

Crisis Communications Plan Template

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General – Section 1 – Introduction

The Crisis Management Plan is part of the overall company's emergency operations plans. These plans cover incidents that may occur to this company.

It is impractical to describe all emergency situations that could arise; therefore, an organizational structure is contained herein to allow for meeting the following objectives in response to various levels of system disturbances. The Crisis Communication Plan is specific in outlining processes and responsibilities, pertaining to communications both internally and externally in an accurate, and timely matter to all the appropriate parties.

This plan will be reviewed at least annually by subject matter experts and updated, as needed, to ensure continuous improvement.

General – Section 1.1 – Purpose

The Crisis Communication Plan establishes guidelines to streamline communication and coordination for extensive emergency response activities.

The purpose of the plan is to:

- Establish an organizational structure that provides centralized oversight of emergency response communications.
- Provide guidelines to support key functions Management Team, Service Center, and Call Centers.
- Provide documentation for incident activities.
- Ensure communications with the public, customers, media, regulatory agencies, and federal, state, and local governments to operate effectively in order to exchange accurate and timely information.
- Identify guidelines for training, drills, and evaluations to continually refine procedures and improve emergency response performance.

General – Section 1.2 – Scope

The Crisis Communication Plan is designed to provide a systematic and efficient means to communicate. It coordinates the communications, roles, and processes of the Information Center during events.

This plan serves as a guide to assist management and is intended to maintain flexibility so that specific details can be tailored to address varying incidents.

The Crisis Communication Plan operates under the *[TITLE] Plan*.

This plan contains instructions and procedures necessary to prepare for and/or respond to incident communications requirements. These plans meet or exceed National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1600 standard and any jurisdictional requirements, including:

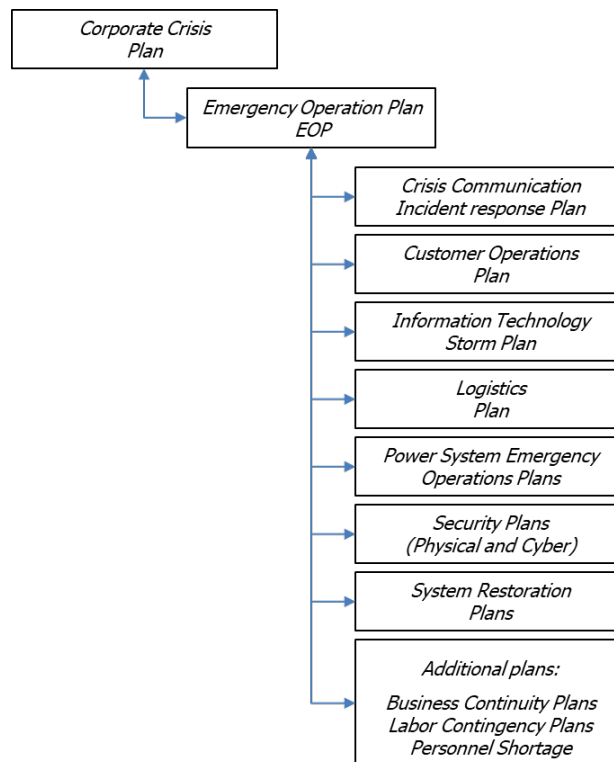
- *Name of State and agency*
- *Name of Federal Agency*

General – Section 1.3 – Plan Alignments

Purpose of plan alignment is to demonstrate the alignment of the Crisis Communications Plan to other emergency plans in the company and to assure coordinated communications.

- *Each plan should have sections on communications that references the Crisis Communications Plan*

Add schematic of all plans in a company and the interactions.



General – Section 1.4 – Manual Responsibility

Position/Department is responsible for keeping the plan updated.

The plan will be reviewed and updated at least annually. It is understood that additional revisions will be required as changes occur to the process and/or operations.

Manual revisions are controlled by an appropriate version control scheme.

General – Section 1.5 – Plan Approval

The details in this plan have been approved and places a priority on communicating the maintaining a reliable system and restoring service when needed.

The elements in this plan meet or exceed the requirements of the respective utility commissions and other authorities.

