

event Used interchangeably with the term “incident,” a sudden or slowly developing, expected or unexpected occurrence that leads to a crisis situation.

executive team As it relates to crisis management, senior leaders of an organization who are tasked with the responsibility to strategically “lead” (vs. tactical involvement) the crisis response when threshold levels are reached that will mobilize their involvement. Every function of the organization should be represented on the core executive team.

exercise An activity that simulates a crisis-related situation and tests the strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and limitations of the company’s crisis management organization, including the plan(s), team(s), and other preparations.

exercise observer An individual or small team that is not actively involved in an exercise, but has the role of monitoring to assure the objectives are being met and to compile useful information for improvement.

fact finding An ongoing individual and team process during crisis response of receiving, validating, compiling, and prioritizing incoming crisis-related information in order to implement an effective crisis response.

fact pattern Interconnected issues and bits of information that are in context of a crisis situation, including what has occurred, identification of problem areas, stakeholder responses, intended and unintended consequences, and anticipation of upcoming manifestations.

gatekeeper When assigned to secure a crisis command center, the sole purpose is to manage traffic in and out of the room. This person should be armed with a list of people who are allowed in the center and assure no one else gains access to the room without authorized approval.

guiding principles Established behavioral and decision-making guidelines for individual and corporate crisis response that are based on undisputable, high-level character traits and social appropriateness.

higher purpose Where the overriding crisis response focus is not on self-serving interests, but on the greater good of the organization, community, and other impacted stakeholders.

holding statements Public statements that are prepared and pre-approved by management prior to a crisis situation for use by appropriate communicators in the early aftermath of a crisis.

human side of crisis The specialty area of addressing the communication, palliative (physical comforting), emotional, safety, wellbeing, and other needs and concerns of impacted crisis stakeholders, including employees, their family members, and others.

psychological debriefing Typically, one-session group or individual meetings that are intended to reduce the negative and unwanted reactions of people impacted by a crisis situation. Research has demonstrated that the traditional approach of discussing and shared reliving of a traumatic incident is not clinically helpful. However, there is a social expectation that organizations should demonstrate caring following a distressing crisis incident. Thus, new approaches to debriefing and intervention are focused on supporting issues of post-incident calm, safety, information, interpersonal connectedness, and hope.

psychological first aid (PFA) Assistance provided to impacted people in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event to reduce distress and to begin adaptive functioning. Components include establishing a sense of safety, allowing a compassionate opportunity to talk, provision of coping information, addressing needs and concerns, establishing social support, referrals for additional assistance, and offer of follow up.

public relations (PR) consultant Crisis communications require PR professionals who are experienced and skilled in crisis management. Beyond PR responsibilities during normal times, PR consultants should be fully adept at managing crises.

purposeful disengagement Structured process used to de-escalate the crisis management teams and their active crisis response involvement, based on decision-making that takes into reasonable consideration the disposition of all involved stakeholders.

tactical crisis management Often involving immediate and emergency response actions, tactics also refer to tangible, “doing” actions taken to address a crisis.

recovery Returning an organization to operational stability following a crisis.

reasonable person test Reflects what an informed person would have expected you to do, given what you knew (or should have known) at the time and were capable of doing.

reliability An attribute that consistently produces the same results and can be counted on to work successfully in the same manner in response to repeated challenges.

resilience The ability for an organization to protect its core assets, including ability to operate at acceptable levels, following a crisis situation.

ripple effect of vulnerability A progressive and unwanted exposure to a threat or damage once primary security measures have been breached.

risk Potential for damage or unwanted outcome relating to a corporate or