

## PRD Manual Extracts – 01. Emergency Response

### 0101. Crisis Communications Response Procedures

Perception quickly becomes reality during an emergency situation. Thus, it is critical that The Salvation Army has a clear, implementable plan of action to follow in the event of a natural or man-made crisis or emergency. This document outlines the process that will be followed by Territorial Headquarters in the event that such a situation occurs.

Ultimately, The Salvation Army as a whole will be judged by how quickly and effectively, we communicate during a crisis situation. As the Army heightens its profile throughout Canada, the likelihood increases that a crisis in which we are involved will spark media interest. The media will play a key role in defining public perception. This makes it all the more critical that The Salvation Army in Canada respond with “one voice” during a crisis and includes the prompt involvement of the Territorial Public Relations and Development Office.

Some crises may only require a communications response. Others, such as a natural disaster, also will require an operational response. To be fully effective, an operational response guided by the Incident Command System (ICS) process must be coordinated with this plan to enable us to access timely, accurate information so that we can manage a crisis effectively.

The key objectives of this plan are to:

- Integrate communications into the overall operational response at the Territorial level
- Provide a mechanism for effective communications during a crisis
- Outline roles and responsibilities of communications personnel
- Establish consistent policies and procedures

#### Defining a Crisis

Before responding to a crisis, it is critical to understand how the term is defined. A crisis is any event or situation that could materially influence the internal or external perception or reputation of The Salvation Army. This definition is intentionally broad because many different situations have the potential to trigger a crisis. For internal purposes, we have outlined three levels of crisis response in which THQ would be required to respond – **Red**, **Yellow** and **Green**. We have defined these levels in greater detail below.

##### **Red Level**

A Red-level crisis is a major event involving The Salvation Army at the national level and generating significant media interest throughout Canada – both national and local. During a Red-level crisis, all resources within the Public Relations and Development Office will be utilized along with other departments at THQ.

##### **Yellow Level**

A Yellow-level crisis is a significant event involving The Salvation Army primarily at the Divisional or local level with a possibility of generating national media interest. During a Yellow-level crisis, some Territorial PRD staff will be monitoring the situation, communicating with the relevant Division or Ministry Unit and potentially assisting with the response to national media by preparing spokespeople and triaging requests. It is important to remember that a Yellow-level crisis can easily escalate into a Red-level crisis depending on media interest and engagement.

## **Green Level**

A Green-level crisis is an event involving The Salvation Army at the Divisional and local level generating primarily if not exclusively local media interest. During a Green-level crisis, it will still be important for at least one member of the territorial PRD staff to monitor the situation and offer to assist the Division or Ministry Unit as needed. It is important to remember that a Green-level crisis can easily escalate into a Yellow-level crisis depending on media interest and engagement.

**If you are not certain if an issue or problem rises to the level of a Red, Yellow or Green crisis, error on the side of alerting Territorial Headquarters anyway. Media are unpredictable and there are no hard and fast rules as to what they will choose to cover. Even if no immediate assistance is required, it is always best that THQ is made aware of ongoing situations and issues so that personnel can assist should the need arise.**

While no policy can anticipate every eventuality, below we have described some examples of the sorts of situations with the potential to rise to a Red, Yellow or Green-level crisis.

- Emergency Disaster Services
- Use of donor funds
- Misdeeds by officers and/or staff
- Operational failures
- Advocacy attacks or Legal issues

## **Crisis Communications Principles**

The following core principles guide our crisis communications efforts:

- Credibility**      To be credible, we must be accurate. Having a thorough grasp of the facts is essential to communications, especially under crisis conditions when information may be fragmented and events are quickly unfolding.
- Timeliness**      We must communicate with our stakeholders as quickly as possible, once facts are confirmed. To do this, we must be able to make decisions quickly, and be accessible to the news media and stakeholders.
- Candor**            The information we release must be comprehensive, even if it is unfavourable. If we are not candid with our stakeholders, we cannot maintain their trust. If we don't have the information requested, we must do our best to provide it; if there are legitimate reasons we cannot answer a certain question, we must explain these reasons.
- Relevance**        We are accountable to a number of stakeholders, all of whom have different concerns. For example, our employees have different priorities than local community groups, regulators, disaster survivors, or the news media. Our communications must be responsive to these individual concerns.
- Consistency**      We may be communicating a great deal of information to a variety of audiences and must be consistent in what we release. If our information seems to conflict, we will quickly lose our credibility.