Realizing that any actions taken may have a far-reaching effect, designated personnel (*add name of positions and department*) have a responsibility to:

- Maintain a safe environment.
- Offer and participate in training, simulations and drills.
- Understand and follow developed Emergency Plans.
- Collect, store, and provide data and other information to facilitate preparing reports required by regulatory, governmental, or industry agencies as a result of an emergency.
- Cooperate and coordinate with the Regional Transmission Operator and with Local, State, and Federal Officials in the restoration of all or parts of the power system.

Approval

The position responsible for maintaining this plan is the *name of position and department*.

General – Section 1.6 – Information Distribution and Security

Add information on how plan is to be handled

General – Section 1.7 – Record of Changes

Crisis Communications Incident Response Plan Revisions Log			
Section	Date of Change	Description of Change	Revised By

General – Section 2 – Narrative

Crisis Communications Plan establishes a framework to manage effective communications during a major incident affecting the company. During a major event an Information Center is activated to provide for a heightened level of communications support and coordination. The center's role is to ensure that customers, community leaders and employees have access to information that is transparent, proactive, timely, accurate and consistent to help keep them safe and ease the inconvenience and disruption caused by a widespread, extended power outage or other major events affecting the company.

Widespread outages, grid emergencies, natural disasters and man-made crises increase the demand for both speed and volume in communications. The Information Center increases resources and focuses them on this demand by providing timely, accurate and consistent information internally and externally.

Communications represents an integral part of the Incident Command Structure (ICS). The Communications Leader reports to the Incident Management Team (IMT) Lead. The organizational IMT structure provides for Command, Planning, Operations and Logistics, and Finance, and it is scalable to adapt to events of varying size. The Information Center assures consistent event information and interacts with Operations, Customer Care, Government Affairs, Regulatory, Legal, and other departments as needed.

This plan provides a comprehensive approach for communicating with customers, public officials, media, employees, outside agencies and other stakeholders. It encompasses multiple tactics, with an understanding that it is as relevant and important to provide information during a major event as it is to maintain and restore electrical service. This plan supports other company plans such as the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP).

General – Section 2.1 – Goals and Objectives

Crisis communications facilitates and enhances internal and external communications during storms, extreme weather conditions and other events such as a cybersecurity or terrorist attack. The goal is to support the efforts to maintain safe and reliable service; proactively help customers understand the impact of an event and how the company's responding.

Those communications include but are not limited to:

- Press releases, news conferences, interviews, etc.
- Social media and web updates
- Talking points
- Photography and video

- Employee communications

The goals are to:

- Gather accurate information
- Develop and distribute consistent messaging in a timely fashion
- Proactively communicate to customers
- Monitor media and social media for information related to the crisis

The objectives of this crisis plan are as follows:

- Prepare employees and customers in advance of predicted events.
- Provide customers, community leaders, regulators, employees and key audiences with consistent, accurate and timely information.
- Ensure communications align with overall company communications strategy.
- Ensure the efficient flow of information.

General – Section 2.2 – Safety

It must be emphasized that SAFETY – for both employees and the public—is of paramount importance. No situation, condition, or pressure justifies an unsafe work practice!

Our objective is that all available resources are used safely, to restore service and/or respond to all customers and/or events requiring immediate response as rapidly as possible.

General – Section 2.3 – The Crisis Communications Team

The Crisis Communications Team represents the internal group to facilitate and coordinate communications across the company, to customers, and all other audiences during events that have the potential to interrupt customer service, disrupt company operations, affects customers, and affects company's image and/or reputation.

The team's purpose is to address the demand for need, speed and volume of communications, to support response, first responders and customers. The team would generally be staffed and coordinated by communications staff, and include representatives from all other business functions. The team includes skilled writers, editors, media relations representatives, advertising personnel, video and photography resources, strategists, organizers, coordinators, etc.

The Crisis Communications Team also provides information to all employees to ensure that employees are informed.

Reference the organizational chart in the appendix for further information on the roles in the Crisis Communications Team during an event.

General – Section 2.4 – The Communication Process

Prior to, during, and after a crisis event, the main communications function is to monitor, gather and compile information, then convey it to customers and other stakeholders.

