CRISIS MANAGEMENT
A PRE-PLAN IN ACTION
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OVERVIEW OF NOLS CRISIS RESPONSE AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

SCENARIO

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSE

FORUM FOR DISCUSSION
DEFINITIONS

- **Crisis**: An event that is, or has potential to be, a turning point in the organization. A crisis may overwhelm the organization’s available staff and resources and impact its ability to operate.

- **Emergency**: An event that may require urgent response but is within the scope of the organization’s resources and does not threaten its ability to operate.
1989: Fatality, Wyoming, mountaineering
1992: Fatality, Wyoming, avalanche
1996: Fatality, Wyoming, river crossing
1999: Fatality, Alaska, glacier travel
2011: Multiple injury incident, Alaska, bear attack
2011: Fatality, India, backpacking
2018: Cardiac arrest, Wyoming, WEMT
CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL

1. Provides guidance for your response and management
   - Many things happen at once

2. Prioritize tasks and actions, and deploy resources

3. Pre-determine certain actions and decisions
AN INCIDENT OCCURS

DAY ONE

- 6:30 PM, Friday, July 28
- The on-call emergency contact person receives an emergency satellite phone call from an instructor stating there has been a fatality on ABW 7/2 and she provides latitude and longitude coordinates.
- The connection is poor and suddenly cut off.

What do you do in the next 30 minutes?
LEADERSHIP

INCIDENT DIRECTOR & LEADER

☑ Organize team structure
☑ Assemble personnel resources
☑ Communicate among teams
☑ Assign roles and responsibilities
☑ Establish priorities
☑ Make/facilitate decisions

☑ Develop contingencies
☑ Plan for long duration response
☑ Knowledge of law enforcement, SAR, investigation requirements
☑ Knowledge of land agency requirements
☑ Determine course continuation options
AN INCIDENT OCCURS

All we know is:

- Which group it is
- Their location
  12 miles in wilderness in a river valley
- Immediate questions include:
  - Is the situation stable?
  - Who is the deceased?
  - What happened?
  - What support is needed?

What are your next steps to help the people in the field?
FIELD OPERATIONS

What we did: Evening

- Established satellite phone contact

We learn:

- Her name
- She died that morning while crossing a river
- She was a member of a five person hiking group
- Everyone else is OK
- The group is now camped near the body
- A runner party left earlier for a road head 12 miles away
- Want to end the course early
# FIELD OPERATIONS

## What we did: Evening

- **Support**
  - Began arrangements for a ground team to hike in
  - Organized additional supplies:
    - food
    - fuel
    - phones
    - batteries

## Evacuation

- Notified the sheriff’s office
- Contacted a horse packer
- Contacted four helicopter companies
- Got permission to land in Wilderness
FIELD OPERATIONS

What we did: Evening

- Helicopter retrieved body that evening
- Sheriff’s deputy to investigate scene in morning
- Prepared two staff to fly in and hike out with group
FIELD OPERATIONS

What we did: Day One

- Deputy sheriff and staff flew to the course
- Deputy returned and briefed crisis team on situation
- Runner party arrived at road head in evening
  - Vehicle and driver waiting
- We continued to support other courses (about 25 at that location)
FIELD OPERATIONS

What we did: Day Two

- Course came to trailhead in late afternoon
- Vehicles waiting to pick them up
- Return to campus
- Shower and fed
- Allowed to call home
Psychological Support

- Psychological stress discussion next morning
- Counseling made available for students and staff
- Normal end-of-course tasks
- Group activities for students
- Instructors stayed involved with students
AN INCIDENT OCCURS

All we know is:
- Who the deceased is
- We need to notify the family

- How is the family contacted?
- Who informs them?
- What factors are considered?
FAMILY RELATIONS

What we did:

- President (or designee) telephoned family
- Organized, compassionate, and caring
- Sample script

Hello. Mr./Ms____I am____(title)____from NOLS. ______(name of student) was____(hit by rock/fell/in an accident) while on their NOLS course. I am terribly sorry to have to tell you that _________(name) (died/was seriously injured).
FAMILY RELATIONS

What we did:

- Designated family liaison (consider divorced parents)
- Issues of family members at location
- Family interaction with students and staff
- Family members visit incident site
- Grief counselors, clergy, or therapists
FAMILY RELATIONS

