

South Shore Realtors® Crisis Communication Plan

Introduction

Purpose and Objectives

The South Shore REALTORS® (the Association) Crisis Communications and Management Plan (CCMP) was created so that in a crisis situation the Association staff and leaders will be equipped with a plan of action and a chain of command and will have helpful information readily available to communicate with staff, the members, the media and the public. The CCMP will serve as a guide for staff and leaders to follow in case of a crisis.

The CCMP includes identification of and responsibilities for crisis team members, key audiences and the plan for their notification, external crisis response procedures, the plan for the crisis communications control center, records preservation procedures, potential crisis situations, early warning procedures, the recovery plan, testing, training and the plan for revisions.

Definition of a Crisis

For the purposes of the CCMP, a crisis is defined as any unplanned event or circumstance that has the potential of disrupting the internal or external structure, procedures or image of the Association. Crises are characterized by their suddenness, uncertainty and time compression, which contribute to the stress of the situation. By anticipating potential crises through the CCMP, the Association staff and leaders will be better prepared to handle crises when they occur.

If there is any doubt to whether the Association is in a crisis, the crisis communications team leaders (Chief Executive Officer, President and President-Elect) should decide whether the situation is a crisis and whether the CCMP should be implemented.

Mission Statement

The purpose of this plan is to clearly communicate the Association's commitment to crisis management. The plan will involve the entire organization including the Officers, Board of Directors, staff and members themselves. The authority and structure is clearly laid out in this plan.

Basic crisis control steps include the following:

- Agree on crisis coordinator (i.e., CEO or CEO and CCMP team)
- Collect all facts before deciding
- Define affected audiences
- Begin documentation
- Delegate responsibilities
- Contact authorities and legal counsel
- Assess severity of crisis
- Develop communications plan
- Avoid speculation and blame
- Address security (health, financial, morale, etc.)
- Educational efforts
- Cut losses and move on
- Perform post-crisis audit

Crisis Communication and Management Team Members

Purpose of CCMP Team:

A crisis communications and management team is named so that in the event of a crisis, a planning team of several individuals with specific responsibilities are aware of the plan and are prepared to respond. In a crisis, an organization does not want the full responsibility of responding to the crisis and communicating to the various publics to fall on any one individual. A team scenario will also allow the organization to respond in the event when one or more members of the team are unable to function in his or her designated capacity.

Responsibilities of Team Members

In case of a crisis, the CCMP Team should assemble as quickly as possible and review the appropriate steps as detailed in the CCMP. The Chief Executive Officer should notify the crisis communications team when a crisis occurs. If the Chief Executive Officer is absent or injured or otherwise unable to perform her duties, the Communications Director (or another individual designated by senior management) should fulfill the duties of the Chief Executive Officer as described in the CCMP. If all team members are unable to assemble due to logistical reasons, a conference call should be held (if possible) to go over the plan of action.

It is important to remember that while team members have been given specific responsibilities, each member should be fully aware of everyone's role, in case a member is unable to carry out his or her duties.

The Crisis Communications and Management Team include:

- Chief Executive Officer
- President
- President Elect
- Communications Director
- Professional Development Director
- Managing Director
- Membership Development Advisor
- Administrative Specialist

The Chief Executive Officer, the President, and the President-Elect are the team leaders. All other members of the crisis CCMP team report to the Chief Executive Officer. If the Chief Executive Officer is incapacitated during the crisis, the other two team leaders will direct the remaining team members. The Communications Director is responsible for maintaining records of all events, including written, taped or photographed records. The Administrative Specialist is responsible for answering the main telephone line immediately after the Chief Executive Officer declares the crisis. The Administrative Specialist should also assist the Communications Director by recording all telephoned media inquiries, including date, time, questions and date and time of response.

Identification of Spokesperson

In non-crisis situations, the President is the primary spokesperson for the Association and the President-Elect serves as spokesperson if the President is unavailable. In a crisis, the President, President-Elect and Chief Executive Officer should select the most appropriate person to serve as spokesperson according to the nature of the crisis. If the President, President-Elect and Chief Executive Officer are unable to perform their regular duties, the CCMP Team will select an appropriate spokesperson.

The spokesperson should keep in mind the following tips:

- Deliver only the message that has been agreed upon by the CCMP Team leaders.
- Just give the facts. Do not speculate.
- Do not place blame for the incident.
- Do not knowingly provide false information.

d. Crisis Communications and Management Team Directory and Flow Chart

The CCMP Team directory (See Appendix A) should be reviewed and updated with each annual CCMP revision. Each member of the Team should have a copy of the CCMP at their home(s).

Communicating to all Audiences

As stated earlier, communication is one of the most important steps in the successful handling of a crisis. When considering communications, it is important that team members take the necessary time to consider all obvious, as well as not so obvious, potential audiences. It is key that all information being released be factual and timely. Even the appearance that information is being withheld could be devastating, depending upon the nature of the crisis. The team members must ensure quick and effective communications with internal and external audiences.

Obviously, the audiences will change with each situation, but it is vital that the following questions be addressed. Once each has been addressed and the communications process has taken place, it is extremely important that quality follow-up is done. The team at this point must ask if each of their messages was received and understood. It will do no good to deliver a message which is either not heard or misinterpreted. The best plan will fall apart at this point.

In the time of a crisis, communicating, no matter how hard or trivial it may seem, is the one step in the process that either makes or breaks an organization in times of crisis. The team should go through the following series of questions during the first meeting of the crisis team. (See Appendix G for Sample Agenda)

Questions to be asked:

1. Who needs to know this information?
2. Who is responsible for communicating to those specific audiences?
3. Does each team member who is responsible for communicating to a specific audience have all the facts and fully understand the situation?
4. What exactly do we want to communicate to each specific audience?
5. What are the best avenues for communicating the message to the audiences?

List of Key Audiences and Plan for Notification

The audiences that may be affected by the crisis should be contacted immediately. These include:

Employees

If the crisis occurs during normal working hours, the Chief Executive Officer will notify staff members in person through an impromptu staff meeting. If the crisis occurs outside of normal working hours, the Chief Executive Officer will call all employees. The Staff will continue to perform regular duties unless otherwise directed by the Chief Executive Officer. Staff may be asked to work after hours during a crisis if the CCMP Team deems it necessary. If questioned for information about the crisis, Staff members should remember that the designated spokesperson is the only person who can make an official statement about the crisis.

Board of Directors

As soon as the CCMP Team has gathered and determined first action steps, the Chief Executive Officer will activate the phone tree (if appropriate) to contact the Board of Directors (see Appendix B). The phone tree message should be brief and should announce the name of the chosen spokesperson. In addition, an email with the same message will be sent to all members of the Board of Directors.

Members

After the appropriate message to the members (if necessary) is developed by the CCMP Team Leaders, CEO and the Communications Director, the Communications Director will post the message to the member page of the website. The Communications Director will also send out an email blast to all members. The Communications Director will revise and resend messages as needed and as directed by the Crisis Communications Team Leaders.

d. Media

In a crisis, the media are the most important link to the public. Once the CCMP Team has met to assess the situation and formulate a statement, depending on the severity of the crisis, the media will be contacted by the Director of Communications via email or fax. See Appendix C for an up to date list of media contact information and Appendix D for a fill-in-the blank press release that can be used in a crisis.

The Communications Director will also post the message to the website. The Communications Director will revise and resend releases and update media information on the Web site as needed and as directed by the CCMP Team Leaders.

It is essential for the Communications Director to maintain open and frequent communications with the media during the crisis. If the Crisis Communications Team deems it appropriate, the Communications Director may offer to set up a room for the media to gather during the crisis.

e. Emergency Personnel and Local Officials

If the crisis requires aid from emergency personnel and/or local officials, the Managing Director will contact the appropriate people to alert them of the situation. (See Appendix E for a list of Emergency Personnel and Local Officials). If the crisis does not require such aid but warrants alerting officials, the Managing Director will do so.