- As an event progresses, messaging will adapt to the circumstances and, as more information becomes available, our customer information and supporting data will become more specific.
- If it is a cybersecurity or physical security threat, the process will include outside parties such as local law enforcement.
- During a major natural disaster, we will release information.
- Attempt to provide accurate estimated times of restoration
- Communicate that public health and safety are our foremost priorities.

Elements of the process would detail

- *How, when, and what information is collected*
- *What information is prepared such as talking points, press releases, updates to key messages, etc.*
- *How and which communications are circulated through the company and externally.*
- *How and which communications are distributed to the public.*
- *How photos, video, key messages and other information will be disseminated to help ensure customers are getting their questions answered.*
- *How the team will inform media, respond to media inquiries, and correct errors that emerge in the media.*
- *Who and how the team informs and coordinates with regulatory and government staff on communications.*

General – Section 2.5 – Event Modes

This section describes the modes of preparedness and response. Preparing for and responding to incident/events can be broken into four modes: sustained preparedness, pre-event, event and post event. Following is a brief description;

1. **Sustained preparedness** is the period between events that allows time for emergency procedures and emergency operations plans to be written, reviewed, and updated, incident response roles to be assigned, partnerships to be developed and training to take place.
2. **Pre-event** pertains to a specific event and can start two weeks to one hour before an event. It is the opportunity to position the company in a rapid response mode by using checklists, scheduling personnel, checking availability of personnel, preparing for internal transfers, securing housing, arranging for

meals, utilizing historical data on similar past events, requisitioning material, communicating with Mutual Assistance Groups, and communicating with internal support groups.

3. **Event** mode is now utilizing all your pre-event preparations and utilizing them to focus on managing the event.
4. **Post Event** is after events such as ice, wind, hurricane, etc., the objective is to evaluate the storm event within a few weeks of the event, to determine processes and procedures that worked well and identify those that may need revised and determine additional training needed.

General – Section 2.6 – Company Information

Following is information and references that you might use in communications.

1. Customers serviced –
 - a. Industrial, Commercial, Residential
2. Territory square miles –
3. Jurisdictions in (State, County, etc.) -
4. Number of Generating Stations –
5. Number of miles of Transmission –
6. Number of miles of Distribution –
7. Incident Severity Levels -

Insert map of territory footprint

General – Section 2.7 – News Cycle

Communications to stakeholders take into account the 24-hour news cycle, which informs customers, regulators and public officials. It is with an understanding of an ongoing requirement to address questions and inform the public that the Corporate Communications will be asking Operations for the Reports to be updated at least three times each day.

New information needs to be available for morning broadcast, for which calls will begin around 4 a.m.; the afternoon news conference; and the late broadcast news, which will air at 10 and 11 p.m. This covers the three peak periods for broadcast. Print will cover the afternoon news conferences and may also call before press time for last-minute updates. Print also will check periodically throughout the day to update online editions.

Appendix – Crisis Communications Incident Management Team and Roles

Insert Information Center ICS Structure schematic

Roles and Responsibilities

The following are the roles within Information Center. The Information Center is scalable to the event and may activate only some of its members if the event is small, or preparing for a larger event. In this case, the team members remain in their original locations and may also continue to fill their day-to-day roles. The scalability of the Information Center allows for the necessary roles to be activated while other roles remain on standby. The Information Center Leader should determine what roles are required for specific events as they occur.

Role Name (Example)

Role Description

Key Responsibilities

Skills Required

Number of People Required

- 3 (2 day shift and 1 overnight backup)

Reports To

Examples of possible roles

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| • Administrative Coordinator | Message Developer |
| • Messaging Editor | Planning Coordinator |
| • Event Statistician | Information Liaison |
| • Emergency Management and Key Accounts Liaison | |
| • Call Center Liaison | Regulatory Affairs Liaison |
| • Government Affairs Liaison | IT Support and Monitor |
| • Media Information Coordinator | Media Monitor |

Appendix – Templates

The following is just an example and each utility will have to update their templates. In many cases, you should be able to take past communications and quickly create an approved template for your company.