## **Activating THQ's Crisis Communications Response**

Below, we have described the key steps to the Territorial Public Relations and Development Crisis Communications Response process upon initial receipt of information about a developing situation or notification by other means. After defining the crisis by following the procedure outlined, we have broken out the appropriate response during a Red, Yellow or Green-level crisis.

Upon notification of an emergency situation, gather as much information as you can. The following are a series of questions that can help guide the initial decision-making with respect to emergency situations requiring a communications response. The answers to these questions will help determine whether the response level is Red, Yellow or Green:

**When did the event occur?**

The territorial PRD office routinely anticipates the amount of news coverage an event might generate. An emergency situation occurring mid-day, for example will generally prompt on-site news coverage through the afternoon, the early evening. An event occurring later in the day will generate late-night news, to be followed the next day with on-air early morning updates and in-print stories. Depending on the severity and nature of the event, the story may continue to generate interest for several days.

**Where did it occur?**

Events should no longer be viewed as “local” – that is, only one community will be affected. Communications today moves far too quickly and has the potential to draw in many audiences who may want to get involved by helping the Army and the people affected. Negative stories about Salvation Army officers, staff or programs may also impact nationally.

**Were there any injuries? Fatalities?**

The Army’s compassion and involvement at times of tragedy is well-known by most media outlets, and national media can be expected to ask about our involvement usually within the first 60 to 90 minutes of a situation that includes casualties.

**What’s the Army’s Involvement in this situation?**

If it’s a programmatic or operational failure, that information must be conveyed to assist with the communications response; if it’s a natural disaster, it will be critical for Territorial Headquarters to communicate with local and/or on-the-ground contacts to ensure that up-to-date information is shared at the national level.

**What is the source of your information?**

The Army’s resources in many cases may be deployed in advance of media and other first-responders, but personnel may be too busy providing relief and unable to assist with media. Nonetheless, on-scene information from designated Salvation Army personnel can be important in communicating the Army’s involvement in an emergency situation and generating public support.

**Do you know if there is any media attention?**

Media attention today comes in many ways. Few boundaries remain. Anyone with a cell phone or digital camera can quickly disseminate images from a scene to media and the Internet so it would be wise to always assume that an incident or situation will attract media attention. Likewise, the media respond quickly by seeking people on-site to talk about an emergency situation – all of it meaning potential escalation of situation far beyond a first-responder’s ability to handle.

### **Who is the appropriate contact?**

Be sure to gather the relevant contact information – office and mobile phone, email, etc. of whomever you speak to and share your contact information with them.

**In the event that the initial notification is not routed to the PRD office, it is vital that that Territorial Secretary for Public Relations and Development or the Territorial Public Relations Director are notified of the situation immediately. In the event that this crisis involves a natural or man-made disaster, it is vital that the Territorial Emergency and Disaster Services Director, is notified. Be persistent until you reach a live person – leaving a voicemail may not be sufficient in a crisis situation when time is critical.**

### **Decision Point – Define Crisis Level – RED, YELLOW OR GREEN?**

Based on the information provided by the Division or Ministry Unit and the established crisis definitions, the Divisional Public Relations and Development Office, in consultation with THQ if needed; should determine whether this is a Red, Yellow or Green-level crisis. Once the crisis level is defined, the response procedures for each outlined later in this document apply. As appropriate, the PRD office may consult with THQ leadership on the appropriate level of response.

