



Policy Document

Policy: **Crisis Communication Plan**

Policy Number: 4.17

Policy Type: Operational

Date Approved: February 9, 2018

Date Revised:

1. Background

- 1.1. A crisis is any situation that threatens the integrity or reputation of the college, usually brought on by adverse or negative media attention¹. The Saskatchewan Association of Medical Radiation Technologists (SAMRT), like any organization, may, at times, be confronted by a crisis situation which demands immediate attention. In such matters, the media, on behalf of the public, will be requesting information or an opinion from SAMRT.
- 1.2. The Crisis Communication Plan serves to provide consistent and accurate information to the media and the public in a professional manner. A well-managed crisis may actually improve the public's opinion of the SAMRT, as well as showcase the SAMRT as a professional organization.
- 1.3. Remember that it is crucial in a crisis to tell it all, tell it fast, and tell the truth.

2. Preparations

- 2.1. The Crisis Communication Team should be identified^{1,2}. It should be comprised of:
 - a) The SAMRT President;
 - b) The SAMRT Executive Director;
 - c) The SAMRT Vice President;
 - d) Committee chair(s) of relevant committees; and
 - e) Legal representation.
- 2.2. The Executive Director will determine if government stakeholders should be informed. The nature of the crisis will drive who is contacted, and what form of communication should be employed. (Refer to Appendix A for potential government stakeholder contacts.)
- 2.3. The Executive Director will act as the spokesperson. This is best suited for timely response and consistent messaging. However, the Crisis Communication Team will discuss the matter and determine the key communication points. Members of the Crisis Communication Team may attend media interviews in person, standing in the background to show a united front and for support. One person on the Crisis Communication Team will be appointed to take notes. Team member attendance at the media interview also allows for an immediate meeting of the committee after the interview for follow-up actions or for review.



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3. Location of Media Interviews

- 3.1 A neutral, consistent site is the best plan. The SAMRT office is the preferred location. If necessary, the news studio would also be a reasonable location. Interviews should not be conducted at the homes of any of the team members of the Crisis Communication Team, or at the workplace of any college volunteers.

4. Immediate Responses

- 4.1 Media calls should be directed to the SAMRT office.
- 4.2 The Executive Director should quickly respond with statements similar to, "Facts are being gathered. We will make a statement within 24 hours OR by the end of the day."
- 4.2.1 The person receiving the media contact or who is first aware of the situation will contact the Executive Director.
- 4.2.2 The Executive Director notifies the Crisis Communication Team.
- 4.2.3 The Executive Director and others at her discretion collect the relevant facts or information regarding the situation.
- 4.2.4 The Crisis Communication Team meets directly or by teleconference as soon as possible to:
- Discuss facts;
 - Determine key communication message; and
 - Determine the timeframe for the next follow-up meeting post media interview.

5. Key Message Considerations

- Appendix A and B are unpublished.
- As the regulator of medical radiation technologists in Saskatchewan, the focus of the message is to consider the protection of the public.
- The first message should include the *who, what, when and where* of the situation, recognizing that there may be privacy implications to consider when determining what information can be released.
- It is always best when a mistake is made to admit it up front^{1,2,3}. However, the initial statements should come from a perspective of empathy. An apology, where appropriate, can be issued after the facts have been gathered.
- Never say, "No comment³." Offer, instead, that facts are being investigated and will be communicated as soon as possible.



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- f) Rehearse prepared statements and anticipate tough questions.
- g) Don't volunteer information unless it's a point the college wants to make and the question hasn't been asked yet. Generally, the last question media will ask is, "Do you have anything further to say?" The response should be, "No."
- h) Don't talk off the record³. There is no such thing.
- i) Stick to the facts and stick to the message. Do not speculate or offer an opinion.
- j) Do not blame others or be judgemental.
- k) Follow-up messages should focus on actions being undertaken to avoid similar situations in the future.

6. Apologies

- 6.1 An apology is not an admission of guilt³ and, when appropriate, you shouldn't hesitate to make one. Be aware, however, that the college should not apologize for performing its role as a regulator.
- 6.2 If you apologize, make it a good one. Don't make excuses. Be earnest.
- 6.3 An apology can go a long way in earning the trust of the public.
- 6.4 *The Evidence Act* (Apology provision)
Amendments to *The Evidence Act* allow people and organizations to make a sincere apology without fearing legal liability in an existing or potential civil action. An apology no longer constitutes an admission of fault and is not admissible as evidence in a court proceeding⁴.

7. Crisis Review

Once the crisis is handled satisfactorily, the Crisis Communication Team will meet to consider:

- a) Action items to be completed.
- b) Any policies that may require revisions.
- c) Strategies to avoid a similar crisis in the future.
- d) Any recommendations and a full report to Council.

¹Clawson Freeo, S.K. (n.d.). *Crisis communication plan: A PR blue print*. www.niu.edu.

²Roos, D. How Crisis Communication Plans Work. <https://money.howstuffworks.com/business-communications>.

³Crisis Communication Planning presentation, National Provincial Network Meeting, November 2017.

⁴Government of Saskatchewan, Public Representative Orientation