If emergency personnel are required on-site during the crisis and the facility is safe and intact, the Managing Director may offer to set up a command center for the officials to gather. If the facility is not safe and intact, the Managing Director should arrange for a command center to be set up within a safe distance of the office. The Managing Director may ask for assistance or supplies from the Knights of Columbus and/or other neighboring businesses.

f. Public

After the appropriate message to the public (if necessary) is developed by the CCMP Team Leaders, CEO and Communications Director, the Communications Director will post the appropriate message to the website.

g. Contractors, Suppliers, Neighbors

If a crisis forces the office to close, Staff should meet to decide what vendors, contractors, neighbors, need to be notified and who will notify each. (See Appendix F.)

Community or External Crisis Response Plan

In the event of an external community or national crisis that affects normal business operations, the Association Staff, Board of Directors and members should show their united support as an organization and reach out to help those affected by the crisis. The Crisis Communications Team should assemble and decide which steps should be taken to show the Association's support. If appropriate, the CCMP Team may delegate responsibilities to the Community Services Task Force.

Actions may include:

- Organizing volunteers to help with recovery effort
- Donating blood, food, clothing or supplies
- Writing a letter of support/condolence/sympathy to the affected organization
- Make a financial contribution to recovery operation
- Allowing use of the Association's facility to help with recovery effort

Internal Crisis

In the event of an internal crisis affecting normal business operations, the Association Staff will assess the situation to take appropriate action. If external audiences have an interest in the situation, a full disclosure should be made once the CCMP Team has met and formed a statement and a plan of action. Members should be updated by messages on the website and blast emails. The CCMP Team will also need to assess status of events taking place or in the planning that may be affected.

Crisis Communications Control Center

The main conference/classroom at the Association will serve as the crisis communications control center during a crisis if the room is accessible. If for some reason the room cannot be used, alternative locations include the Knights of Columbus or a local business. The crisis communications control center is the main room where the Crisis Communications Team will meet.

Records Preservation

If a crisis occurs, it is essential that the Association continue to function normally as an Association as soon as possible. Preservation of records before a crisis ensures an easy transition to normal business operations. The following records are critical to the continuing operation of the Association and should be protected by the designated Staff person:

| <u>RECORD</u> | <u>METHOD</u> |
|--|---|
| Computer network | Egnyte (Cloud-based) |
| Contract files | Egnyte (Cloud-based) |
| Insurance policies | Egnyte (Cloud-based) |
| Bank and Investment information | Online Accounts |
| Employee records | Egnyte (Cloud-based) |
| Computer equipment and software | Cloud-Based (includes RAMCO Database, MS Office, Egnyte, Constant Contact, Survey Monkey, etc.) |
| Crisis Communications Plan | Egnyte (Cloud-based) Copies distributed to each Staff member and Officer/Director |

Potential Crisis Situations

The following is a list of potential crisis situations that could affect the Association. The list is by no means all-inclusive. It is simply to be used as a reference if and/or when a crisis occurs.

1. The President, President-Elect or Chief Executive Officer dies.
2. The President, President-Elect or Chief Executive Officer is involved in scandal (financial, sexual, unethical etc.) that becomes public.
3. A disgruntled employee or member injures other employees or members on-site.
4. A natural disaster destroys the Association's building and/or property.

Crisis 1: The Association President, President-Elect, or Chief Executive Officer dies.

The Association Bylaws (Article XI, Section 6) give the Board of Directors authority and responsibility to act as the governing body of the association. In the event of an accident leading to the death or incapacitation of the President, the President-Elect (or if he or she is unable, the Vice President) immediately takes office. If the President-Elect dies, the Vice President will perform the duties of the President-Elect. If the Chief Executive Officer dies, the Board will immediately search to find an appropriate replacement. Until a replacement is hired, the staff should handle their responsibilities as normally as possible and the President will appoint the Managing Director as Acting CEO or an appropriate replacement.

If the President, the President-Elect or the Chief Executive Officer dies, the following crisis communications plan should go into effect:

Affected Audiences:

- Immediate family (if occurs during an Association meeting and family are not present)
- Association members
- Association Staff
- Prospective members
- Media
- Massachusetts Association of REALTORS® and other Massachusetts local REALTOR® Associations/Boards.