### **THQ Crisis Communications Response – Red Level**

**The following procedures should be followed by PRD and relevant THQ office staff in the event of a Red level crisis.**

#### **Territorial Public Relations and Development Office Procedures**

- Immediately notify THQ leadership of the ongoing situation in person, over the phone or through Lotus Notes and provide preliminary assessment based on discussion with local contacts;
- Notify building security and telephone operators as quickly as possible and brief them in the following manner: This incident may prompt media interest. Please refer all media and donor inquiries to the Territorial Secretary for Public Relations and Development or the Territorial Public Relations Director in the PRD office. [If applicable] The incident could mean that reporters and/or camera crews will arrive at headquarters. Management should continually monitor security to ensure that the situation is being adequately addressed.
- Notify relevant PRD office staff;
- Notify THQ employees of situation via Lotus Notes, referring all inquiries to PRD office. (See Appendix Section I for sample email);
- Hold follow-up phone call with appropriate Divisional or local contact to:
  - Identify a spokesperson. Except in extraordinary circumstances, the spokesperson for local and national media requests will be an “on-the-ground” officer or public relations staffer;
    1. In some cases, where the volume of requests is particularly high, it may be wise to identify two or more spokespeople – perhaps one for local and one for national interviews;
    2. During a high-impact, Red-level crisis that may go on for days and/or weeks, it is possible that a spokesperson from the THQ PRD office will be utilized as agreed to by the Division or Ministry Unit.

- Ensure that the spokesperson is prepared with national messaging and background for media interviews – offering THQ assistance as needed in drafting these materials;
- Establish a plan for triaging media phone calls to THQ and referring reporters (Email? Mobile Phone? Work Phone?) based on the situation and spokesperson preference;
- Establish a system through which the Division or Ministry Unit will provide timely, updated information to territorial Headquarters through the duration of the crisis.

**In cases where THQ is directly involved with the crisis (e.g. Illegal activity by a THQ employee) a spokesperson will be assigned from the THQ PRD office and these discussions will be held internally.**

- Execute media relations as agreed to in discussion with Division and/or Ministry Unit. Depending on specific circumstances, this activity may include:
  - Media monitoring
  - Periodic updates for territorial leadership and office staff
  - Development of internal messaging and Q&A documents
  - Development of external press releases and other materials
  - Development of collateral materials for the national Web site
  - Responding to or referring donor questions and/or complaints
  - Monitoring the volume of media calls
  - Ensuring that operators and/or THQ voicemail has appropriate media referral information for after-hours calls

**A full listing and explanation of the roles to be filled by the PRD Department in the event of an emergency is included in Appendix Section II. During a Red level crisis, all of the media relations functions listed in Appendix II will need to be fulfilled.**

- Coordinate Departmental response within THQ. These could include, but are not limited to:
  - Ethics Centre**
    - Advise on ethical impact and issues
    - Review public statements with respect to Salvation Army ethical positions
  - Finance Department**
    - Advise on financial impact and issues
  - Human Resources Department**
    - Advise on workforce impact and issues
    - Oversee communications with employees
  - Legal Department**
    - Advise on legal impact and issues
    - Review public statements for accuracy and legal ramifications
  - Social Services Department**
    - Advise on social service impact and issues

**Based on specific circumstances, there will obviously be some level of discretion as to the extent which these departments are involved in the response. For example, a court case would require more input from the Legal Department while a donor fraud may require extra attention from the Finance Department. During a Red level crisis, all departments should be notified and consulted.**

- As appropriate, notify call centres (1800-SAL-ARMY, etc.) of the situation and response;
- Coordinate online, phone and direct mail outreach if appropriate.

### **Office Staff Procedures**

- All incoming media and donor phone calls should be referred to the Territorial Secretary for Public Relations and Development or the Territorial Public Relations Director in the PRD Office;
- All reasonable efforts should be made to reach a contact within the PRD office. However, if this is not possible, inquiries can be referred to a supervisor;
- A reminder to employees when dealing with the media: Be cordial at all times, but it is entirely appropriate to be firm in asking that media inquiries must be redirected to those who are in a better position to assist them.

### **Security**

In some extraordinary circumstances, particularly if THQ is directly involved in the crisis, it is possible that media will attempt to enter THQ premises and/or interview Salvation Army staff as they enter or exit the building. In these rare instances, the following guidelines apply:

- Media may attempt to videotape, photograph and/or interview employees as they enter or exit THQ or contact them at home about a situation. Employees are not authorized to speak on behalf of the Army. If media representatives attempt to interview employees off Salvation Army property, it is appropriate to refer them to the Territorial Secretary for Public Relations and Development or the Territorial Public Relations Director and/or respond that they are not the correct person to discuss the situation [e.g., "I understand you have questions about this situation, but I am not an authorized spokesperson for The Salvation Army. You should contact the Territorial Secretary for Public Relations and Development or the Territorial Public Relations Director."];
- Under no circumstances are media representatives to be allowed onto THQ premises without authorization from the PRD office and/or leadership;
- If appropriate or necessary, THQ PRD will assist in finding a room for the media on the first floor of THQ that can be secured to ensure that reporters do not have access to the remainder of the office complex. Otherwise, media will have to be accommodated in the lobby based on direction from THQ PRD.

