries within easy reach.
 - 2) Public Information Officer:**
 - Gather and provide information to all outside media.
 - Monitor website activity and post correct updated information on crisis.
 - Be sure staff has all agency resource information.
 - 3) First Aid Administrator:**
 - Be prepared to administer first aid on staff members, if necessary
 - Keep current first aid knowledge.
 - 4) Contact Information Update:**
 - Gather and create contact information for all staff members.
 - Be sure information is posted clearly in office and create individual cards for each staff member.
 - Gather and create contact information for all necessary outside resources.
 - 5) Constituent Management:**
 - Create list of constituents and contact information.
 - Send agency contact information to constituents.
 - Create survey for constituents as to information on their individual needs during a disaster.
 - List most critical contacts that need to be made for each constituent.
 - 6) Personnel Resource:**
 - Determine staffing requirements for organization's post-crisis response.
 - Create list of critical staff needed to report to work.
 - Determine safety and circumstances of staff's family welfare.
 - Assure that staff is regularly updated on emergency preparedness.
 - 7) Resource Manager:**
 - Create an agency/organization "Go Kit". Include copies of emergency plan, action checklist, phone rosters, copies of vital documents, credit cards, etc.
 - Post a notice indication where personnel have gone during disaster.
 - Locate temporary close to workplace, in case of necessary evacuation.
 - Create a phone list and system for letting authorities, family and friends know where you will be sheltering and keep list updated.
 - Assign staff person the responsibility of taking head counts periodically.

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8) Financial Resource Administrator:

Organize and be aware of costs of normal agency operations.

Estimate cost increases that might arise from emergencies.

Be familiar with eligibility prerequisites for aid and/or reimbursements from federal or other agencies.

Have all financial documentation as part of "Go Kit".

Take all liquid assets when evacuating, i.e. petty cash, coins.

Have any agency credit card and signature information on hand.

General Information for Ensuring Service Continuation:

- List primary services agency will continue to provide following an emergency.
- List the critical material resources necessary to maintain these operations.
- Research and create list of possible collaborations in order to share resources, maintain operations, and ensure care of those served.
- Organization should clarify what its mission and priorities will be in the aftermath of a disaster or crisis.

Some questions include:

- What are the predictable needs of the constituents in an emergency?
- Will the needs require agency to expand services in the aftermath?
- Will new or different services need to be considered?

Crisis Communication Plan

Advice for Directors and Other Decision Makers

2008

1. **Be in front of the story.** Do not let interested parties (particularly the media, but especially investors) chase after you for the facts.
2. **Be proactive, not reactive.** Diffuse potential negative issues, make them less damaging or turn them into positives.
3. **Keep everyone in the loop.** Everyone means everyone, from the Board of Directors to the janitorial staff. Anyone with a professional stake in your corporate well-being needs to be addressed of the situation. It is important for management to keep employees informed before going to the media for morale and to control leaks.
4. **Internal audiences are critical.** They are as critical, if not more so, as external audiences. Your people are your face and voice in the community. They're also your eyes and ears, bringing critical feedback from the outside to your disaster operations. Listen to them.
5. **Do not take a one-size-fits-all approach in your external communications.** Your agency will need to reach out to specific groups that will require individual attention and assurances.
6. **Frame the news in a proper perspective.** Things don't just happen inexplicably. An explanation of the crisis needs to be addressed, and a mature, but spin-free, solution also needs to be presented to show the crisis will be contained and not repeated.
7. **Maintain consistency from start to finish.** After a communications plan is made, stick with it and do not deviate from the message and mission.
8. **Strategies and principles should guide your communication decisions.** Following a strategy gives consistency to your messages and actions and provides a framework for making decisions (especially the tough ones).
9. **Manage issues before they manage you.** If you choose to ignore a potentially bad issue, odds are it will not go away. Better to constantly scan the environment, anticipate the bad stuff, and tell the senior managers. When you do, have action steps and key messages already formulated.
10. **Plan and prepare for worst-case scenarios.** What's the absolute worst thing that could happen? A spokesperson flies off the handle and his quotes end up in the newspaper? Anticipate and be prepared.

To Our Coast Constituents
Sample Emergency Preparedness Letter
Mississippi Arts Commission
September 2007

Since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast and its cultural heritage, the Mississippi Arts Commission has been working in arts recovery and emergency preparedness in an effort to support and assist our arts constituents before and during times of disaster. With the upcoming 2008 Hurricane Season, we want you to know that we are here to help you and your local arts entity in any way possible. Most of you are well aware of the “what to do” aspect of being well-prepared in an emergency, but the MAC would like to support that plan with some suggestions and contact information.