Recommended Action:

- The CCMP team should assemble immediately to determine the course of action.
- The team should select the most appropriate spokesperson for the situation.
- If the immediate family of the deceased officer is not aware of the death, one of the other two officers should call them immediately.
- If the President or President-Elect dies, the Chief Executive Officer should activate the phone tree to notify the Board of Directors and staff. If the Chief Executive Officer dies, the Communications Director should activate the phone tree.
- If the President dies, the Chief Executive Officer should notify the President-Elect immediately that he/she will immediately assume the President's role and responsibilities.
- If the President, President-Elect or Chief Executive Officer dies, one of the other two officers should call an emergency Board of Directors meeting to update them on the situation.
- If necessary, the Chief Executive Officer (or if the Chief Executive Officer is deceased, the Managing Director) should contact legal counsel and the MAR Legal Affairs Department.
- The Communications Director should write a press release about the officer's death and emphasize that the Association is still functioning normally.
- The Communications Director also should write a message from the President (or new President) to the members letting them know what has happened and what will take place next. Again, the message should be positive and emphasize that the Association

is still functioning normally. The message should be emailed to the members and posted on the member page of the website.

- The CCMP Team should meet regularly as needed.
- The Communications Director should maintain ongoing communications with the media and the members throughout the crisis to update those audiences on any decisions made or important developments in the situation.
- The Chief Executive Officer (or in the case of his/her death, the President) should notify MAR and other local REALTOR® Associations/Boards of the death.
- The Chief Executive Officer should maintain records of all events, including written, taped or photographed records

Crisis 2: The President, President-Elect or Chief Executive Officer is involved in some type of scandal that becomes public.

The Association's leaders are to set examples of the highest ethical conduct in accordance with the Bylaws and the Code of Ethics. If for any reason, the President, President-Elect or Chief Executive Officer is suspected of unethical or scandalous behavior, the Board of Directors will investigate the situation and act, as they deem appropriate (may call authorities if they believe the law was broken). The Board may decide to suspend or remove that person from office (authority given under Article XI, Section 8 of the Association Bylaws). The Board also has the authority to appoint a replacement to that office.

The following communications plan should go into effect in this scenario:

Affected Audiences:

- Immediate family
- Association members and Staff
- Prospective members
- Media
- MAR and other local REALTOR® Associations/Boards

Recommended Action:

- The highest-ranking officer not affected by the situation should call an emergency Board of Directors meeting to discuss the situation. The officer should read Article XI, Section 8 of the Association Bylaws to the Board. The Board should decide whether it wants to take action at this time.
- Once the Board decides whether to take action, the CCMP Team should assemble to determine next steps.
- The CCMP team should select the most appropriate spokesperson for the situation.
- If necessary, the Chief Executive Officer (or Managing Director if the Chief Executive Officer is affected by the situation) should contact legal counsel and the MAR Legal Affairs Department.
- If the situation involves finances, the Chief Executive Officer (or Managing Director if the Chief Executive Officer is affected by the situation) should prepare for a potential audit and contact outside auditors.
- If the Board has acted, the Chief Executive Officer should activate the phone tree to notify the staff. If the Chief Executive Officer is the one involved in the scandal, the Communications Director should activate the phone tree.
- The Communications Director should prepare a press release about the situation (and if the Board has acted, the Association's plans for the replacement of the officer). If the situation remains within the association, then the release should not be sent out unless

media contact the Association. If the situation is public, the release should be sent out immediately and posted on the website.

- If the Board has taken action to replace the Officer, the Communications Director should write a message from the President (or new President) to the members letting them know what has happened and what will take place next. The message should be positive and emphasize that the Association is still functioning normally. The message should be emailed to the members and posted on the member page of the website.
- If the Board has not acted but the situation is becoming known among the members, the CCMP Team should decide whether (or when) it is appropriate to send a message to the members about the situation. If so, the Communications Director should write a message from the President (or new President) to the members letting them know what has happened and what will take place next. The message should be positive and emphasize that the Association is still functioning normally. The message should be emailed to the members and posted on the member page of the website.
- The CCMP Team should meet regularly as needed.
- The Communications Director should maintain ongoing communications with the media and the members throughout the crisis to update those audiences on any decisions made or important developments in the situation.
- The Managing Director should maintain records of all events, including written, taped or photographed records.

