



Crisis Communication Plan

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Crises can strike at any time and they can affect any organization. A crisis is any situation that threatens the integrity or reputation of Racquetball Ontario. The factor that determines how Racquetball Ontario will withstand a crisis is its ability to respond to the media, public, and internal staff and sport partners. It is important for Racquetball Ontario to respond quickly and consistently. The longer Racquetball Ontario delays its response, the more time critics, rivals, and adversaries have to take advantage of the situation.

This crisis communication plan outlines the steps that need to be taken during the first few hours of a crisis. It is a generic plan that outlines the “who, what, when, where, and how” to deal with a crisis impacting Racquetball Ontario. It includes many of the materials necessary ahead of time, such as initial statements, press releases, fact sheets, and backgrounders so that your information can be inserted and ready to go.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION TEAM

- President;
- Executive Director;
- Communication and Marketing staff person.

If the crisis affects National Team

- President;
- Executive Director;
- Communication & Marketing staff person;
- High Performance Chairperson;
- Sport Development and High-Performance staff person.

If the crisis affects Competitions:

- President;
- Executive Director;
- Communication and Marketing staff person;
- Sport Development Committee Chairperson;
- Sport Development and High-Performance staff person.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

1. Establish plan of action;
2. Determine appropriate positioning or messaging to address the crisis. Positioning categories include the following:
 - Human Error;
 - Clerical Error;
 - Unauthorized procedures;
 - Inadequate supervision;
 - Inadequate quality control;
 - Misuse of confidential information;
 - Errors of judgment;
 - Inadequate standard operating procedures.

3. Designate:
 - Primary spokesperson (answers media, makes official statements);
 - Secondary spokesperson (backup to primary);
 - Technical experts (relating to crisis);
 - Advisors;
 - Media escorts;
 - Personnel to direct questions (answering phones).

Designated spokespeople should be comfortable dealing with media, responding to questions, accessible to the public, skilled at identifying key messages, knowledgeable about Racquetball Ontario and the crisis at hand. They should feel comfortable in front of a camera and with reporters.

It is also important to gather as much information about other parties involved in the crisis so that contacts with the media can be coordinated accordingly between the two parties whenever possible.

4. Select locations:
 - Media center: Strategically select a place where all media and external inquiries can go that is away from the offices of crisis communication team, spokesperson and emergency operations center;
 - Interviews and Press Conferences: These locations should be determined ahead of time by the Crisis Communication Team.
5. Prepared statements:

- The greatest opportunity for disseminating accurate facts and control events is IMMEDIATELY following the crisis;
- Your first news release should include the who, what, when and where of the crisis (**Appendix A** and **Appendix B**);
- Include only the facts gathered from reliable sources and confirmed;
- Don't speculate;
- First press interaction: show concern for the public and for your employees, volunteers, athletes, coaches, families;
- As the crisis progresses and new information becomes available the spokesperson should update their prepared statements to include the new information.

6. Be consistent and courteous with media:

- Be consistent with media before and after crisis – maintain the same routine;
- Warn media ahead of time of special circumstances such as safety hazards;
- Treat all media equally;
- Don't volunteer information unless it is strategic to the crisis communication plan;
- Don't talk off the record.

7. Restrict interviews:

- Control interviewing process by restricting interviews to only the designated people;
- The media will likely seek out the information they want regardless;

8. Prepare and practice:

- Prepare and practice tough questions with the spokespersons, advisors, and experts.

9. Collateral Materials:

- Brochures, fact sheets, backgrounders are helpful to reporters and anyone seeking extra information;
- In some cases it helps to create materials that further explain the situation.

10. Key Audiences:

- Consider all audiences and what the most effective method of communication would be for each group;
 - Racquetball Ontario Employees;
 - Racquetball Canada and Sport Partners;
 - Racquetball Ontario Board Members
 - Participants – athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers and parents;

- Communities: local, city, rural, provincial, national;
- Media;
- Government: city, provincial, federal;
- Special Interests Groups;
- General Public.

11. Contact Log:

- Keep a record of all telephone calls from the media and other parties inquiring about the crisis (**Appendix C**).

HOW TO HANDLE THE MEDIA

1. Media Interviews:

- Prepare and practice key messaging;
- Anticipate questions – prepare and practice responses;
- Consider all controversial areas ahead of time;
- Know who will be interviewing you;
- Find out ahead of time how much time the interview will take – set a time limit;
- Find out the location of interview;
- Audiences often remember impressions, not facts;
- Avoid jargon or professional expressions.

Do:

- Be specific;
- Use analogies and comparisons;
- Be enthusiastic, most of all be yourself;
- Be calm, cool and correct.

Don't:

- Avoid double-enders (remote interview with host in the studio);
- Accept “laundry list” questions;
- Go off record;
- Think you have to answer every question;
- Answer hypothetical questions.

2. Television Interviews:

- Sit back in chair, but lean forward to appear enthusiastic and use your hands;
- Keep eyes on interviewer – not on camera;
- Avoid wearing stripes, checks or small patterns;
- Solid colours are best. Avoid wearing bright colours.

3. After the Interview:

- You can check technical points, but do not ask to see an advance copy of the story;
- Never try and go over a reporter's head to stop a story;
- Do not send gifts to reporters – it is unethical for them to accept them.

Appendix A – Media Advisory

PRINT ON LETTERHEAD

DATE

Media Advisory

Event:

Date:

Time:

Location:

The details of this press conference involve (WHAT) _____.

(WHO) _____ will host the press conference.

Full press kits will be available at that time.

Unfortunately no other details can be released until then.

This advisory has been issued by:

(ADDRESS)

Appendix B – Press Release

PRINT ON LETTERHEAD

(Press Release Lead goes here)

For Immediate Release

Date

A (what happened) at (location) involving (who) occurred today at (time).

The incident is under investigation and more information is forthcoming

Appendix C – Call Log

Date:

Name of Caller:

Questions asked:

Telephone number:

Person responsible for response:

Additional follow-up needs: