

# COMMUNICATIONS IN TIMES OF CRISIS

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts

These guidelines have been adapted based on the Girl Scouts Crisis Communications Tool  
“When It Feels Like the Sky Is Falling...And Why It Really Isn't”

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# UNDERSTANDING AND PREPARING FOR CRISES

## Approach.

### PREDICTABLE ISSUES

Anything cyclical which directly affects your Girl Guiding or Girl Scouting brand – negative stories about Guiding and Scouting programmes, or Girl Guide or Girl Scout events...

**APPROACH:** planned messaging, identified spokespeople, targeted media. Build reactive messaging into your Risk Assessment.

SENSITIVE ISSUES RELATING TO GIRL GUIDING AND GIRL SCOUTING

### UNPREDICTABLE ISSUES

Anything non-cyclical that has a direct impact on your Girl Guiding or Girl Scouting brand – natural disasters (flooding, hurricanes, gender-based violence, other tragedies...)

**APPROACH:** Rapid response analysis, on the ground support, Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting reactive messaging and instant response to inquiries.

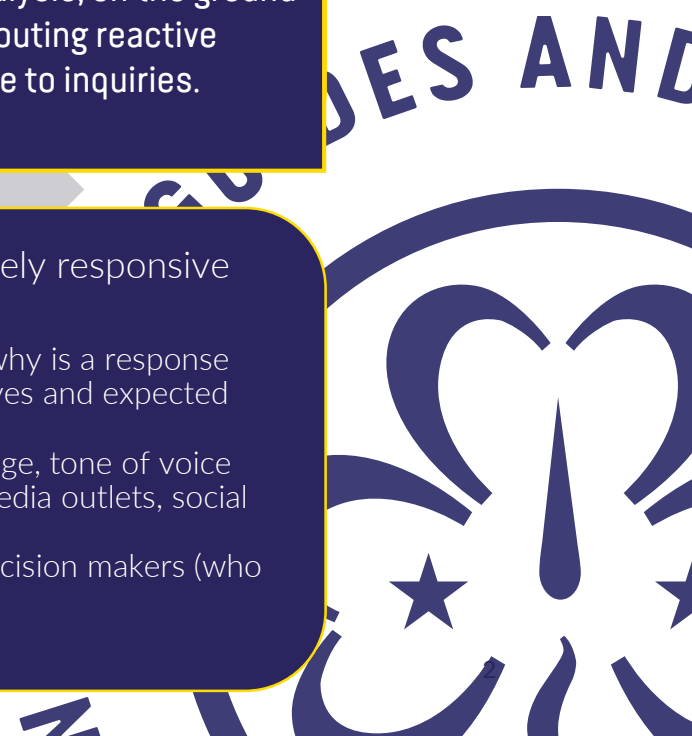
Anything cyclical which is unrelated to the Girl Guiding or Girl Scouting brand but may have a negative impact and needs to be managed (e.g. abortion, transgender, men and boys in the Movement)

**APPROACH:** Planned messaging, position statements and identified spokespeople.

SENSITIVE ISSUES UNRELATED TO THE MOVEMENT

The unknown requires a purely responsive reaction.

- **Assess** – is this a threat? If so, why is a response necessary? What are the objectives and expected outcomes?
- **Determine** – appropriate message, tone of voice and message vehicle (targeted media outlets, social media, other?)
- **Empower** – Messengers and decision makers (who will own the message)
- **Act** – Deliver the response.



# UNDERSTANDING AND PREPARING FOR CRISES

## Handling unpredictable issues.

- Rapid response analysis
- On the ground support
- Reactive messaging
- Instant response to enquiries

Ask yourself: who is your audience and what is the required outcome?



# CAN YOUR SCHEDULE HANDLE A CRISIS?

Crises don't wait.

- The immediacy of social media has changed the scope of crisis management
- Social media is your biggest asset, and liability.

