

# Crisis Communication

## Crisis Takes Many Forms

1. Fire
2. Lawsuits
3. Loose horse causes injury
4. Integrity issues
5. Injury/death of horseman or fans
6. Structural collapse
7. Weather/Natural disaster
8. Something you never imagined

## Your crisis is their opportunity

1. Radical animal “rights” groups
2. Anti-gambling groups
3. Political leaders looking to divert racing funds
4. You cannot “undo” the crisis, but you can mitigate it and present the message you want to be heard

## Lay The Foundation

1. Establish a single spokesperson at the highest possible level. No lieutenants doing a generals’ work
2. Make it clear there will be zero transmission of information or photos by any track employees. This includes social media
3. Designate staff members to gather and provide information to the spokesperson
4. All requests go through the spokesperson

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## Your Response

1. Gather all pertinent information and prepare a spokesperson, who should initially be high level staff. Subsequent communications can be the PR person.
2. Issue a statement when facts are known. Let the media know you're gathering the fullest possible set of facts and will respond as soon as they are known. Be mindful of their deadlines.
3. Use blind copy, all the time, in every email.

## Just The Facts

1. No inflammatory words. Horses fell, not tripped. Horse was euthanized, not destroyed.
2. Provide name, title of spokesperson and cell number.
3. If an update is called for, specify that and when it will be provided.
4. Never say, "no comment." If you do not know or cannot discuss a topic, say so. "That's not something I can discuss right now."

## CAP

1. All responses should be formed with CAP in mind.
2. **CONCERN** "This is a very difficult day at our fair. We are distressed at the effect on the people and animals that compete here."
3. **ACTION** "I have instructed the staff to do everything possible to help the people and animals affected and to cooperate with local officials."
4. **PREVENTION** "My staff and I will sit down with pertinent safety professionals to review all our policies and protocol to ensure they are up to date and in full use."

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## Nothing is “Off The Record”

1. If you don't want it repeated, don't say it.
2. Even if you ask to be off the record and they agree, they'll just try to get someone less suspecting to say the same thing – on the record. You gave them a lead they will follow.
3. You are fueling their next story.

## Quick Tips

1. Don't get trapped in binary responses, have an opposing and informative message.

### Accusations:

- a. Isn't this cruel to the horses?
- b. Racing is fixed, right?
- c. There are lots of cheaters in racing, right?

### Responses:

- a. Racing is highly regulated by the state and all our staff are fully cooperating.
- b. Every horse that races here is subject to health and safety provisions.

Do not ever repeat inflammatory words.

Refute the characterization and inform the person.