Following are a few examples of templates that should be in this section

Pre-event

- Storm preparation tips for employees
- Outbound call to customers
- Severe weather vacation policy for employees
- Notice to event leads - Managers and template meeting notice
- Social media posts with general information about events or restoration process
- Etc.

Event

- Mobilizes Comprehensive, Strategic Response to Restore Power
- Continues Damage Assessment as Restoration Crews Work to Bring Power Back
- Significant Progress Made, Work Continues Around the Clock
- Continues Restoration Effort More Than %> of Customers Restored in First 24 Hours
- Continues Restoration Efforts; Nearly % of Customers Back On Line Within 48 Hours
- Restores Power to All Public Schools Across Its Service Territory
- Etc.

Post-Event

- All customers restored message
- Employee appreciation
- Thank you to customers and first responders
- Etc.

Appendix – Public Safety Messages

Public Safety Message:

Customers should be aware of downed power lines. Please stay clear of downed lines and treat any line down as being energized. There is also a large amount of tree debris and standing water that may cause a safety hazard. [Utility] reminds customers to be aware of their surroundings and be safe.

Public Safety Message:

- [Utility] strongly urges everyone to follow these important safety tips:
Never touch a downed or damaged power line. Do not attempt to move downed or damaged power lines with branches, boards, etc. Again, stay away from downed lines and report them immediately.
- If customers see a downed line, they should stay away from it and report it to [Utility] by calling [Number].
- Never attempt to remove trees or limbs from any utility line. Assume all objects touching a power line are energized.
- If you are using a portable generator during a power outage, always operate it outside. Keep the generator away from doors, windows or garage to prevent deadly carbon monoxide from entering the house.
- Customers who have special medical needs and depend upon electricity should consider implementing emergency plans or making alternate arrangements.
- Using candles can be hazardous. As a result, [Utility] strongly recommends using flashlights. If customers choose to use candles, they should use them safely. Don't leave candles unattended and watch them carefully around children and pets. Keep candles away from curtains and other flammable objects such as paper.

Public Safety Message:

Customers should be alert for standing water and downed power lines that may occur with the expected storm. Please stay clear of standing water and downed lines, and treat any line down as being energized. There is also a large amount of tree debris that may cause a safety hazard. [Utility] reminds customers to be aware of their surroundings and be safe.

Those customers still without power should turn off all major appliances. This will prevent an overloaded circuit which may cause a fire. Also, if you have an electric range, make sure it's turned off, and do not leave flammable materials such as pizza boxes (etc.) on the appliance. Leave a light on to know when power is restored.

Appendix – Customer Frequently Asked Questions

Questions that you should consider answering and insert in this plan to assist those helping with customers

- How do I protect my home and belongings while my power is out?
- How does [Utility] restore power?
- Are ETRs available?
- When will service be restored for most customers?
- How are ETRs assigned?
- What are your priorities in restoring service?
- Should I call [Utility] if I am still without power?
- What outreach is the company planning to customers in the last restoration tiers?
- My ETR was [When] but I still don't have power.
- Why don't I have an ETR?
- How are the ETRs assigned?
- Why did my ETR change?
- Why does my power keep coming on then going off again?
- I received a call that my power was restored, but I have no power.
- Can a customer get an ETR without reporting an outage? Is there a menu option if a customer doesn't have a callback number?
- Can a customer get an ETR from the outage map?
- Why did the assessment take so long?
- How does [Utility] restore power?

Appendix – Social Media Messaging Examples

Reporting Outages

- Make sure your current phone number is displayed on your account so that we can identify your location immediately. You can update your information by calling <PHONE>.
- Customers are urged to report outages and downed wires by calling <PHONE> or visiting <WEBSITE>.
- You can report and track outages on our mobile app. Download by visiting <LINK> on your mobile device.
- If you know someone without power, please make sure they report it to <PHONE>, <WEBSITE>, or on our mobile app.
- Please continue to report outages at <WEBSITE>, using the mobile app or at <PHONE>.

