



**American  
Red Cross**

PR News  
Crisis Scenario

# Scenario #1

River City Mall is the most popular shopping center in the metro area and you work on the mall's public relations team.

It's 1:00 on a Saturday afternoon in December. You are at home when you get a call from a CNN producer asking you to confirm a report of a deadly shooting in the mall.

At nearly the same moment you see this on your Twitter feed:





EyeWitness @IWitness

Just saw two people shot inside Macy's at River City Mall. Five people w/guns on the loose. Freaking out in parking lot. #RiverCityShooting



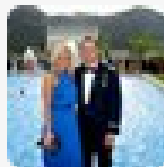
LadyShopper @Ladyshopper

@Iwitness saw the same thing. Couldn't tell how many shooters. People running and screaming everywhere. Ran out of the mall too.



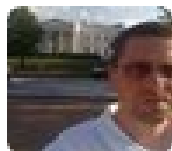
EyeWitness @IWitness

@Ladyshopper glad ur safe. I'm looking for my sister. Got separated. Still hearing more shots from inside the store.



Jill Taylor @Jill\_Taylor

@Iwitness @LadyShopper tv report says 12+ people in Macy's injured. @CNN interviewing people trapped in store. #RCShooting #Pray4RC



Bob Riley @RiverCityPD\_PIO

Confirmed active shooter in River City Mall. If you are in mall, you need to get out as quickly as possible.

# Discussion Topic #1

## What is your first step?

In your table groups, answer the following questions:

- Who *inside* of your mall management team do you need to work with?
- Who *outside* of the mall management structure needs to be part of your coordination efforts?
- How are you working with or coordinating internal and external partners?
- What information do you need to assess immediately?



# Basics for interacting during emergencies and crisis situations

**Build trust and credibility with people who are engaging with you.**

- Express **Empathy** and **Caring**
- Demonstrate **Competence** and **Expertise**
- Display **Honesty** and **Openness**
- Show **Commitment** and **Dedication**

*Adapted from CDC Crisis Emergency and Risk Communication 2008*



# Basics for interacting during emergencies

- Give accurate and clear information; clarify rumors or misinformation
- Provide action steps
- Don't over reassure
- Validate (normalize, reframe) their emotions by acknowledging fear and uncertainty
- Express wishes (“I wish I had more answers.”)
- Tell people when you will provide more updates

*Adapted from CDC Crisis Emergency and Risk Communication 2008*



# Turning Basic Messaging Into Empathetic Messaging

**Why can't you tell us exactly what is going on inside the mall?**

## **Concern**

- **We understand this is a difficult and frightening time for those who believe they have loved ones inside the mall.**

## **Action**

- **There are few details that we can confirm this early in the situation. But what I can tell you, is that mall management is working with police and first responders to do everything possible to help those still inside the mall and assist those who have made out.**

## **Plan**

- **We have made contact with the local Red Cross and they are assisting us in setting up a reception area at River City High School for anyone who has fled the mall.**

## Scenario #2

Within five minutes of the call from CNN, here is what you've been able to find out from your boss, the mall manager:

- 1) Multiple people have been injured in an apparent shooting inside of the Macy's.
- 2) River City PD has a 24 person SWAT team surrounding the Macy's end of the mall and they've asked for help from neighboring cities.
- 3) There is an unknown number of shooters and it's unclear if they are contained in the Macy's or if they have moved to other parts of the mall.
- 4) At least some of the shooters are believed to have taken hostages inside of Macy's.
- 5) River City Emergency Management is asking people in the mall to shelter in place if they haven't been able to get out.





## Discussion Topic #2

River City Mall has a Twitter following of 500,000 and 400,000 Facebook likes.

In your table groups, answer the following questions:

- What are the 3-5 main messages you need to get out?
- How will you disseminate those messages?
- Who is going to deliver those messages?
- How are you going to handle social media?
- How do you structure your team to respond in multiple channels?



## Scenario #3

Four hours after the event began, the shooter was found deceased inside the mall, just outside of the doors of the Macy's. Police have searched the store and found three victims. Fourteen other people were transported to local hospitals.

You receive a call from the same CNN producer who first contacted you. Their sources are telling them that the shooter was a former mall security guard, recently fired from his job after being accused of shoplifting at the Macy's. Store employees have told CNN that they feared for their safety because the security guard threatened violence after the firing and mall management ignored the threats.



# Discussion Topic #3

In your table groups, answer the following questions:

- What are the main messages you want get out to the public?
- How do you address the allegations about the security guard and his firing?
- How do you address the allegations that mall management ignored threats of violence?
- Is social media an appropriate channel to address these allegations?



# Things to Remember

- Empathy
  - Are you conveying a presence/message that conveys an understanding of the seriousness of the situation?
- Correct messaging
  - Are you confidently and correctly conveying your message?
- Blocking and bridging
  - How are you getting around tough questions and how do you bridging back to your message?
- Coping in the absence of facts
- Ability to debunk or reject a faulty premise
- Coping with misinformation and external criticism
  - Can you effectively messaging in the face of public criticism?
  - Can you effectively correct misinformation?
  - Are you communicating in the right channels?