What we did:

- Ask if organizational representative can attend funeral or memorial
- Stay in regular contact with family
- Stay in touch with other course members
AN INCIDENT OCCURS

- Word spreads fast
- Who needs to be informed?
- We only have basic information of what happened

- How is communication managed?
- Who are your audiences?
- What do you need to watch out for?
COMMUNICATION

What we did:

- Establish leadership
  - Media Leader
    - Social Media Coordinator
    - Spokesperson
  - Communications Manager
COMMUNICATION

What we did:

• Audiences

External
• Media
• Associates
• Partners
• Clients

Internal
• Staff (field/town)
• Trustees
• Other students
• Other families
• Legal counsel
• Insurance
COMMUNICATION

What we did:

- Media/public messages drive all messaging
- Stand-By / Buy Time Statement
- Press Release
- Use of website
COMMUNICATION

What we did:

- Factual
  - What, when, and where
  - Maybe who (next of kin, minors)
  - Never why
  - No medical information

- Don’t deny incident occurred
COMMUNICATION

What we did:

- Be cooperative
- Want a short-lived story
- Manage interviews: in person or on site
- Watch for errors
- Turn off comment feature
- Keep records of print and interviews
COMMUNICATION

What we did: Internal audiences

- Informed all staff
  - Held all staff meeting at HQ
  - Inform other NOLS locations and staff in field (memo, email, website)
  - Watch for staff judging the incident

- Limit use of email

- Called each family of other course members

- Direct people to the website
AN INCIDENT OCCURS

- We need more information
- Need facts to assess our legal exposure
- Need facts to prevent rumors
- We really want to understand what happened

- How would you get additional information?
- How would you investigate the incident?
INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

Three phases of investigation and documentation

1. Field
2. Administrative
3. Incident review
INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

What we did—field

- Witnesses
  - Just the facts (who, what, when, & where)
  - Written accounts by leaders
- Evidence, photos, sketches
- Site visit
INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

What we did—administrative

- Google Doc
- Student factual interviews
- Staff factual interviews
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we did—documentation sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Witness statements  <em>(written)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Instructor statements  <em>(written)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Interview notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Maps and location coordinates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Photos and diagrams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Weather &amp; Environmental records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Incident response logs  <em>(Gdoc &amp; others)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Course paperwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Daily travel plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Outfitting records  <em>(gear/rations)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Briefing information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Evaluations  <em>(student, instructor, program)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Contact logs w/family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Reports from other agencies  <em>(SAR, law enforcement, land agency, FOIA requests, etc.)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

What we did—incident review

Internal review

- Captured the story
- Analysis
- Conclusion
- Recommendations for change (if any)
INVESTIGATION & DOCUMENTATION

What we did—incident review

External review

- Yes or no?
- Who arranges
- Plan soon after incident
- Specific charge to reviewers
- Release of review
NOLS CRISIS MANAGEMENT SCHEMATIC

 Incident and Field Response

  Emergency Notification

 INCIDENT DIRECTOR

 Incident Leader

  • Field Management
  • Evacuation Management
  • Communicate with people on the scene
  • Arrange evacuation/field support

 Family Relations

  • Documentation Management
  • Manage response log, collect field documents, maps, etc
  • Maintain day-to-day operations & business continuity

 Communications

  • Notifying Family
  • Family Support

 Investigation

  • Gather facts & evidence
  • Facilitate review

 External Media Leader
  • Spokesperson
  • Social Media Coord
  • Staff (field/town)
  • Other students
  • Trustees
  • Other Families
  • Legal counsel
  • Insurance

 Internal Media Leader
  • Internal Comms Leader
  • Media
  • Associates
  • Partners
  • Clients
ACTION ITEMS

“Keep a cool head and a warm heart.” United Educators

1. Use the NOLS schematic as a guide to develop a crisis plan
2. Identify key players in your organization who will be involved with crisis management and assign roles and responsibilities
3. Practice your crisis plan. Run a drill to identify strengths and gaps.
“A crisis is a brutal audit of prepared plans.” Weick and Suttcliffe

Thanks

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A PDF of this presentation can be found at

www.nols.edu/wrmc