

Crisis Issues Management Workshop

Frankie Gould, Louisiana State University

Lyndall Stout, Oklahoma State University

Derek Meads, University of Kentucky

Faith Peppers, USDA NIFA

GROUP POLL

Welcome!

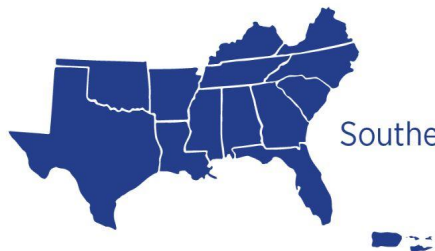
Please answer these 4 questions related to crisis management.



POLL RESULTS

CRISIS & ISSUES MANAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATORS

Joint ASRED-SAAESD Meeting
Lexington, Kentucky
March 27, 2024



Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors



TODAY'S PRESENTERS

- Frankie Gould - LSU AgCenter
- Lyndall Stout - OSU Ag Research & Extension
- Derrick Meads - UK Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment
- J. Faith Peppers - USDA/NIFA

TODAY'S DISCUSSION

- Crisis/Issue overview
- Administrator perspective
- Risk mitigation strategies
- Administrator's role
- Scenarios
- Media tips & practice
- Critique & questions

CRISIS DEFINITION

- Something unexpected, immediate, critical, demands fast response
- Potential for communication to the public through mass media
- Situations that could:
 - Harm or threaten to harm people or property
 - Seriously interrupt operations
 - Significantly damage reputation
 - Negatively impact the organization's future credibility

ISSUE DEFINITION

- A negative or potentially negative occurrence or situation that could develop into a crisis that damages the reputation of the organization
- Issues management is NOT spin, public relations and the sole responsibility of communicators
- It is everyone's responsibility
- Ignoring an issue can damage your brand, create chaos and make the organization crisis prone

EXAMPLES

- Natural disaster
- Disease discovery
- External conflicts
- Internal conflicts
- Loss of life
- Student incidents
- Scandals, arrests, accidents

ADMINISTRATOR PERSPECTIVES

- **Crisis: Turfgate**
 - Scott Senseman, Associate Vice President
Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station
- **Issue: 4-H Shooting Sports**
 - Tara Smith, Executive Associate Vice President & Director
Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service

CONTAINING AN ISSUE

- Seconds away from crisis every second of every day! (No pressure)
- If it's on social media (even personal accounts) – considered official statement
- Media training essential for staff and volunteers
- Pre-crisis plans for special events
- Standing crisis communications plan for organization that includes problem identification “heads up” and lines of reporting
- Culture of contacting communications team, sample scripts, expectations for social media, etc.

MITIGATING RISK

- Safety is paramount
- Regular discussions with executive/leadership team about emerging issues and potential controversies
- Work with communications leader to develop tactics to prevent reputation harm
- Truth and transparency, mindful of personnel and legal matters
- Flexibility and availability to have candid conversations
- Avoid emails

ROLE OF ADMINISTRATOR ON CRISIS TEAM

- Top-down approach preferred, unless team & chain of command already established
- Phone calls vs. emails vs. text
- What does the “E” in email stand for?
- Calm - able to make quick decisions amid chaos and partial information
- Resources for faculty and staff; reprioritizing others if needed
- Communicate with university leadership and other state agency heads

RESPONSE PREPARATION

- Gather facts & begin drafting messages immediately
- Determine the right spokesperson or person to attribute to if using a statement
- Determine the best response and whether to release a statement, develop talking points or select a spokesperson to position for media interviews
- If interviews are needed to convey specific details, prep with your communicator

SPOKESPERSON'S ROLE

- Empathetic, calm & knowledgeable
- Good listener
- Able to get back on topic
- Thorough yet concise, speak in soundbites
- Use the inverted pyramid approach to conveying the facts
- Most important information first, save the 'how' and 'why' for later
- Weave in the values of the organization: safety, service, science, etc.

WHAT NOT TO DO!



APPEARANCE TIPS

- Be your best, authentic self on your best day
- Speak clearly and in soundbites
- Look at the reporter/interviewer
- Avoid busy patterns and the color orange
- Wheel of Fortune contestants are great examples of what to wear
- Hair out of face, hairspray it so you don't touch it
- If wearing branded clothing, ensure logo is current
- Hair, makeup, clothing and accessories should be modest and never detract from what you're saying

INTERVIEW TIPS

- If there's time - get background on media outlet, reporter, angle of story, etc.
- Non-verbal communications say a lot
- Speak with integrity and humility, not arrogance
- Pivot if needed to return to topic
- Don't take the bait, stay calm, ask clarifying questions
- OK to say "I don't know, but will get back with you."
- Never lie
- Don't speculate or give hypotheticals

CRISIS EXERCISES

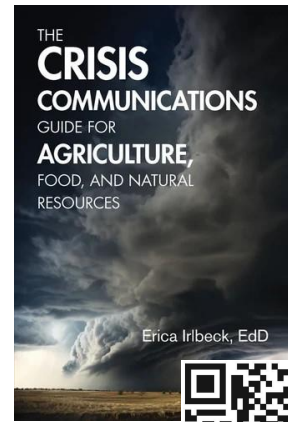
Today's Scenarios

- Animal welfare issue
- Environmental accident
- 4-H transportation accident
- Research ethics
- Contagious disease outbreak
- Food safety

PRACTICE TV INTERVIEWS

RESOURCES

- **The Crisis Communications Guide for Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources**
 - Author, **Erica Irlbeck, Ed.D.**, Assoc. Dean for Outreach & Engagement, Davis College of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources and Professor, Ag Communications, Texas Tech



- **ACE Certification in Issues & Crisis Management**
 - **March 19** - Issues Management with Frankie Gould & Faith Peppers - **Virtual**
 - **May 22** - What is Crisis Communication? with Erica Irlbeck - **Virtual**
 - **June 26** - Developing the Plan & Experiential Learning Practice Exercises - **Post Conference workshop at ACE in Salt Lake City**

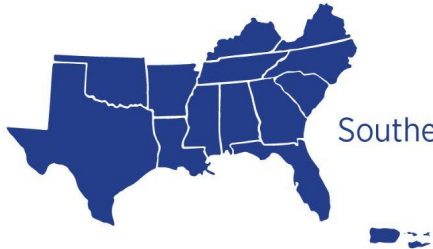
FINAL THOUGHTS FOR ADMINISTRATORS

- Set the expectation and govern training efforts for faculty and staff
- Mobilize resources for comms teams during crisis and suggest specialized or advanced crisis training afterward
- Crisis management quickly takes a toll on well-being of individuals and teams
 - Depending on risk or magnitude of event, fund collaboration with external public relations firm if needed
 - Offer support and encouragement in your leadership role

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK & QUESTIONS

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