

Crisis Communication Simulation

① Place 15 Whole Units

These units are an abstract representation of time, training, money, effort, and other various resources available to your organization. You have a maximum of 15 units; you do not have to use all of them, but you cannot use more. Units cannot be divided. For example, you are not allowed to spend ½ of a unit working on adequate environmental controls by improving your facilities. The figures in the probability column represent the likelihood that a crisis will result for each of the causes. Your organization faces a 21% chance that a crisis will result from ill defined or conflicting policies, for example. To protect your organization from this source of crisis, you could choose to spend units on procedures (the appropriate intervention for this cause of crisis).

Cause	Probability	Intervention	Unit Value
Ill defined conflicting policies	21% (88-99)	Procedures	
Opportunities for training not made available	18% (69-87)	Training	
Oversight of operations; chain of command	13% (55-68)	Surveillance	
Not having clearly defined organizational objectives; or adherence to policy	12% (42-54)	Standards	
Log book, updates, and weather reports	12% (29-41)	Information	
Failure to provide guidance, oversight, and leadership	10% (18-28)	Supervision	
Threats to job status or pay	6% (12-17)	Pressure	
Inaccurate signoffs, checklists and record keeping	4% (07-11)	Documentation	
Well defined, verified processes, regulation, accountability	3% (03-06)	Substantiation	
Adequate environmental controls	1.5% (00-02)	Facilities	

② Roll for crisis form

Roll a ten-sided die. A roll of 2, for example, means that your organization has been the victim of sabotage. The event details are provided in the second column.

Crisis Form	Event Details
1 = Terrorism	Terrorists have used <i>e. coli</i> to contaminate salad bars throughout a city. The number dead is 1 times the crisis severity units (all children). So far, the number of sick people is 100 times the crisis severity units. You are the state epidemiologist.
2 = Sabotage	Angry line workers sabotaged ovens at a poultry processing plant. The ovens were programmed to cook the products at too low of a temperature and for too short of a time to eliminate <i>Salmonella</i> . A recall has been initiated. The financial impact is one million dollars times the crisis severity units. You are the company's CEO.
3 = Weather/Act of God	Your community has been experiencing torrential rains for an extended period of time. Flooding has been a problem. You have discovered that an unusually large number of people, especially the elderly and youth, have been showing up in hospitals complaining of intense abdominal cramping, bloody stools, and fever. Several children have been diagnosed with Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome. On a hunch, you asked your lab to test tap water for fecal contamination. The lab has just called and reported that the water has indeed been contaminated. The number of dead is 5 times the crisis severity units. You are medical doctors at a large, regional hospital.
4 = Mechanical Failure	An air conditioning unit has been malfunctioning. Condensation has been dripping on your deli meat production line. Your company has sold meat contaminated with <i>Listeria</i> in seven states. The number of people killed is 1 times the crisis severity units; 2 times the severity units of spontaneous abortions have occurred; 10 million dollars times the units has already been lost due to the plant shutdown and recall of products. You are the CEO of the company.
5 = Worker Error	Employees at a Lebanese restaurant have been serving a dish made with raw beef. Local health inspector had told the managers to remove the item from the menu, and they did, but the employees were not told to refuse to make the dish if someone asked for it. The number of sick is equal to the crisis severity units. In addition, the financial cost is \$10,000 times the crisis severity units. You represent the state department of health.
6 = Malfeasance	The manager of a restaurant told cooks to lower grill temperatures by 10 degrees to save some money. The amount of people who are suffering from food poisoning is 2 times the crisis severity formula. You represent the health inspector office.
7 = Economic Exigency	The company in scenario 1 has pledged to pay for the hospital bills of anyone who became ill or was tested for exposure to <i>Listeria</i> . The company underestimated the cost and does not have enough funds to honor its commitment. The amount of money the company is short is \$600,000 times the crisis severity units. You are the CEO of this organization.
8 = Theft	Hospital workers, worried after attending an extra-scary presentation about the potential bird flu pandemic, have raided the meds. locker and have stolen all of the anti-viral medication. This hospital had been identified in the pandemic crisis plan as the lead institution for treating the sick when they begin to appear. Federal officials have threatened to remove your hospital from the plan