The most devastating and deadliest storms in history, Hurricanes Camille, Rita, and Katrina, both made landfall in August and both have taught us the importance of being prepared in all ways necessary for the protection and recovery in everyday life. With the hurricane season still upon us and living in a state that regularly experiences flash flooding, tornadoes, and occasional ice storms, we invite you to take the time to make decisions pertaining to your evacuation plans, as well as plans to protect your personal and/or professional situations.

In addition to your regular “disaster kit” items, which should include:

- Flashlight and battery-powered radio (with extra batteries)
- Canned and non-perishable food
- Bottled water
- First Aid Kit
- Blankets and Clothing
- Eyeglasses
- Toiletry items
- Pet food and pet supplies
- Medicine and prescription medication
- Full gasoline tanks in your automobiles
- Copies of important family papers and documents
- Small amount of cash or traveler’s checks

Please be sure to include the following:

- Documentation of any personal and/or professional artwork or collections of any kind (literary and music) with accompanying documentation of photographic images or back-up computer files. Store copies of this documentation at an off-site and safe location, if at all possible.

- A thorough inventory of items and equipment used in your business, comprised of written and visual documentation with detailed descriptions and proof of ownership when available.
- Ledger books and/or back-up computer records, stored in the off-site location.
- A list of your computer hardware and software, including model names and serial numbers, as well as contact information for equipment suppliers who could assist you in an emergency.
- An evaluation of options for temporary relocation of your business or studio that would allow you to continue operations.
- A financial contingency plan to cover continuing expenses and debt obligations.
- A list of contractors who could make emergency repairs, if necessary.
- A list of key creditors, customers, and suppliers to contact if business operations are interrupted.
- A list of your insurance policies with your agent's name and contact information.

Additional information for general disaster preparedness can be found on the Mississippi Arts Commission's website, www.arts.state.ms.us. Links for further support and other contact information will be available in the Emergency Preparedness section of the MAC website.

In closing, if you happen to incur damages or loss, please contact the Mississippi Arts Commission as soon as possible, so that we can begin networking on your behalf to provide immediate assistance. Since Hurricane Katrina, the MAC has been working diligently in the support of our arts and cultural recovery and is poised to consistently perform as a resource center for our constituents, in addition to assisting with direct contact and financial aid.

Very significant lessons have been learned since our experience in 2005 on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and our staff continues to work on renewal and revitalization concepts. We appreciate you as constituents and partners and look forward to a culturally vibrant future together.

Thank you,

Malcolm White
Executive Director
Mississippi Arts Commission

Sallye Killebrew
Arts Recovery Coordinator
Mississippi Arts Commission

General Preparedness Notes

Mississippi Arts Commission

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Step One: Prepare for the Worst

- For personal safety, identify what storm shelter is available to you and prepare an evacuation plan. Choose two meeting places: one right outside your home; and one outside your neighborhood, in case you can't return home.
- Make sure you have a "Go Bag" prepared: bottled water, a first aid kit, flashlights, battery-powered radio with extra batteries; non-perishable food items, blankets, clothing, prescription drugs, eyeglasses, personal hygiene supplies, and a small amount of cash or traveler's checks.
- Make a plan for your pets. Not all emergency shelters will take pets, so check with your local veterinarian for help with a plan.
- If you need to evacuate your home, turn off all utilities and disconnect appliances.
- Take proactive steps to protect your property from loss. Be sure there is no loose siding on your home and no damaged or diseased trees growing over your home.

Step Two: Take an Inventory of Your Property

- It's always a good idea to take photos or videos of your home before a disaster strikes to properly record the condition of your home. If you use a digital camera, email the photos to yourself, a friend or relative, or store them on a web site.
- Take an inventory of your personal property, such as clothes, jewelry, furniture, computers and audio-video equipment. Photos and video of your home, as well as sales receipts and the model and serial numbers of items, will make filing a claim a lot simpler. Leave a copy of your inventory with friends or relatives, email it to yourself, and/or store it in a safe location. In addition, add insurance information to your inventory information – the name of your company and agent, policy number and contact information.
- Move all of your important documents to a safe location. Take them with you when you evacuate or store them in a safe deposit box outside your area.

Step Three: Review Your Insurance Coverage

- Review your insurance coverage. What does your insurance policy cover? What does it exclude?

- The standard homeowners' insurance policy does not cover flood damage. Check to see if your policy covers debris removal and sewer back-up.
- Find out if your policy covers additional living expenses to reimburse you for the cost of living in a temporary residence, if you are unable to live in your home.
- If you have jewelry or collectibles, check the limits of coverage. You may want to buy more coverage for these items.
- What is your deductible? You will have to pay at least this much if you have a covered loss.
- Be sure you understand the difference between replacement cost and actual cash value.