

# *Veal* 2020 INDUSTRY



## ISSUES & CRISIS COMMUNICATION REFERENCE GUIDE

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# CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN



IT TAKES MANY GOOD DEEDS TO  
BUILD A REPUTATION, **AND ONLY  
ONE BAD ONE TO LOSE IT."**

BEN FLANKLIN

## OBJECTIVE

This reference guide serves as a resource to those in the veal industry to effectively manage those issues and crises that threaten to impact consumer trust and confidence in veal, its products, practices and people.



How prepared are you to communicate with the public and stakeholders when an unexpected event occurs that could have a negative impact on the reputation of your business and the veal industry? More importantly, how quickly are you able to communicate with key audiences? A 2019 study by CRISP indicates that **53% of consumers** expected companies to respond within an hour of a crisis and **90% of consumers** surveyed they are likely to shop with a brand that responds well to a crisis.

Simply put, a crisis is any incident that has the potential to severely damage an individual's or an organization's reputation in the eyes of its stakeholders. A crisis can present itself in numerous ways and include everything from a minor incident to a major situation that takes weeks or even months to overcome. Most crisis situations in food and agriculture are external – undercover videos released to the public, product recalls that bring food safety into question, environmental accidents that draw attention and raise questions about industry practices, a protest outside your place of business amplified by live video on social media.

A crisis can also be internal, including employment litigation, worker safety or working conditions, theft of company property, or workplace injury or death.

All organizations will face a crisis at some point. It's best to effectively anticipate, prepare for and plan to manage these potential crises.

It's important to take time to carefully evaluate how your business is currently prepared to manage a potential crisis. This reference guide is designed to help you initiate a plan and help you respond in a timely manner when a crisis threatens your reputation.



## OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPING A CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN

### ASSESS YOUR VULNERABILITIES

1

What situations may cause a crisis? How will the crisis emerge? What stakeholders will it impact? What monitoring systems are in place to identify issues before they escalate? How are you mitigating these topics now?

### CREATE A CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

2

Who's in charge? What organizational leaders need to be engaged? Who manages key stakeholders and groups? Who leads communication and social media? Identify a media spokesperson. Are there outside experts who can be a resource?

### DEVELOP PROTOCOLS FOR RESPONDING TO CRISIS SITUATIONS

3

How will issues/crises be monitored and evaluated? What is the best way to gather the team? What are the steps the team will follow? How and where will all information related to a crisis be filed for future reference? Who's responsible for contact information for stakeholders and is that information current?

### PREPARE KEY MESSAGES & YOUR SPOKESPERSON

4

Develop basic key messages **now** – before you need them in a crisis. Have key facts and other data researched and confirmed. Identify external third-party spokespeople who could be a resource. Ensure your media spokesperson is ready to go when the media calls. Make sure your key messages are also social media ready!

5

### COMMIT TO WRITING, REVIEWING & UPDATING YOUR PLAN

A crisis response plan is not effective if it is tossed in a file or placed on a bookshelf. Treat it as a living, breathing document and continue to review and update its content. Meet with your team periodically to ensure everyone knows the process and their responsibilities.



## ASSESS YOUR VULNERABILITIES

1

The first steps in readying your organization is to fully assess possible situations that may trigger a crisis. This includes identifying and evaluating potential vulnerabilities, likely causes of a crisis, potential impact on the organization, and audiences affected. Completing this assessment allows you to think through all possible scenarios and prioritize the development of specific crisis response protocols. Be sure to assess internal and external factors.

Think of all the potential incidences within each of these subject areas that make your organization vulnerable to a crisis. Make a list and be specific.

- Animal Well-being
- Environment and Sustainability
- Food Safety
- Employees/Human Resources
- Other

Next, using the template below, gather input from your team to assess each of these incidences and the impact they could have:

### SUBJECT AREA

VULNERABILITY	LIKELIHOOD / IMPACT (hi – low)	STAKEHOLDERS IMPACTED	POINT OF CRISIS	POINT PERSON
<i>List the specific incidence in this column.</i>	<i>What is the likelihood this could happen? High? Medium? Low?</i>  <i>What is the impact this incidence could have? High? Medium? Low?</i>	<i>What stakeholders (audiences) will be impacted?</i>	<i>At what point would this incidence move from an issue to a crisis?</i>	<i>Who in your organization is responsible for this area?</i>



## CREATE A CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

2

A dedicated management team is critical to guiding your organization through a crisis. The management team is responsible for all aspects of a crisis – from coordinating with legal and human resources and communicating with stakeholders to responding to media interviews and comments through social media. Your crisis response team should include the following roles and individuals:

