

# *Battle Stations: The Critical First Hour*

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*May you work in  
interesting times...*

The Critical First Hour



- Workplace violence
- Workplace injuries and fatalities
- Fatal accidents involving company vehicles
- Hazardous chemical spills
- Layoffs, plant closings, production moves offshore
- Labor unrest
- Off-the-rails projects
- Catastrophic product failures
- Product recalls
- Activist pressure (including boycotts)
- Conflict zone casualties
- Unscrupulous external partners/associates
- Natural disasters
- Terrorism
- Unpopular corporate actions and practices
- Ethical lapses
- Illegal activities
- Epidemics
- Criminal investigations
- Congressional inquiries
- Rogue employees

# Task # 1: Disambiguate

The Critical First Hour

00:20

Incident Facts		
Date of Incident:		Time:
Type of Incident:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Fatality	<input type="checkbox"/> Injury	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire / Explosion
<input type="checkbox"/> Bomb / Terror Threat	<input type="checkbox"/> Product Failure	<input type="checkbox"/> Infectious Disease
<input type="checkbox"/> Kidnapping / Abduction	<input type="checkbox"/> Protest / Demonstration	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental
<input type="checkbox"/> Workplace Threat / Violence	<input type="checkbox"/> Business Interruption	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe):		
Status of Incident (as many details as possible):		
Emergency Notifications:		
<input type="checkbox"/> LEPC	<input type="checkbox"/> State Police	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Police
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Law Enforcement (describe):		
<input type="checkbox"/> OSHA	<input type="checkbox"/> EPA	<input type="checkbox"/> State Environmental Management
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Department	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Utilities (describe)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe):		
Victim Information:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Injured	<input type="checkbox"/> Missing	<input type="checkbox"/> Fatalities
Treatment Status:		
<input type="checkbox"/> On-Site Emergency Medical	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-Site Hospitalization	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe):		
Potential Off-Site Impact:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
If Yes, What:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Injury	<input type="checkbox"/> Property Damage	<input type="checkbox"/> Evacuation
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual	<input type="checkbox"/> Odors
<input type="checkbox"/> Noise		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe):		
Public Actions Requested:		
<input type="checkbox"/> No Action	<input type="checkbox"/> Shelter-In-Place	<input type="checkbox"/> Evacuate

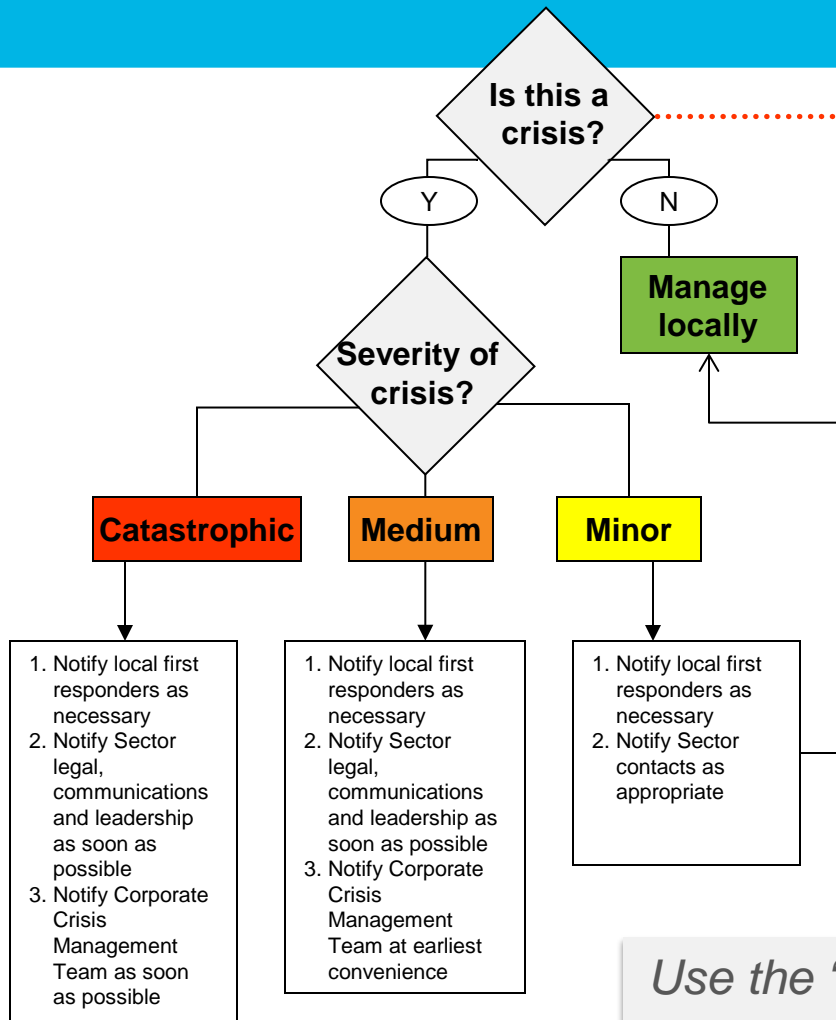
- Critical to gain clarity out of confusion
- Gather and sort out the facts (including what we don't know)
- Opinions, guesses, speculation are unhelpful
- Employ crisis tools to organize the process

