

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

PLANNING & RESPONSE

PLAN AHEAD

Despite proper planning and prevention your organizations are not immune to the tragedies and crises that have struck college campuses with alarming frequency over the past decade. As leaders you must be prepared to meet the needs of any crisis you face. We strongly urge you to review your national organization's crisis management procedures or develop basic steps to follow in case of an emergency.

INVOLVE OTHERS & EDUCATE

Just as it is important to review policies with your members, it is equally important to review any crisis management procedures with the entire membership in the beginning of each semester. The first concern should be the health and safety of each member, and the chapter in general. All members must know who is in charge and be prepared to follow instructions.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES

At the chapter level, the president of the chapter should take charge in any crisis. The president should consult with advisors, national organization staff, university administration and other members who possess more expertise or insight. The final decision, however, must rest with the president. If the president is absent, the next ranked officer is in charge. All chapter members should know where to find a copy of the chapter's emergency procedures.

IF A CRISIS OCCURS:

1. Call emergency number(s), usually 9-1-1, so appropriate emergency personnel (police, fire, and ambulance) can respond. Cooperate fully with the needs of any public safety organization seeking to help you or protect your safety.
2. If applicable, restrict access to the location where the crisis occurred immediately. The President must have complete control of the situation, and be aware of who is in the area. Permit only essential members and appropriate officials to enter. Assign one or more responsible members/officers to calmly secure the area.
3. Do not tamper with any part of the area involved in the incident specifically which might be construed as evidence or involved with the incident.
4. Notify your Chapter Advisor.
5. Call appropriate staff with your national organization.
6. Call the Fraternity & Sorority Life staff member responsible for your council.
7. Assemble your members in a group (in case of fire, assemble outside, near the street). All should remain calm. Explain there is an emergency, but that it is under control. Remind members that only the President or Chapter Advisor can speak for the organization — members are not to speak to anyone (including friends, boyfriends/girlfriends, parents, the university) about the crisis.
8. Do not discuss details, speculate on events or otherwise elaborate on the situation. Often, litigation follows crisis. Statements made could later be used in court.
9. Fully cooperate with appropriate authorities. This can be a stressful and chaotic time, but take note of all measures taken and who played what role during the response. These details will be important to the national organization and university during any follow up conversations.

This document is a resource to help interpret policy. Always observe federal, state, local law in addition to national organization policies.

Source: Linda Wright, LMS Risk Management Services and Sigma Phi Epsilon Crisis Management Procedure Manual;
Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity Crisis Management Plan [<http://www.pikapp.org/>]

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DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Depending on the circumstances, the national organization may take over any direct contact with the media including the issuance of a press statement. If allowed, it is suggested only the President or Chapter Advisor speak for the chapter.

- Avoid “no comment” as it leads to speculation. Instead, make a simple statement: “We are aware that an incident occurred and are cooperating fully with the police and university officials who are investigating.”
- Keep repeating the above statement if you are pursued further. Do not give in because you are asked the same question several different ways.
- Never release names or admit liability.

SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH

DO NOT NOTIFY THE PARENTS. Medical or police personnel who are trained in this will notify the family. You should always have parent/guardian information on file and available to proper authorities. After you know that the family has been notified, it is appropriate for a chapter representative to call and share your concern. University staff will assist in coordinating communication to notify members and offer counseling and general assistance.