NOTE: If the Chief Executive Officer is involved in a scandal the President will immediately search to find an appropriate replacement. Until a replacement is hired, the staff should handle their responsibilities as normally as possible and the President will appoint either the Managing Director or an appropriate replacement as Interim or Acting CEO.

Crisis 3: A disgruntled employee or member injures other employees or members on-site.

Employees who have been released from their positions, on occasion, may become depressed and resentful. Likewise, Association members who have been reprimanded or who have had their memberships revoked (or refunds not granted) may become angry. If an unhappy employee, former employee, member or former member becomes hostile and injures other employees or members at the Association headquarters, the following procedures should be followed:

Affected Audiences:

- Immediate family
- Association Staff and members
- Families of the Association Staff and members
- Media
- MAR and other local REALTOR® Associations/Boards

Recommended Action:

- The Chief Executive Officer or any other staff member should immediately dial 911.
- The Chief Executive Officer should be responsible for contacting the proper authorities (i.e., President).
- If the Chief Executive Officer is the injured party, the Managing Director should fulfill his or her duties in this scenario.
- The CCMP Team should assemble immediately to determine the course of action.
- The Team should select the most appropriate spokesperson for the situation.

- The Chief Executive Officer or President should contact family members of the injured people and of the disgruntled employee/member.
- The Chief Executive Officer should activate the phone tree to notify the Board of Directors and Staff.
- The Communications Director should write a press release about the attack, giving the basic facts of what happened, what time, how many were injured and the location and being careful not to identify the attacker by name.
- The Communications Director also should write a message from the President to the members letting them know what has happened and what will take place next. The message should emphasize that the attack is being thoroughly investigated by the proper authorities and the association leaders and the Association will be taking measures to improve security. The message should also express sorrow for those injured or killed. The message should be emailed to the members and posted on the member page of the website.
- The CCMP Team should meet regularly as needed.
- The Managing Director should contact legal counsel.
- The CCMP should plan to investigate how to improve security measures at the facility.
- The Communications Director should maintain ongoing communications with the media and the members throughout the crisis to update those audiences on any decisions made or important developments in the situation.
- The Chief Executive Officer should notify neighboring MAR and Local REALTOR® Associations/Boards of the attack.
- The Chief Executive Officer should maintain records of all events, including written, taped or photographed records.

NOTE: If the Chief Executive Officer is injured, the Managing Director or appropriate replacement, as decided by the CCMP Team, should fulfill the duties of the CEO as described above.

Crisis 4: A natural disaster destroys the Association's building and/or property.

Natural disasters can occur at anytime without notice. In the event a natural disaster occurs that damages the Association headquarters and/or property so that business is disrupted, the following procedures should be followed:

Affected Audiences:

- Association members and Staff
- Families of Association Staff and members
- Media
- MAR and other Local REALTOR® Associations/Boards

Recommended Action:

- In the event of a fire, all staff and anyone else in the office/building will immediately evacuate the building and gather in the parking lot for further instructions.
- If emergency assistance is needed, the Chief Executive Officer should immediately dial 911.
- If there is not extensive damage to the office and/or building or potential danger to the occupants, the Chief Executive Officer should activate the phone tree to notify the Board of Directors and staff.
- If any staff members or members were injured by the natural disaster, the Chief Executive Officer should contact their family members.