### CRISIS TEAM LEAD \_\_\_\_\_

- Convenes core response team and facilitates strategy discussion, group consensus and next steps
- Ensures response plan is executed

### COMMUNICATIONS/MEDIA EXPERT \_\_\_\_\_

- Recommends media strategy, prepares spokesperson
- Develops key messages, statements and news releases
- Coordinates media outreach and inquiries
- Leads media monitoring and analysis and provides updates to Response Team
- Ensures messages are social media ready and provides leadership for online posting and responses

### MEDIA SPOKESPERSON \_\_\_\_\_

- Serves as the media spokesperson – this can include the CEO, president or subject matter expert
- Needs to know organizational strategy and key messages and can deliver information with empathy and credibility

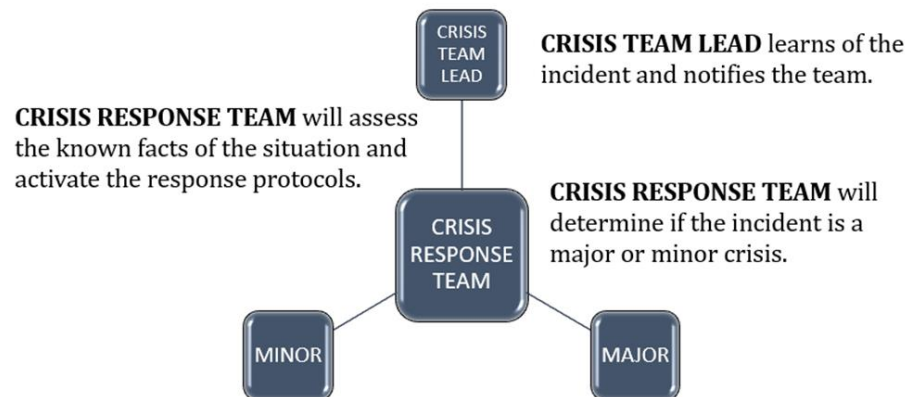
### ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS/SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS \_\_\_\_\_

- These are individuals who lead primary functions of the organization
- They provide scientific expertise and insight and can review communication materials for accuracy
- They are responsible for specific stakeholder audiences critical in the communication efforts

## DEVELOP PROTOCOLS FOR RESPONDING TO CRISES

Based on your potential vulnerabilities, the next step is to develop specific protocols for responding to crisis situations. These protocols should include the basic steps your organization will take to respond to either a minor situation or a major crisis.

# 3



If this is a MINOR CRISIS, the following steps should be taken:

- Team Lead notifies internal personnel responsible for answering external calls and the call center; provides a standby statement to address inquiries; this statement will need to be updated as the situation evolves
- Communication is delivered to key stakeholders impacted by the incident
- Standby media messages are prepared
- Situation is monitored and strategy is adjusted as needed

If this is a MAJOR CRISIS, the following steps should be taken immediately:

- Team Lead notifies internal personnel responsible for answering external calls and the call center; provides a statement to address inquiries; this statement will need to be updated as crisis unfolds
- CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM develops response strategy based on current information
- Media strategy and statement is established and implemented
- Evaluate if current marketing, promotions, sponsorships or online engagements need to be modified or suspended
- Communication is delivered to all key stakeholder audiences including employees
- Facts and information continue to be gathered
- News reports and social media are monitored and addressed
- Team members follow up with impacted audiences
- Team monitors and adjusts strategy

**FOR MAJOR EMERGENCIES, DIAL 911**





## PREPARE KEY MESSAGES & YOUR SPOKESPERSON

4

When crisis hits, time is valuable. Develop three to four key messages for each area of vulnerability identified during your assessment. These messages are intended to provide a framework for a timely response to the situation. They should be reviewed and updated based on the exact situation.

### ENSURE YOUR MESSAGES EASILY TRANSLATE TO SOCIAL MEDIA ... *and that includes having a digital media strategy*

Your organization's crisis plan is incomplete without a comprehensive digital strategy. What you say at the outset of a crisis will set the tone for how both internal and external audiences will perceive your organization's response and handling of a situation. Social media is likely already "talking" about your issue. How are you monitoring those conversation and how will you share and engage? It's important to have messages that are simple, concise and forthcoming. Gather statistics, images and videos in advance to access and distribute as conversations grow online.

**MESSAGE TEMPLATE** - Follow this template to create your message.

<b>Acknowledgement</b>	<i>We are aware of the situation and we are actively working to address it.</i>
<b>Concern/Empathy</b>	<i>This is so concerning / We are as troubled as you to learn about this / Our first concern is for the ...</i>
<b>Action</b>	<i>Share / show what's being done and/or what others can do / "Visit our website for updates"</i>
<b>Context</b>	<i>Confirm / clarify facts; provide information / incorporate third-party experts as appropriate</i>
<b>Commitment</b>	<i>Reinforce commitment / key message and when to expect updates</i>

### ***Empathy & Speed***

Whether you will succeed or fail during a crisis is directly related to the ability of your organization to show and express genuine empathy to the situation and to the people affected. Do not let "getting all the facts" exacerbate the communications problem by creating a delay in your initial response.



