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Risk Management Bulletin

Crisis Management

How will your organization respond when a crisis occurs? If a serious auto accident, a worker fatality, major flood, an OSHA inspection, or workplace violence event occurs at your operations, how will you respond?

Cry? Hide? Or Implement your plan? Earlier this month I had the opportunity to address these questions with the American Subcontractors Association.

"When is a crisis reached? When questions arise that can't be answered." (R Kapuscinski 1932). The key to dealing with a crisis situation is to know the answer to the questions BEFORE the event occurs. This begins with assessing critical vulnerabilities that might adversely impact the organization and developing a detailed plan of attack to address these exposures. The exposure assessment is a very important part of the process, because if you have not identified the risk, you will likely not have developed a plan to tackle the issue. Exposure assessments are a helpful tool to systematically look at the operations and the potential risks.

FEMA <https://www.ready.gov/business/implementation>) and OSHA (<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/expertsystem/default.htm>) have developed helpful tools to assist with this process.

Every organization is unique, so it is important to supplement any third party resources with round table discussions with internal staff to identify any other potential vulnerabilities.

Unfortunately, in today's world, dealing with workplace violence must also be a part of this plan. Supplementing your security plans with appropriate responses to an active shooter or other workplace violence events should be a part of every crisis management plan. This should include practicing situational awareness and educating staff to report any suspicious activities (an excellent topic for your next Tool Box meeting).

There are some excellent resources to assist with this process:

<https://www.ready.gov/active-shooter>
<https://www.dhs.gov/publication/active-shooter-emergency-action-plan-guide>

Once you have your road map the next step is to develop and implement the plan. Assign responsibility & accountability, including a lead person to deal with each potential issue. Train staff in each of their roles and review the plan on at least an annual basis and if possible conduct a mock drill just to see how staff will respond. Educate field staff what to do and where to go to limit the surprises when the event occurs.

Next step... develop a communication plan. This should include internal communication to ensure all staff are on the same page (*"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place"* George Bernard Shaw) and external communication, making sure the message does not create liability or a public relations mess (*"Effective communication is 20% what you know and 80% how you share what you know."* J Rhon).



External communication must be clearly disseminated through designated individuals, focused on the facts and demonstrating concern, without admitting guilt or non-compliance. Don't make any promises regarding responsibility or action plans until a complete evaluation of the facts is completed, and educate staff what to say, what not to say, and who to turn to for answers.

Lastly, after the dust has settled from the event, take the time to revisit the positive and negative aspects of the experience. Learn from mistakes so the next event will be handled even more smoothly.

Nobody likes a crisis, but with proper planning and procedures in place, you can effectively navigate the situation and deal with the aftermath in a more efficient manner, minimizing potential adverse public relations issues and liability exposures.

If you are looking for resources to assist with your crisis management plan or other loss control or risk management issue, please feel free to call or drop me a note.

For more information about Crisis Management and other solutions from Marsh Wortham, contact your local representative or:

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