

## **FOUR PEOPLE TO INCLUDE ON YOUR COMMUNICATION ALERT TEAM**

*The following blog article, produced by PR News, discusses key individuals to have on a crisis communications team.*

By Ian James Wright

When you're putting together preparations for the possibility of a crisis, internal communications is usually not the first thing to come to mind. But it's an essential part of crisis response preparedness; you must loop in employees, owners, board members, investors and the wider community (including the families and business associates of all the above) if you want to maintain a reputation of integrity and transparency.

Melinda Merillat, senior director of marketing and public relations at the College of Biblical Studies in Houston, Texas, advocates for putting together a communication alert team, which is responsible for notifying appropriate stakeholders in a timely fashion in the event of a crisis. The size of this team will probably scale with the size of your organization, but these four people should be at the core:

### **Incident commander**

- Leads response and recovery effort during a crisis
- Activates emergency alert system or delegates to a public information officer

### **Public information officer**

- Is the media spokesperson or designates one.
- Writes communications, protects brand and assists with image and presentation
- Coordinates communications timeline
- Coordinates and oversees “human touch” element during an incident
- Sends pre-approved communications to stakeholders and community
- Provides support for strategic planning team and on-ground incident team
- Activates emergency alert system if incident commander is unable

### **IT specialist**

- Responsible for the communications infrastructure (computer, website and telephone) during emergency operations and recovery
- Oversees all issues related to company intranet and other IT systems
- Provides website support as needed
- Updates phone systems with pre-approved, pre-recorded crisis message

### **Social media coordinator**

- Provides communications support as needed, including social media and website updates
- Implements and manages “human touch” element
- Trained in emergency alert service operations—activates alert system if incident commander and public information officer are unable

You may also consider adding someone specifically designated as internal liaison, who is the link between major stakeholders and the crisis management team. Merrillat stresses that all team members should participate in scheduled practice alert tests.