



A guide to Crisis Management Teams

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The purpose of this report is to act as a guide on how you can best prepare for and deal with a critical incident. This may include becoming the victim of a crime such as kidnap, blackmail or product contamination.

The role of a Crisis Management Team (CMT) is to coordinate the response to the crisis and, where appropriate, provide liaison with the police investigation.

Depending upon the nature and magnitude of the incident, a tiered response by the company or organisation may be appropriate and it is important that appropriate representatives are involved at each tier of responses. This may include a corporate CMT operating at head office level, working in conjunction with a Forward Management Team and a Tactical Management Team in close collaboration with those directly affected by the crisis.

Function & Level of Authority

For any CMT to be effective, it must have appropriate levels of authority. This will be especially relevant where unwarranted demands are being made of the company or organisation. Law enforcement agencies investigating the incident will require rapid access to decision makers who can act as an authoritative body without having to defer decisions to the main board or other departments.

The primary function of a Crisis Management Team is to coordinate the company's responses to the crisis and act as a liaison point with law enforcement agencies with the key strategic aim of resolving the incident.

Members of the CMT should be selected for their specialist knowledge and expertise and not simply because they are managers.

“Unless Management continues to manage business, the business will not manage to continue”

Any crisis has the potential not only to seriously disrupt or affect business continuity but also poses a significant threat to the organisation's reputation, both with customers and within their field of business. A poorly handled crisis will no doubt attract considerable adverse media attention and could even jeopardise the safety of individuals, either staff or, in the case of product contamination, members of the public.

Establishing a CMT

CMT members may be required to assemble at short notice and should therefore prepare others to fulfil their normal workload. Routine tasks may need to be given to non-CMT members in order for the daily business to continue.

It may be necessary for the CMT to convene in secure premises, away from the normal workplace.

All unusual activity within a company or organisation will attract unwanted rumour and speculation among staff and colleagues and careful handling of 'rumour control' will be required. It is imperative therefore that the initial meetings of a CMT are conducted in secret and, as the crisis develops, the degree of sensitivity can be reviewed. CMT should always operate on a 'need to know' basis.

CMT Membership

The Crisis Management Team will vary in size and structure dependent upon the crisis being dealt with. The below list is by no means exhaustive but gives an indication of the various roles that may be required.

- Senior Management (Chairperson)
- Personnel / Human Resources
- Insurance/ Risk Manager
- Finance
- Legal Services
- Corporate Affairs/Media
- Distribution & Marketing
- Production
- Scientific Research & Development
- Organisational Specialist
- Co-Opted Members
- Security
- Risk Consultants
- Business Continuity
- Police Liaison

All members of a CMT should clearly understand their role and have practised in a safe learning environment. The time to test if your CMT is effective is not when you have to implement it for the first time!

Decision Making

The role of a CMT is to act as a decision making body that can significantly influence the successful resolution of the crisis situation.

As such, they are accountable for their decisions either individually or collectively. Accurate and timely records of meetings and decisions should be kept to demonstrate a clear auditable trail of;

- ✓ What the decision was
- ✓ Who took the decision
- ✓ Their rationale behind taking the decision
- ✓ When the decision was made

It may also be necessary to securely store documents, E mails and correspondence relevant to the crisis.

All of these will be relevant in either a post-incident investigation or enquiry.

“In a crisis don’t hide behind anything or anybody; they’re going to find you anyway”

Author: [Bear Bryant](#)

Training & Familiarisation

For a CMT to be effective during a crisis, it is suggested that the group meets and trains together regularly. Crisis scenarios can be worked through in a measured fashion without the additional time pressures and demands that a real life crisis will bring. Much can be learned during exercises and familiarisation training. It will give companies and organisations an opportunity to test both their standard operating procedures (SOPs) and their business continuity plans.

Training also provides an opportunity for the CMT to work together as well as to integrate new members into the team.

Remember – “Proper Preparation and Planning can Prevent Poor Performance”