*Have a document at the ready to prompt the right questions*

# Task # 2: Diagnose

The Critical First Hour

00:25



**Could this situation, event or incident:**

- Cause unwanted or negative attention?
- Harm the financial health of the company?
- Threaten or harm the health, safety or wellness of employees or the community?
- Threaten or harm the environment in or around the facility?

*Use the “FIDDLE & BOW” to guide your communications posture*

# Communications Posture

The Critical First Hour

00:25



Communications Response

Urgent

Quick

Workplace Fatality/Injury

Plant Fire/Accident

Layoffs

Criminal Investigation

Workplace Violence

Chaotic

Multiple Fatalities/Injuries

Hazardous Chemical Leak

Chronic

Product Recall

Labor Unrest

Lawsuit

Activist Pressure

Epidemic

Threatening Weather

Kinetic

Measured

Limited,  
Contained

Widespread,  
Uncontrolled

Severity

# Task # 3: Deploy

The Critical First Hour

00:35

- Three streams of communications to manage
- Each has a distinct dynamic unto itself

	For stakeholders who are:		
	Managing the Crisis	Impacted by the Crisis	Talking about the Crisis
Their Focus:	Operational (Contain, Solve, Return to Normal)	Informational (Understand, Act)	Reputational (and Legal) (Critique, Analyze)
Their Needs:	Focus, Space, Decisions	Facts, Direction, Reassurance	Updates, Access, Background
Channels:	Internal, Formal and Informal	Internal and External, Official and Unofficial	External, Official
Communication's Role:	Support, Counsel, Shield	Update, Liaise, Advocate	Correct, Confirm, Corral
Communication's Goal:	Minimize distractions; provide advice and resources as appropriate	Keep informed; listen and respond; earn continuing permission to operate	Achieve balanced coverage; isolate as an aberration; decouple

## *Task # 4:* *Decide*

The Critical First Hour



### **What plays will you run?**

- Who needs to know (stakeholders); what do they need to know?
- Who is your crisis team conduit (and backups) for updates?
- What is the process for updates (scheduled or ad hoc)?
- What assets will we deploy (channels and platforms)?
- What can we say?

## Task # 5: Direct

The Critical First Hour



### Run your plays

- Assign tasks and roles (writer, spokesperson, news/social media monitoring, crisis team liaison, etc.)
- Notify and engage required parties (HR, Legal, Operations and other staff as necessary)
- Organize initial messages (think in bullet points)
- Develop refined first-response statement
- Run review and approval process (with high urgency)
- Push statement across selected internal and external channels



# *Your Process Writes Your Response*

The Critical First Hour



## Facts, structured into a statement

We have had **[describe type/location of incident]**. At this time **[describe status of incident]**. Our primary concern right now is for the safety of our employees and the community. We are taking every measure to ensure that the health and safety of our employees and the community are protected. We have notified local officials, including **[identify as appropriate]** and they are offering assistance as needed. While we are still in the process of accounting for all of our employees, we do know that **[acknowledge whether there are injuries]** and they are being **[describe treatment status]**. Along with local officials, we are monitoring off-site impacts very closely. Potential off-site impacts could include **[describe off-site impacts, if any; if none omit this sentence]**. Currently the community is being asked to **[describe advised activities, if any]**. We will be providing updates as information becomes available. Thank you for your patience.

## The playbook goes only so far

- Crisis communications is not just about delivering facts; it also reveals your culture
- Institutional knowledge and relationships are supremely valuable for moving quickly
- The “Awake-at-Nighter’s Law”: The crisis your team didn’t see coming is the one that will happen
- By the time you hear about it, it’s already been a crisis situation for a while
- Know your contingencies; establish them as necessary
- Know your friends and allies; nurture them continuously

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