Answer Key to Creating a Crisis Communication Plan

Answers will vary but should include and outline the four key elements of a crisis communication plan as illustrated below.

QAMB Inc. Crisis Communication Plan for Evacuation of the Headquarters

1. Identify the crisis communication team members: The crisis communication plan for QAMB includes the crisis communication team members’ contact information, including their home and mobile telephone numbers along with their home addresses. According to Business Communication for Success, a crisis communication team should include people who can:

- decide what actions to take,
- carry out those actions, and
- offer expertise or education in the relevant areas.

The names of the following members from QAMB along with their telephone and address contact information should be written in the crisis communication plan.

1. Chief executive officer (CEO)
2. Chief financial officer (CFO)
3. Vice president for operations
4. Vice president for communications
5. Public relations (PR) director
6. Company attorney
7. Human resources director
8. Information technology (IT) director
9. Headquarters building manager
10. Bank officials in the building
11. City officials (police chief, fire chief, etc.)
12. Two PR specialists

Key QAMB company officials: The CEO and CFO will authorize other company officials to provide resources necessary for the crisis communication plan to work. They will also make themselves available for media training by the PR director in advance of having a real crisis that requires them to also speak on camera or to provide a written statement based on advice and counsel from the PR director.

2. Designated spokesperson: Based on this scenario, you designate yourself, the public relations director, to be the spokesperson. Be sure to write a summary of the characteristics that a designated spokesperson should be able to demonstrate. Include what information the spokesperson should know about QAMB, its mission, and company values. Also, describe how the spokesperson should behave when communicating to news media. Be sure to mention which
internal and external officials the designated spokesperson will need to coordinate and ensure the release of timely and factual information.

3. Meeting place/location: The alternate headquarters building 3 miles away will also be the location for QAMB to conduct a news conference, to release news statements, and to update the company website on what crisis event happened and what is being done.

4. Media plan with procedures: During a crisis, stakeholders want to know what happened and how an organization is handling the crisis. It is important to keep strong lines of communication open with the stakeholders; one way to do so is to ensure that you involve traditional and new forms of media, such as social media. Otherwise, leaving stakeholders to wonder what happened can lead to misinformation and rumors that will worsen the situation or damage the company’s public image. The media plan will state that all media queries about the crisis, i.e., the fire that resulted in evacuation of the QAMB headquarters building), will be forwarded to the public relations director for response. It will also provide the name and contact information, such as the phone number and email address, of the spokesperson for 24/7 access. Examples of questions to anticipate from the media include the following:

   1. What caused the fire in the QAMB Inc. headquarters building?
   2. Were there any injuries or deaths as a result of the fire?
   3. Where will the employees work until the headquarters building is replaced or rebuilt, and how long will it take?
   4. How will employees be compensated for their lost work time?
   5. Did the company’s evacuation plan work as well as expected?
   6. Can we hear from the company CEO?
   7. How will this affect the company’s stock?

Examples of prepared messages to include in the media section of the communication plan are:

   1. The safety of our employees, partners, clients, and the local community is very important to us.
   2. We have arranged to assist all our employees and their families affected by this fire.
   3. We credit a successful evacuation to the excellent planning of our staff and crisis management team, which ensured that we have an alternate headquarters building three miles away that is up and running to ensure minimum delay and inconvenience in serving our clients both here in North Carolina and in our four regional offices.