### **THQ Crisis Communications Response – Yellow Level**

**The following procedures should be followed by PRD and relevant THQ office staff in the event of a Yellow level crisis.**

### **Public Relations and Development Office Procedures**

- Immediately notify THQ leadership of the ongoing situation through Lotus Notes and provide preliminary assessment based on discussion with local contacts;
- Notify telephone operators as quickly as possible and brief them in the following manner: *This incident may prompt media and public interest. Please refer all media and donor inquiries to the Territorial Secretary for Public Relations and Development or the Territorial Public Relations Director in the PRD office.*
- Notify relevant PRD office staff;
- Hold follow-up phone call with appropriate Divisional or local contact to:
  - Identify a spokesperson. Except in extraordinary circumstances, the spokesperson for local and national media requests will be an “on-the-ground” officer or public relations staffer;
  - Ensure that the spokesperson is prepared with national and/or local messaging and background for media interviews – offering THQ assistance as needed in drafting these materials;
  - Establish a plan for triaging media phone calls to THQ and referring reporters (Email? Mobile Phone? Work Phone?) based on the situation and spokesperson preference;
  - Establish a system through which the Division or Ministry Unit will provide timely, updated information to territorial Headquarters through the duration of the crisis.
- Execute media relations as agreed to in discussion with Division and/or Ministry Unit. Depending on specific circumstances, this activity may include:
  - Media monitoring
  - Periodic updates for Territorial leadership and office staff
  - Development of internal messaging and Q&A documents
  - Development of external press releases and other materials
  - Development of collateral materials for the national Web site
  - Responding to or referring donor questions and/or complaints

**A full listing and explanation of the roles to be filled by the PRD Department in the event of an emergency is included in Appendix Section II. During a Yellow level crisis, it is likely that only some of the media relations functions listed in Appendix II will be required, depending on specific circumstances.**

- Coordinate Departmental response within THQ. These could include:

**Legal Department**

- Advise on legal impact and issues
- Review public statements for accuracy and legal ramifications

**Human Resources Department**

- Advise on workforce impact and issues
- Oversee communications with employees

**Ethics Centre**

- Advise on ethical impact and issues
- Review public statements with respect to Salvation Army ethical positions

**Social Services Department**

- Advise on social service impact and issues

## Finance Department

- Advise on financial impact and issues

**Based on specific circumstances, there will obviously be some level of discretion as to the extent which these departments are involved in the response. For example, a court case would require more input from the Legal Department while a donor fraud may require extra input from the Finance Department. During a Yellow level crisis, only departments with specific involvement or expertise need to be consulted.**

## Office Staff Procedures

- All incoming media and donor phone calls should be referred to the Territorial Secretary for Public Relations and Development or the Territorial Public Relations Director in the PRD Office;
- All reasonable efforts should be made to reach a contact within the PRD office. However, if this is not possible, inquiries can be referred to a supervisor;
- A reminder to employees when dealing with the media: Be cordial at all times, but it is entirely appropriate to be firm in asking that media inquiries must be redirected to those who are in a better position to assist them.

## THQ Crisis Communications Response – Green Level Crisis

**The following procedures should be followed by PRD and relevant THQ office staff in the event of a Green level crisis.**

## Public Relations and Development Office Procedures

- Notify relevant PRD office staff;
- Hold follow-up phone call with appropriate Divisional or local contact to:
  - Offer assistance from THQ PRD office as needed;
  - Request that they keep PRD office informed of any updates on the situation.
- Execute media relations as agreed to in discussion with Division and/or Ministry Unit. Depending on specific circumstances, this activity may include:
  - Media Monitoring
  - Development of internal messaging and Q&A documents
  - Responding to or referring donor questions and/or complaints

**A full listing and explanation of the roles to be filled by the PRD Department in the event of an emergency is included in Appendix Section II. During a Green level crisis it is likely that only a few of the media relations functions listed in Appendix II will need to be fulfilled.**

- Consult with appropriate Departments within THQ that may have particular expertise on the issue.

