Crisis Communication Plan

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In times of crisis within the organization, it is important for McDonald’s to revert back to and emphasize the company’s core mission and brand values. We are committed to keeping the customer our first priority and to keeping their experience of the utmost importance.

The initial stages of the crisis is when a detailed implementation plan is used to notify the Crisis Team consisting of: the COO, two PR spokespersons, brand manager and regional manager. The crisis is identified by using three different color coding levels: blue, orange or black.

The objectives of the crisis plan are to (1) Maintain the positive brand image (2) Implement two-way communication with internal and external publics (3) Evaluate internal procedures post crisis to improve in the future. These objectives are achieved by carrying out strategies based on detailed tactics.

Internal and external messages are constructed around the level of the crisis. The messages also have a timeline of when to complete necessary actions in order to provide a open and clear communication channels.

A general question and answer document is constructed for all media related questions and can be tailored for each specific crisis.

It is of utmost importance to continue to keep stakeholders updated on the progression and corrective actions of the organization until the issue is resolved. After the crisis, it is important to evaluate the plan as a whole to ensure effectiveness of the crisis plan in the future.
Crisis Team consists of:

- COO of McDonald’s
- Two PR Spokespersons (Writer and Speaker)
- Brand Manager
- Regional Manager
1. Maintain McDonald’s positive image

Strategies:

- Establish crisis team
  Tactic:
  - Assemble crisis team based on severity of crisis
  - Establish crisis levels
    - Level Black: Death, Acts of Nature
    - Level Orange: Injury, Illness, Minimal safety
    - Level Blue: Human error, Operational issues (not hurt)

- Ensure lines of communication are open between crisis team and media
  Tactic: Train authorized crisis team members on communication with media
  Tactic: Establish crisis hotline number
  Tactic: Construct and send press release to local and national media (if applicable)

- Ensure transparency with consumers
  Tactic: Release direct statement to public
  Tactic: Respond to crisis concerns in a timely manner via all social media platforms
  Tactic: Establish hotline number
  Tactic: Rely on key messages in all public statements
2. Implement two-way communication between McDonald’s and its internal and external publics

Strategies:

- Ensure lines of communication are open between employees and upper-level management
  
  Tactic: Train authorized crisis team members on communication with internal publics
  
  Tactic: Create an online forum for all McDonald’s employees
  
  Tactic: Use key internal messages on forum

- Ensure lines of communication are open between external publics and upper-level management
  
  Tactic: Train authorized crisis team members on communication with external publics
  
  Tactic: Establish a hotline number
  
  Tactic: Use key external messages
3. Evaluate internal procedures after crisis has occurred

**Strategies:**

- **Assess location(s) of crisis**
  - Tactic: Ensure that district and/or regional managers visit the site accompanied by third-party safety consultants to monitor progress after the accident
  - Tactic: Develop safety plan with outside crisis or safety consultant

- **Ensure all employees are informed of the situation**
  - Tactic: Distribute letter from district and/or regional managers to all on-site employees
  - Tactic: Distribute a second letter to regional or nationwide employees on a case-by-case basis

- **Provide additional training and/or counseling opportunities to move forward from event**
  - Tactic: Host training sessions for employees to ensure that everyone is aware of new procedures
  - Tactic: Offer counseling to victims, bystanders or employees who request it
Key Messages - Internal

Initial contact - made within 1-6 hours of crisis situation

1. Notify crisis team via telephone and include:
   - Location of event
   - How to access site
   - Known details
   - Number of initial consumers affected
   - Phone number of on-site contact person

2. Notify specific McDonald’s store owner and all other management of the crisis via telephone and include:
   - Known details
   - Number of initial consumers affected
   - Phone number of on-site contact person

3. Notify McDonald’s Executives in Corporate office via email and include:
   - Location of event
   - Known details
   - Number of initial consumers affected
   - Phone number of on-site contact person

4. Send text message and email to specific store’s employees with crisis information and include:
   - Acknowledgement of crisis
   - Information of any evacuation plan or store closures
   - How to access site (if different than normal procedures)

5. McDonald’s suppliers communication information includes:
   - Detailed report about event (keep in mind legal situation)
   - Way situation has been modified; Apologize if necessary
   - Explanation of the ongoing plan
   - Contact information for crisis team
   - Anticipative steps to prevent crisis from occurring again