An unexpected crisis, compounded by the immediacy of social media, makes crisis communications and reputation management critical.



# THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A PLAN

## Act Promptly and Communicate Effectively and Consistently.

Your plan may not be perfect or elegant - there will be things you can update as you go along. It should provide opportunity for questions and two-way communication.

Your communication has two purposes:

- Inform: Share pertinent data and process and let people know that your plan is still focused on safety, your mission and identified priorities.
- Engage: Thank stakeholders for and ask for continued support.



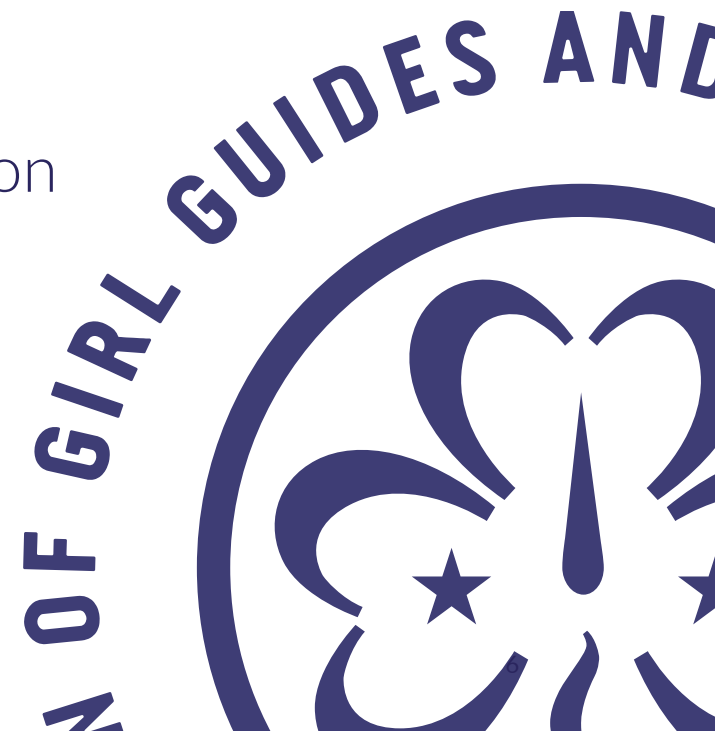
# THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A PLAN

## Don't let the story get ahead of you.

Your crisis communication plan should include:

- Guidelines for identifying the type and magnitude of a crisis
- Roles and responsibilities
- Up-to-date contact information for leaders
- A communication plan for internal updates
- Any pre-approved external messages, images, or information
- A link to your social media policy.

Update the plan and communication, as needed.



## DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

### Be honest.

Responding to social media requires tact. Your message should be clear and explicit.

If you don't know, be honest.

“We're still gathering the facts and are committed to responding when we have all of the information.”

Also keep in mind, all responses on social channels are considered public statements and can easily be shared. Ensure your message is something that you want people to share broadly and quickly respond to.



# MONITORING CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

## Questions to ask yourself.

- **Audience:** Who are our key stakeholders, what do they need to know, how will they be informed?
- **Image:** How are we perceived by the community at large during this time?
- **Channels:** Do we need new or different outlets for getting the word out? Are we taking full advantage of appropriate and safe social media outlets?
- **Resources:** What existing and new resources might we use?
- **Engagement:** How can we highlight our actions in terms of all the ways individuals and groups helped during the recent crisis?
- **Messaging:** Are we telling our full story as well and as often possible?





# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## Immediate action items.

Develop a process (and hopefully never use it)

- Decision making
- Chain of command
- Identify spokespeople.

Create a crisis communication plan

- Clear guidelines
  - Roles and responsibilities
  - Pre-approved messaging.
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- Continue to assess, monitor and update your plan, as needed.



# CONTACT

For questions and support, your contacts are:

- WAGGGS Membership Communications Manager
- Image & Visibility Lead Volunteer (Megan Neuffer)

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