



Crisis Communications Planning

AAPA Emergency Preparation and
Response Seminar

Portland, Oregon

July 12, 2006



**What is a Crisis Communications
Plan...and why do I need one?**



A Crisis Communications Plan is not an Emergency Operations Plan.

- Our mission is to communicate with our employees, tenants, customers, stakeholders and the public.
- The dissemination of accurate, timely information is our method of ensuring public safety and preserving the port's hard-earned reputation.
- A successful Emergency Operations Plan greatly enhances the effectiveness of the Crisis Communications Plan.

Crisis Time

- In a crisis, the media wants to know what happened, why and who may be responsible for allowing/causing the crisis to occur.
- If you can't convince them you're the best source for this information, they'll look "elsewhere."
- "Elsewhere" is often where reporters find rumor and speculation.



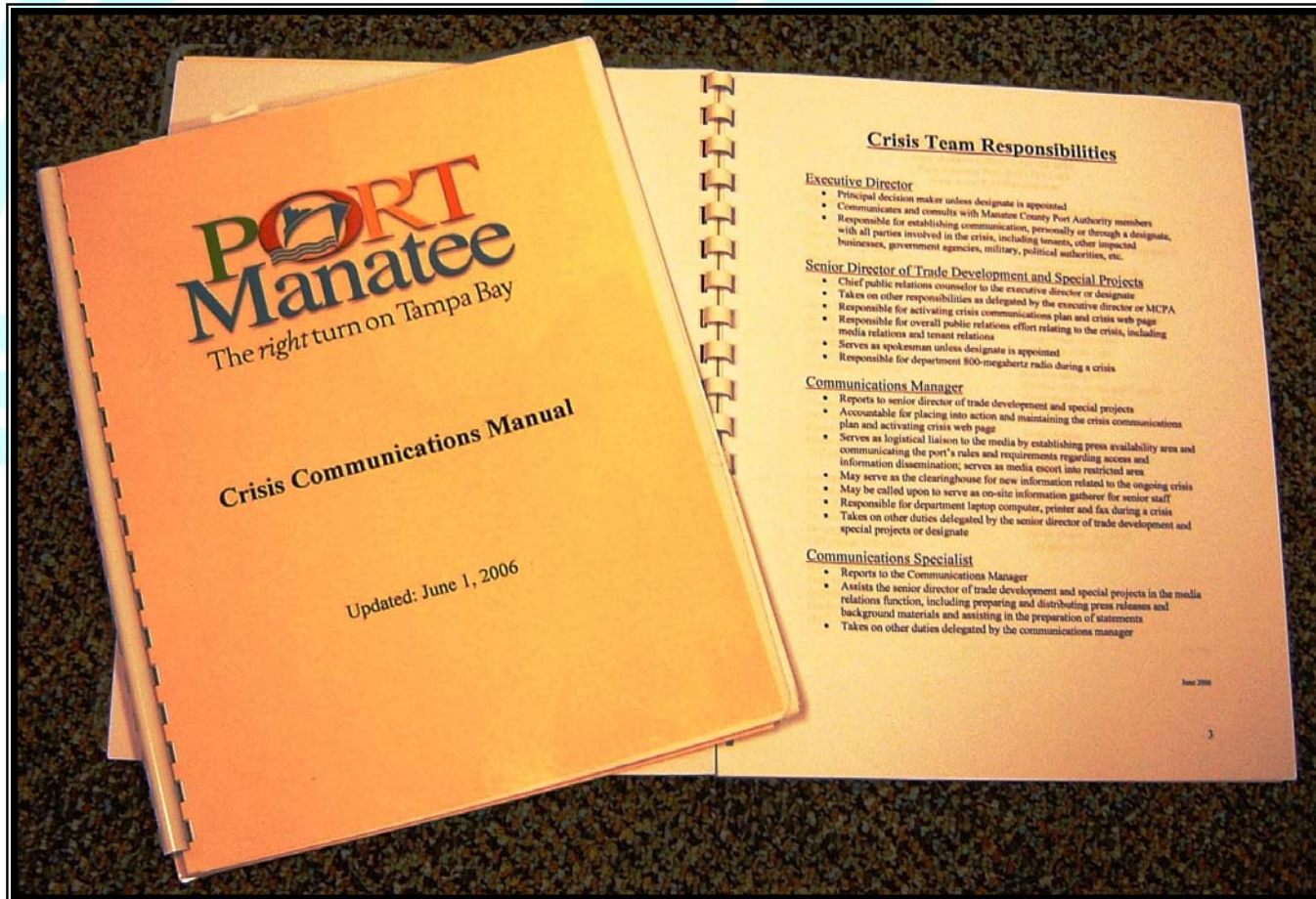
How to prepare? Face Your Worst Fears!

- Natural Disaster
- Industrial or Maritime Accident
- Terrorism
- Criminal activity
- Death of senior staff member
- Embezzlement
- Embarrassing behavior or revelation
- Administrative Miscue

Consider the Ridiculous

What do we do if a terrorist detonates a dirty bomb inside a container as winds and seas are picking up in anticipation of a Category 4 hurricane, causing a docked petroleum barge to capsize and spill oil while all of the Coast Guard's recovery vessels are tied up with the storm?

Plan The Work, Then Work The Plan





In a Nutshell...

“While not every crisis can be predicted, an established routine of information gathering, examination and dissemination is crucial to a favorable outcome.”

- Port Manatee Crisis Communications Manual (2006)

“Procedures & Guidelines”

- Establish the responsibility for information gathering. Someone has to get as close as safely possible, and they have to be able to communicate with decision makers.
- Know in advance who needs to be contacted, and have their information ready at a moment’s notice. (Keep elected officials informed!)
- Know where media members will be gathered and who will be in charge of accommodating their needs.

(HINT: Have background information ready and identify an off-site location in case evacuation is necessary.)

“Key Messages”

- A handful of “key messages” can be crafted in anticipation of a crisis.
- At the very least, these generic statements serve to get us thinking in the right direction during the chaos of a crisis.
- Ex: “All efforts are being made to ensure safety and security, first and foremost.”
- Ex: “We are committed to investigate fully the circumstances surrounding this incident. Until those answers are known, it is unwise for us to speculate.”



And most importantly.....

The port needs a spokesperson... one spokesperson only, please.

- Reporters need a point of contact, a source of timely and reliable information.
- This person needs to be accessible at ALL times. Reporters are bombarded with rumors from editors, bystanders and “experts.” We need to be ready to address everything with a thoughtful answer, or a promise to find out the RIGHT answer, as soon as possible.
- A correctly managed crisis will mitigate the damage, and can actually *enhance* a port’s reputation.

Developing Your Plan

- Consider potential natural disasters unique to your geographic area.
- Be sure to cover the more predictable types of crisis:
 - Major accidents (collisions, spills, injuries)
 - Personnel Crisis (deaths, ethics and morals)
 - Terrorism/Criminal (arson, threats, theft)
 - Legal/Confrontational (illegal activity, protests)

Finally, get the word out!

- Train your front-line employees - receptionists, security guards, etc.
- Schedule times to do tabletop exercises and walkthroughs
- Don't let the plan get stale