	entirely. Your credibility has taken a severe threat. Your CFO has estimated that this event will cost your organization \$500,000 times the crisis severity units, even if your hospital is not removed from the plan. You are the CEO.
9 = Rumors	No one knows how the story got started, but a rumor is spreading widely that someone found a finger in her can of Parker's Pumpkin mix. Sales of Parker food products are dropping fast. The amount of money lost so far is equal to \$50,000 times the crisis severity units. You are Parker's CEO.
10 = Employee Unrest	Lettuce field workers are angry that they do not have access to adequate health insurance. Executives for the lettuce distributors received large bonuses while the workers and their families endured another year of demanding work and static pay levels. The workers are so angry that some of them sprayed lettuce fields with powerful pesticides just before the lettuce was harvested. Fortunately, the problem was discovered before the lettuce was sold to consumers. Unfortunately, the amount of money lost so far is equal to \$1,000,000 times the crisis severity units. You are the head of the Lettuce Growers Association.

③ Roll for crisis cause

Roll ten-sided die twice. The first roll represents the 10s unit, and the second roll is the 1s unit. For example, a first roll of 2 and second roll of 3 would equal 23. This number corresponds to the percentages listed in the probability column of step one. Using the ranges in parentheses, we find that 23 falls in the 18-28 range. The underlying cause of this crisis would be a problem with supervision.

4 Roll for crisis severity units

In the details of your crisis form (as determined in step 2), a formula for calculating damage is provided. Crisis severity units are determined by rolling the appropriate die for your crisis form, as indicated in the following table. For the example of sabotage, a ten-sided die is rolled. The resulting number indicates how severe the crisis might have been without pre-crisis intervention. Next, using the table from step one, look to see if you were prescient enough to spend units on the cause of the crisis you are now facing. Considering the example roll of 23 in step 3, you would look to see how many units you spent working on supervision in step 1. Subtract this number of units from your crisis intensity roll. If you had rolled a 9 for crisis severity but had placed 5 units on supervision, then your final total crisis severity units would equal 4. For the sabotage scenario, the crisis severity equals one million dollars multiplied by the final severity units. In this case, your organization has lost \$4 million. Look on the bright side; if you had not spent units as you did, you could have lost \$9 million. If your total is 0, then you have averted the crisis. If the total is a negative number, your efforts have not only averted the crisis, but you have also improved the efficiency, structure, responsiveness, etc. of your organization, thus saving money in the long-term.

For crisis form # ...	Roll
1 = Terrorism	1-10 (one ten-sided die)
2 = Sabotage	1-10 (one ten-sided die)
3 = Weather/Act of God	1-10 (one ten-sided die)
4 = Mechanical Failure	1-10 (one ten-sided die)
5 = Worker Error	1-10 (one ten-sided die)
6 = Malfeasance	1-6 (one six-sided die)
7 = Economic Exigency	1-6 (one six-sided die)
8 = Theft	1-3 (one six-sided die, divided by two and rounded up)
9 = Rumors	1-3 (one six-sided die, divided by two and rounded up)
10 = Employee Unrest	1-3 (one six-sided die, divided by two and rounded up)

Again, severity units equal the number rolled minus the number of preparation units allocated to prevent the cause of this crisis type (as set in step one).

5 Communicate with the public

Using everything that you have learned in this class, but especially the 10 Best Practices, prepare a public statement to lead off a press conference. The public statement should explain:

- 1) What happened?
- 2) How severe is the damage/harm?
- 3) How you had prepared for the crisis?
- 4) How you are handling the crisis?
- 5) What will be done in the future?
- 6) An appropriate statement regarding degree of responsibility and regret.