

Marketing and Communications

National Crisis Communications Plan

CAP Pamphlet 150-16

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS CIVIL AIR PATROL

Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

4 March 2024

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Marketing and Communications in Civil Air Patrol is to connect with internal and external audiences to show our national value, manage the brand, and strengthen relationships with key audiences and customers to enable the organization to grow.

This crisis communications plan is written to provide a framework for handling crisis situations and communicating with key audiences during a crisis. This plan will help CAP protect its reputation, maintain public trust, and ensure accurate and timely information is disseminated to all stakeholders.

This is not a guide for a PIO to use during a mission for which CAP members routinely train, such as searching for an overdue aircraft or missing person.

This plan applies to all CAP units and activities – regions, wings, squadrons, and flights. It covers all types of crises, including natural disasters, accidents, criminal activity, and reputational damage.

SECTION 2: OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this plan are to:

- Establish clear lines of communication and authority
- Ensure that accurate and timely information is disseminated to all stakeholders
- Protect CAP's reputation
- Maintain public trust
- Minimize negative publicity
- Recover from a crisis quickly and effectively

SECTION 3: CRISIS COMMUNICATION TEAM

A Crisis Communications Team (CCT) will be activated when a crisis occurs. The CCT will be responsible for developing and implementing the crisis communications strategy. The CCT will be composed of the following members:

- CAP National Commander or designee
- Chief of Marketing and Strategic Communications
- CAP National Public Affairs Manager
- CAP National Public Affairs Officer
- General Counsel (as needed)
- National Staff Officers (as needed)
- Region and Wing Commanders (as needed)
- Region and Wing PAOs (as needed)
- Region and Wing Staff Officers, including the region/wing chaplain (as needed and determined by region/wing CC)

SECTION 4: CRISIS COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The CCT will develop a crisis communication strategy that is tailored to the specific crisis. The strategy will include the following elements:

- Key messages: The CCT will develop a set of key messages that will be communicated to all stakeholders. These messages should be clear, concise, and consistent.
- Target audiences: The CCT will identify the target audiences for the crisis communications. These audiences may include the media, CAP members, the public, and government officials. Additional target audiences may be defined if the specific situation warrants their inclusion.
- Communication channels: The CCT will select the appropriate communication channels for reaching the target audiences. These channels may include press releases, social media, website updates, and media briefings.
- Monitoring and evaluation: The CCT will monitor the media coverage of the crisis and evaluate the effectiveness of the crisis communication strategy. If needed, additional messages will be developed and disseminated.

SECTION 5: CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOLS

The following protocols will be followed during a crisis:

- Units subordinate to the wing will report ALL crisis incidents directly to the wing commander.
- Immediate notification: The CCT will be notified by the wing commander (or their designee) immediately of any crisis by emailing mac@capnhq.gov. The wing commander will copy the region commander, wing PAO, and any necessary wing staff officers, including the wing chaplain, on the email. The notifying official shall provide verified background information regarding the crisis, e.g., who was involved, what happened, when did it happen, where did it happen, was there any serious injury or loss of life.
- Initial assessment: The CCT will conduct an initial assessment of the situation to determine the scope of the crisis and the potential impact on CAP.
- Develop a communication plan: The CCT will develop a crisis communication plan that is tailored to the specific crisis.
- Execute the communication plan: The CCT will execute the crisis communication plan and monitor the media coverage of the crisis.
- Evaluate and adjust: The CCT will evaluate the effectiveness of the crisis communication plan and make adjustments as needed.
- The CCT will determine when a crisis is resolved, recognizing there may be a need for local follow-up, depending on the situation.

SECTION 6: WHAT IS A CRISIS

In the following instances, all CAP units and activities – regions, wings, squadrons, and flights – are required to notify their chain of command of a crisis:

1. All Cadet Protection Policy violations
2. Airplane crashes
3. Fatal injuries
4. Serious injuries
5. Criminal activity
6. Reputational damage

This is not a comprehensive list. If the wing is uncertain whether an incident rises to the level of requiring the national CCT's involvement, send an inquiry to mac@capnhq.gov for a determination.

SECTION 7: WHAT IS NOT A CRISIS

Instances wings will handle without alerting CAP/MC under this plan include, but are not limited to:

1. A member sustains minor injuries, such as a sprained ankle, etc.
2. A CAP vehicle backs into a pole in a parking lot.
3. A CAP aircraft blows out a tire.

If the wing is uncertain whether an incident rises to the level of requiring the national CCT's involvement, send an inquiry to mac@capnhq.gov for a determination.

SECTION 7: CONCLUSION

This National Crisis Communications Plan provides a framework for CAP to effectively communicate during a crisis situation. By following the protocols and guidelines in this plan, CAP can protect its reputation, maintain public trust, and minimize the negative impact of a crisis.