6. Notify all other regional employees in the company via email and include:
   - Location of event
   - Acknowledgement of crisis
   - Request for support during difficult time
Follow up contact – 1 week – 1 month after crisis situation

1. McDonald’s suppliers communication needs to include:
   – Outline of new safety plan
   – Explanation of new training

2. McDonald’s store owner and all other management positions communicate information including:
   – Outline of new safety plan
   – Explanation of new training
   – Times of new training meetings
   – Provide counseling at no charge for event-related trauma

3. Notify McDonald’s executives in corporate office via email including:
   – Outline of new safety plan
   – Explanation of new training
   – Times of new training meetings

4. Specific store’s employees communication information including:
   – Outline of new safety plan
   – Explanation of new training
   – Times of new training meetings
   – Provide counseling at no charge for event-related trauma

5. Regional employees communication information includes:
   – Outline of new safety plan
   – Explanation of new training
   – Times of new training meetings (if applicable)
Key Messages - External

**Initial Regional Contact – Within 2-12 hours of the event**

1. **Release a general statement to the region where the crisis occurred (Listed below)**
   - Include location, time and date of the crisis
   - State that an investigation is being performed
   - State that McDonald’s will keep the public updated as information is released

2. **Timing of the initial regional contact will depend on the level of crisis involved**
   - Blue - within 12 hours
   - Orange - within 6 hours
   - Black - within 2 hours

**Initial National Contact – Within 6-24 hours of the event**

1. **Release general statement to the nation where the crisis occurred (Listed below)**

2. **Timing of initial national contact will depend on the level of crisis involved**
   - Blue - within 24 hours
   - Orange - within 12 hours
   - Black - within 6 hours

**Initial International Contact - Within 48 hours of the event**

1. **The general statement will only be released internationally if the crisis is severe (Listed below)**

2. **The crisis must be a Level Black in order for the international team to be contacted. The crisis team will make the decision to release the information to international media.**

**General External Message Statement**

“At (time) on (date), a crisis situation occurred at a McDonald’s location in (city, state). This restaurant, located at (street address), and the situation are currently under investigation.

The McDonald’s Crisis Communications Team has been notified and will be working with the media to alert the public with further details as soon as possible. A media kit will be released with information regarding the incident within the next (number of hours). At this time, McDonald’s is not taking further questions.”
Key Messages - External

Level Orange or Black:

Detailed Information – Within 1-2 weeks of the event

- Release a second press release concerning the status of the investigation
- Host a press conference for the media
  a. Release a Question & Answer document to the media beforehand to cover a list of general questions and answers
  b. Spokesperson - Public Relations Manager on the Crisis Communications Team
    i. If necessary, the CEO will become the spokesperson

Ongoing Contact – As needed

- McDonald’s will maintain contact with the media and the public until the investigation is solved
- Will continue to release press materials and statements when necessary
  a. To be decided by the Crisis Team
- Establish a hotline number to allow outside audiences to ask questions and receive information about specific crisis details

Follow Up Contact – Within 2-3 days after the crisis situation is resolved

- Level Orange and Black: Release a final media kit stating facts about how the crisis was resolved and what McDonald’s is doing internally to prevent further crises
  a. Include:
    i. Fact Sheet
    ii. Press Release
- State what McDonald’s is doing to improve for the future
- Level Black: Host a final press conference to reveal details of the situation, the investigation and what McDonald’s is doing to prevent further crises
  a. Crisis team will determine the details to be covered
  b. Release another Question and Answer document
  c. Spokesperson – Public Relations Manager on Crisis Team
    i. CEO will become the spokesperson if necessary
Common Questions and Answers

Q1. Can you tell us what happened?
A1. At this point, we know that (Explain situation with as many details as legally possible) occurred on [DATE] at [TIME]. We are continuing to investigate and will share any updates with you as soon as we know them. McDonald’s is doing everything in its power to assess the current situation and to evaluate how we can prevent an event like this in the future.

Q2. When and where did this event take place?
A2. This event took place on [DATE] at [TIME]. The incident took place at the [Insert CITY, STATE] McDonald’s located at [Insert ADDRESS]. (If this could affect other McDonald’s location(s), add that location and address.)

Q3. How many people were involved and who was harmed?
A3. At this time, we know that [NUMBER] of individuals were injured. Those individuals are seeking medical attention at a local hospital. We plan to release the names of those harmed on [Insert DATE]. (If applicable, also list the number of individuals killed.)