## Office Staff Procedures

- All incoming media and donor phone calls should be referred to the Territorial Secretary for Public Relations and Development or the Territorial Public Relations Director in the PRD Office;

- All reasonable efforts should be made to reach a contact within the PRD office. However, if this is not possible, refer the caller to your supervisor;
- A reminder to employees when dealing with the media: Be cordial at all times, but it is entirely appropriate to be firm in asking that media inquiries must be redirected to those who are in a better position to assist them.

### **PRD Office Guiding Policies**

The THQ PRD department is the Army's point of contact for numerous key audiences, primarily national media. For THQ PRD to provide accurate and timely information, protect the brand, anticipate pending issues and be responsive and transparent, the following policies must be followed:

- All appropriate THQ PRD employees must provide the THQ PRD office manager with their contact information: home, cell and an alternate (i.e. Gmail or Hotmail) e-mail address. If there are any changes, employees are responsible for notifying Ni Namasivayam as soon as the change is effective.
- When traveling – for work and personal – all applicable employees must provide the THQ PRD office manager, currently Ni Namasivayam, or their supervisor, with relevant information, i.e. departure and arrival times, airline and flight numbers, hotel name and phone number, meeting schedules and contact numbers of meeting participants, if appropriate.
- At least one Senior Manager, assigned by the Territorial Secretary for Public Relations and Development, will be available at all times. The Senior Managers are the Territorial Secretary for Public Relations and Development or the Territorial Public Relations Director or the Territorial Emergency Disaster Services Director.
- Senior Managers will be on-call during each individual's scheduled rotation. Rotations are to last one week at a time. The senior manager on-call will carry a departmental telephone with email access at all times and can expect to be reached at any time of day during their rotation. In the event that a senior manager is traveling during their normally scheduled week, that individual must make arrangements to have the rotation timeframe covered by another senior manager in THQ PRD with approval from the Territorial Secretary for Public Relations and Development.
- The Senior Manager on-call will direct the initial crisis and non-crisis communications response until either the situation is resolved, or appropriate staff contacts are made, and it is decided that other senior management involvement is necessary. The assessment of the situation, hand-off of management and/or the designation of duties should happen as quickly as possible depending on circumstances.
- To ensure that Senior Managers will have access to an appropriate level of staffing during a crisis response, employees must keep with them at all times the wallet card with THQ PRD employee telephone numbers and other contact information.

All appropriate THQ PRD employees must receive crisis response training from the public relations director within two weeks of employment and maintain familiarity with the contents of these procedures.

The public relations director or staff assigned by the Public Relations & Development Secretary will review these procedures every 90 days, with changes made as appropriate. Before the review, the PR Director should verify all contact information listed in these procedures.

### **Media Interview Request Policy**

- The Salvation Army generally restricts those authorized to speak to the media to designated Salvation Army personnel who, based on their appointment, topic expertise or knowledge of a specific issue or situation, can respond to inquiries. At times, others associated with the Army may be authorized to speak on our behalf.
- As a general rule, a Divisional or local spokesperson in the area closest to the crisis will be identified as the national spokesperson. In certain extraordinary circumstances, a spokesperson from THQ may be utilized.
- As a policy matter, employees and volunteers are not authorized to represent The Salvation Army in media interviews. Leadership recognizes that in certain cases, media may seek comment from those not authorized to speak on the Army's behalf. In those instances, the following should be communicated: "I understand you have questions about this situation, but I am not an authorized spokesperson for The Salvation Army. You should contact the Territorial Secretary for Public Relations and Development or the Territorial Public Relations Director." Be polite and respectful, but insistent that you cannot be quoted as an official representative of the Army.

Remember that it is best not to interfere with a reporter or photographer/videographer. If they are acting inappropriately, report their behaviour to command staff or local authorities on scene.