

## Creating A Disaster Communication Plan

*A step-by-step guide to creating a communication plan for navigating and responding to disasters.*

### Goals & Audiences

- 1. Identify goals, think broadly about possible disasters or crises that your organization could face.**
  - Outline your key services and stakeholders.
  - Determine what disasters you are likely to face and the services your organization will conduct in a disaster or emergency. For example: Convene partners on a call or in a meeting within 24 hours or conduct a community assessment.
  - If required, outline other possible scenarios and needs that may arise from these emergencies.
- 2. Determine your audiences.**
  - Look at your outline of stakeholders and use this as a starting point for your audiences.
  - Some other audiences that may apply: survivors and families; employees and families (internal); news media; community; elected officials; suppliers; company or network management (for example, Council on Foundations, State and National VOADs).

### Messages & Methods

- 3. Prepare key messages in advance of disasters.**
  - While you will want to tailor what you say to the specifics of each event, you can have draft responses prepared ahead of time that outline steps you plan to take in launching a fund or responding with a particular service.
  - Consider the audiences outlined in step two: What do you need to communicate to your employees? For example, announcements about delayed or shortened workdays, only designated essential employees should report, an update to the board.
  - Draft potential messages for external audiences about standard or signature programs. This could include new actions—a disaster fund launch or a call for partners to update each other.
- 4. Determine your communication and outreach methods and platforms.**
  - Traditional communication methods include newsletters, phone calls, webinars, meetings.
  - Non-traditional and grassroots approaches include door-to-door mobilization, fliers, Yammer, discussion forums.
  - Social media methods include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others.
  - Consider your audiences again: Which methods are they already engaging with? Consider what might happen if there were significant power, cell, or internet outages.
  - Determine which methods will be your primary outreach to each audience, and then decide on alternatives in case the first is not a good option in the aftermath of a disaster.

## Timeframes & Budgets

---

### 5. Outline timeframes and make budget projections.

- Which audiences should you reach out to first? For example, in what order do you need to account for staff, convene partners to a phone call, contact funders and the media? Make an outline of what should occur at what time following a disaster based on these priorities.
- If any of your planned disaster communications will require additional staff hours, radio or television costs, social media boosts, etc., estimate these costs and determine how they should fit into the general organization budget.

## Outreach & Media

---

### 6. Plan for two-way communication and feedback.

- Be prepared to adjust outreach and communication methods based on needs and feedback from partners.
- Social media methods are authentically two-way. Monitor conversations and comments to determine if you need to respond, especially to answer questions regarding where to find help, how people can contribute to disaster response, etc.

### 7. Prepare for working with the media.

- Keep primary media list up to date.
- Ahead of likely disaster, notify key media who to contact after event occurs.
- During a disaster, issue ongoing bulletins and updates that will help media get the word out to the public.
- Be available. Media often have fast deadlines. If you are not prepared to do an immediate press conference, issue a statement with a note on when you will be available for comment or update.
- Don't answer questions if you don't know the answer. It's ok to say you don't know or that you will follow up with them.
- Be prepared with an information sheet that has important facts and contact information.
- Find out ahead of any one-on-one interviews who the reporter is and what their story will be about. Depending on time frame, ask for a list of potential questions that you can prepare for.

## Remember

---

The Center for Disaster Philanthropy is here to assist you. Reach out to CDP's staff before or after a disaster has struck your community. They are ready to provide thought-leadership, advice on establishing disaster funds, and connections to colleagues around the nation who can support and inform your efforts.

Center for Disaster Philanthropy

1201 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20036

T: 1 202 595 1026 | F: 1 202 833 5540

@funds4disaster