Q4. Are those that were harmed getting help?
A4. Yes, McDonald’s has ensured that medical attention is available to all victims and their families. Counseling and other support is also being offered to any employees or other bystanders who choose to take it.

Q5. Who is at fault for this?
A5. If the event could have been prevented by McDonald’s: McDonald’s takes full responsibility for this situation. It is our mission to be our customers’ favorite place and way to eat. To achieve this, we strive everyday to provide our customers with a memorable, fun and safe environment. Unfortunately, we were not able to provide this environment to our customers on [DATE]. We are using this event as a learning experience that will push us to provide an even better customer experience in the future.
If the event could not have been prevented: Although this incident occurred based on unforeseen circumstances, McDonald’s takes responsibility for ensuring the safety and a smooth road to recovery for all stakeholders affected by [Insert incident details].
Q6. Is there any immediate danger?
A6. If the answer is no: There is no immediate danger. The McDonald’s crisis leadership team and law enforcement have ensured that all danger has been eliminated. We encourage all customers and employees to continue as usual.
   If yes: We are unsure at this time, but we can assure everyone that law enforcement and the McDonald’s crisis team is working 24 hours per day to make sure that all potential sources of danger have been eliminated.

Q7. What is being done in response to this incident?
A7. An investigation is being done by law enforcement. Based on this investigation, the McDonald’s crisis team will assess how operations can be improved to eliminate future crises in the future. These operational updates will be reviewed with all employees and will be executed in nationwide training if necessary.

Q8. Who is in charge?
A8. The McDonald’s crisis team and [Insert CITY] Law Enforcement are in charge of this investigation. If the public has questions, they can direct these questions to the McDonald’s customer service hotline at 888-561-9857. McDonald’s representatives are available 24 hours per day to address any questions or concerns.

Q9. Did you have any forewarning that this might happen?
A9. We did not have forewarning for this issue. With [NUMBER] McDonald’s restaurants nationwide, there are always surprises. We believe in our McDonald’s System, but when it fails, we use that as a learning opportunity. Now is the time for us to re-evaluate our current systems and use that evaluation as a springboard for an even better customer experience.

Q10. When did you begin responding to this issue?
A10. [Insert CITY] McDonald’s management responded to the incident within the first hour of its occurrence. After receiving contact from the local and regional managers, the McDonald’s crisis team began assessment and execution of the current crisis plan.

Q11. Have you told us everything you know?
A11. Yes, we have shared everything that we know at this time excluding any personal information relating to the victims and their families (if applicable). McDonald’s prides itself on transparency and will continue to do so through this entire process.
**Q12. How much will this cost McDonald’s?**

A12. We are not sure of an exact dollar amount at this time. McDonald’s primary concern is to ensure safety for its customers before determining how this incident will affect McDonald’s operating costs.

**Q13. How are employees responding?**

A13. Our employees are responding remarkably well. They have been in constant communication with us since the incident occurred and are eager to get back to work (if applicable). Counseling and other support is being offered to all employees if needed.

**Q14. Will there be inconvenience to employees or the public?**

A14. There will not be any inconvenience to employees or the public. The McDonald’s crisis team is handling all of the investigation and potential operational changes. If changes are made, they will not affect the McDonald’s experience known and loved by customers nationwide. Employees may participate in training to better prepare them for similar situations in the future.
Crisis Implementation Plan

Crisis occurs

- Call 911 for Level Orange and Level Black.
- Contact internal stakeholders within an hour of the crisis
- Use color levels in notifications
  1. Notify crisis team via telephone.
  2. Notify specific McDonald’s store owner and all other management positions of the crisis via telephone.
  3. Notify McDonald’s executives in corporate office via email.
  4. Send text messages to specific store’s employees about crisis information.
  5. Notify suppliers via email.
  6. Notify all other regional employees in the company via email.
- Contact media within 24 hours of the crisis (depending on level of crisis.)
  - PR person on crisis team sends press release via email.
  - The media will release the information to the public.

Post-Crisis

- Keep stakeholders updated on progression of recovery efforts including corrective measures being taken and progress of investigations.
- Analyze crisis management effort for improvements and implement those into crisis communications plan.
- Bring in outside crisis or safety consultant to make recommendations about improvements.