## MEDIA INTERVIEWS – BEST PRACTICES

### Preparation is key!

- Anticipate topics and questions.
- Identify the key messages you want to convey; practice but don't memorize.

### You're in Charge

- Be comfortable stopping, pausing, redirecting and rephrasing.

### Responses

- Deliver your message and STOP; the more you say the more you could be taken out of context
- Feel comfortable repeating key messages ... *as I said before ...*
- Call a timeout if you need to think about your answer.
- Avoid the words "I think..."
- Use every day, simple language. Avoid industry jargon, abbreviations and technical terms.
- Don't just answer a question, give people a reason to trust the information you share. Be personal, forthcoming, open and transparent.
- Do not repeat negative language or buzzwords. Keep responses positive.
- Take advantage of open-ended questions like ....  
*"So what's going on here?" or "Is there anything you'd like to add?"*
- Use analogies or verbal pictures to help explain complex topics.
- Do not speak for others or speculate. Stick to your messages.
- Never say "No comment."

### Flag Key Messages

*"What's important to remember is...."*

*"The bottom line is..."*

*"The focus of this situation should be..."*

### If You Don't Know – Don't Speculate

*"That's something I can't speak to, but what I do know is..."*

*"That's not my area of expertise, but what I can tell you is..."*

### Delivering Your Message

Lead with your conclusion/most important point/theme, then provide supporting information, speak to your audience and what they value.



# CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN



## Acknowledge and Bridge

This is the use of smooth, connecting phrases to move the interview from one point back to your message.

### Acknowledge

That's an interesting viewpoint and it's

a topic I'm thinking about, too \_\_\_\_\_

That's a good question \_\_\_\_\_

That's a popular misconception \_\_\_\_\_

That's not quite accurate \_\_\_\_\_

I understand and share that concern \_\_\_\_\_

Before we move to a new subject \_\_\_\_\_

That's not my area of expertise \_\_\_\_\_

You make a good point \_\_\_\_\_

### Bridge

*Another thing to remember is ...*

*What we should be asking is ...*

*The fact is ...*

*Let me clarify that information ...*

*That's why we should ...*

*I'd like to add ...*

*What I can speak to is ...*

*However, our focus is ...*

## WORKING WITH NEWS REPORTERS

### Questions to consider before engaging with the media:

- What do you gain from participating in the interview? What are the risks?
- Is this an effective medium or opportunity to get your message across?
- Do we have our messages, and can our spokesperson effectively deliver them?

### Ask questions of the reporter before you answer questions such as:

- What's your angle?
- What information do you have and what questions would you like to ask?
- Will others be interviewed and if so, who?
- What is your deadline?
- Will this interview be recorded or live? (radio or television)
- Would it be possible to approve my quotes in advance of publication for accuracy?

### Anticipate these three main questions to be asked in your interview:

- What happened?
- Why did it happen? (Who's to blame?)
- What's being done to ensure this will not happen again?

Monitor news coverage and assess how the media is covering the story and if your messages are being conveyed accurately. Make updates to your messages based on new information and any strategy adjustments.



## COMMIT TO WRITING, REVIEWING AND UPDATING YOUR PLAN

5

A crisis response plan is not effective if it's buried in your computer files or placed on a bookshelf. Treat it as a living, breathing document and continue to review and update its content. Meet with your team periodically to ensure everyone knows the process and their responsibilities.

When a crisis impacts another business or industry, use it as an opportunity to gather your team. Discuss how your organization would manage the circumstances. Take time to review your plan, protocols and messages, and discuss emerging issues or vulnerabilities.



When written in Chinese, the word 'crisis' is composed of two characters. **One represents DANGER and the other represents OPPORTUNITY."**

JOHN F. KENNEDY

# CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN



## Contact Information

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*For immediate assistance with your crisis plan, media monitoring and messages, and to engage with industry contacts, contact Donna Moenning.*

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### WEBSITES:

[www.Veal.org](http://www.Veal.org)  
[www.MeatInstitute.org](http://www.MeatInstitute.org)  
[www.BeefBoard.org](http://www.BeefBoard.org)  
[www.seeitstopit.org](http://www.seeitstopit.org)

**ADDITIONAL INDUSTRY CONTACTS:** *Who are your key industry contacts?*

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