Estimated Restoration Times

- Get storm updates and estimated restoration times on our mobile app. <LINK>
- (Global ETR) That is our global restoration time, but the majority of customers will have power before that time. Thank you for your patience.
- (No ETR) Currently, we have a global restoration time for all customers of <DATE/TIME>.
- (No ETR) As crews make repairs, we will issue more specific times of restoration.
- (No ETR) We will update your estimated restoration time as crews make repairs.
- (No ETR) An ETR may change if crews arrive on site and report damage or other problems that may not have been apparent when original ETRs were set.

Storm and Restoration Updates

- When power goes out, the restoration process begins as soon as conditions are safe for our field personnel. Learn more about power restoration at <LINK>.
- Many storm-related outages in our area are caused by trees or overhanging branches falling onto power lines.
- (Outage map) Our outage map is updated approximately every 10 minutes. As crews make repairs, we will issue new estimated times of restoration.
- (Outage map) You can click to zoom and then hover over outages areas on our outage map. You should see more information.
- (Call back) We encourage you to request a callback when you report an outage. Callbacks are used to confirm your power has been restored.
- If you called us once to report an outage and everyone's power seems to be restored except yours, please call us again. That usually means that there's a secondary problem affecting your service.
- (Second outage (after power's been restored first time)) Crews may switch main lines off and on to work on area equipment. Weak tree limbs also continue to fall and disrupt service.
- (Storm downgraded) The storm has been downgraded, but we remain ready for continued rain and gusty winds.
- (Life support) Because our customers who depend on life-support equipment are spread throughout our service area, it is not possible to provide restoration priority to individual customers.

Personnel/Mutual Assistance

- We have crews all over the region working to restore power. In total, about <NUMBER> personnel have been mobilized for the restoration effort.
- Crews are working on circuits but may not be visible from your home.
- We have about <NUMBER> permanent line personnel active and available, as well as an additional <NUMBER> contractors currently working on the system.
- (Power hasn't been restored) We appreciate your patience. Crews are working around the clock as fast and safely as they can.
- (Power hasn't been restored) Crews are out working as weather permits. Please make sure you report the outage if you have not already and keep us updated.
- (Power hasn't been restored) Crews are working hard to address outages across the region. Your patience is appreciated, and we are sorry for the inconvenience.

Individual Responses

- (Power is out) If you haven't reported your outage, please call <PHONE> or visit <WEBSITE>.
- (Power is out) Further repairs may be needed to fix problems specific to your home or neighborhood. Please report your outage again to ensure crews are aware that the repair did not fix your outage.
- (Neighbors have power and I don't) If your neighbor has power and you do not, it may be due to a problem specific to your home. Please continue to report your outage.
- (Response to when will you restore my power) I can assure you that crews are working as quickly and as safely as possible to restore power across the region.
- (When will you restore my power?) We appreciate your patience. Crews are working around the clock as fast and safely as they can.
- (Not seeing crews) They may be working on circuits and substations that supply the power, but are not visible from where you are located.

Safety

- Businesses and homeowners are encouraged to conduct a damage assessment of their facilities. In some cases, there may be damage to your equipment that must be repaired before electric service can be restored to your property.
- We are responsible for the wires to the house. You are responsible for the equipment that brings it into the house.
- Check your service line and meter box. If the meter is damaged, call <PHONE>.
- Do not touch downed power lines or objects in contact with downed lines. Report electrical hazards.
- If your power's out, avoid opening your refrigerator and freezer as much as possible. Leaving the door closed will keep your food cold longer.
- Do not attempt to move downed power lines with branches, boards, fiberglass, garden tools, etc. These objects could conduct electricity, and you could be seriously injured or killed.
- Touching a power line with any part of your body or any object such as ladders, tree trimmers, poles or ropes can result in serious injury or death. If you see a wire down, contact us immediately at <PHONE>.

Thank You

- (Power is restored) Happy to hear your power is back on! Thank you so much for your patience.

- (Power is restored) You're welcome. Thanks for being patient."
- (Power is restored) Glad to hear your power is back. We are working hard to get everybody restored.
- (Power is restored) Glad to hear your power is back on. Crews are working around the clock to restore everyone as quickly and safely as possible.