- The Chief Executive Officer should assess the damage and facilitate immediate repairs. The Chief Executive Officer should determine if the office should be closed and for how long.
- All staff should work to restore files from the off-site backup location and to verify that the computer network and website are working properly.
- The Chief Executive Officer should be responsible for contacting the proper authorities.
- The Communications Director should work with the Managing Director to restore files from the off-site backup location and to verify that the computer network and website are working.
- The CCMP team should assemble immediately to determine the course of action. If the conference room is unavailable due to the damage, the team should assemble at one of the two alternative locations for the crisis communications control center listed on page 11. (Keep in mind that if the Association is one of many businesses affected by the natural disaster, extensive outgoing communications may be unnecessary.)
- The CCMP team should select the most appropriate spokesperson for the situation.
- The Communications Director should write a press release about the natural disaster's effects on the Association's continuance of business, giving the basic facts of what happened, what time, how many (if any) were injured and an estimated time or date when business will resume. The release should be sent to the media and posted on the website.
- The Communications Director also should write a message from the President to the members letting them know what has happened and when business is expected to resume. The message should emphasize that every effort is being made to repair the building and/or property as quickly as possible so that business can resume. The message should be emailed to the members and posted on the member page of the website.
- The CCMP team should meet regularly as needed. Include computer consultant and Internet service provider as needed.
- Those responsible for records preservation should verify that records have been protected.
- The Communications Director should maintain ongoing communications with the media and the members throughout the crisis to update those audiences on any decisions made or important developments in the situation.
- If necessary, the Managing Director should retrieve the building's insurance policy from the backup server files.
- The Chief Executive Officer should notify MAR and other Local REALTOR® Associations/Boards of the natural disaster's effect on the Association.
- The Chief Executive Officer should maintain records of all events, including written, taped or photographed records.

NOTE: If the Chief Executive Officer is absent or injured, the Managing Director, or appropriate replacement, as decided by the CCMP Team, should fulfill the duties of the Chief Executive Officer as described above.

Recovery Plan

After the crisis has been resolved, the Crisis Communications Team should meet to determine the course of action for the recovery so business can resume as closely to normal as possible. The team leaders should consider recovery efforts for all areas affected by the crisis (legal, business, financial, as well as physical and mental recovery for the staff and members). Depending on the crisis, the following actions may need to be taken:

- The Crisis Communications Team Leaders should work with the Communications Director to send out necessary communications to staff, members and the media about recovery efforts. Include legal counsel as needed.
- If the building is severely damaged and business is impeded, the Team Leaders and CEO should plan for a temporary location for business operations until the proper repairs are made.
- The Managing Director should contact outside vendors and contractors and arrange for a hold on services or delivery of services to a temporary location.
- The Managing Director should take photos or video of the damaged building, review the Association's insurance policies, contact professionals to make necessary repairs and file the appropriate claims. He/she may also need to meet with the insurance agent to update the policies.
- The CEO should take a thorough assessment of the damage and facilitate quick replacement of equipment and supplies that were damaged or lost.
- If a MAR officer has been replaced because of the crisis, the Chief Executive Officer should oversee the transition and help the replacement officer get adjusted to his or her new responsibilities. If the Chief Executive Officer has been replaced, the President and Board of Directors should guide the replacement in the transition.
- The Chief Executive Officer should make sure Staff counseling is available if needed.
- The Chief Executive Officer should meet individually with Staff members as needed to arrange flexible/reduced work hours, salary continuation and child support services.
- The Managing Director should maintain records of all events, including written, taped or photographed records.

Revising the Plan

The Communications Director and Chief Executive Officer should review and revise the plan as needed each year. The Communications Director should consider the following when revising the plan:

- Updating Crisis Communications Team directory
- Updating names of officers
- Adding crisis examples if necessary
- Updating records preservation list
- Updating media contacts
- Updating fill-in-the-blank news release
- Any recommended additional revisions

2020 Crisis Communications Team Directory

Chief Executive Officer: Rachel Tristano

President: Mary D'Ambra

President-Elect: Janet Murray

Managing Director: Stephanie Gillis-Thurstone

Communications Director: Jean Sawtelle

Professional Development Director: Marie Souza

Membership Development Advisor: Marilyn Murphy

Administrative Specialist: Lara Scott

Note: The Crisis Communications Plan Phone Tree is distributed annually (and revised as needed) to the current Board of Directors Team and Staff. Due to the confidential nature of contact information, it is not included in this manual.