



**DISASTER
PREPAREDNESS
GUIDE**

Introduction



Sir Winston Churchill



He who fails to plan is planning to fail.



911 dispatchers spend every day responding to emergencies. Their job is to triage a situation and provide appropriate responders to the scene. But are they prepared to face a catastrophic event like a mass shooting, a Category 5 hurricane, or even a six-foot snowfall that shuts down an entire city (think Buffalo, NY in November 2022)?.

Disasters happen, but within your emergency communications center, failure is not an option.

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Potential Crises



Your emergency communications center should be prepared for any and all potential crises:

Natural Disasters and Severe Weather Events



Hurricanes

Earthquakes



Tsunamis and Volcanoes

Flooding



Blizzards and Droughts



Foodborne illnesses



Pandemics

Biological Hazards

Accidental Human-Caused Events



Fires

Explosions



Building or Structure Collapses

Hazardous Material Spills



Violence



Arson



Mass Shootings

Hostage Situations



Terrorist Attacks

Intentional Human-Caused Event



Power Outages



Cyberattacks

Technology Issues

Create an Emergency Response Protocol

The best way to plan for a catastrophic event is to create a clear, concise and well-defined ERP (Emergency Response Protocol) for the Communications Center.

Once you have created your ERP, you need to disseminate it:



Review it with every single stakeholder.



Make it easily accessible: Publish it in multiple locations so that it can be easily accessed. Make sure you have multiple printed and laminated copies of the ERP throughout the communications center. Keep digital copies in easily accessible locations within your organization's internal drives or cloud instances.



Provide **thorough training** to your staff on how to implement it, and the role(s) they will play.



Run frequent practice drills to enact the plan so that in the event of a real catastrophe, your staff is prepared and ready to respond as quickly, efficiently, and effectively as possible.



Update it regularly, based on your updated staffing, resources and technology.



Crisis Assessment

Identify a process to assess the incident, its potential severity and impact on the population and region you serve.

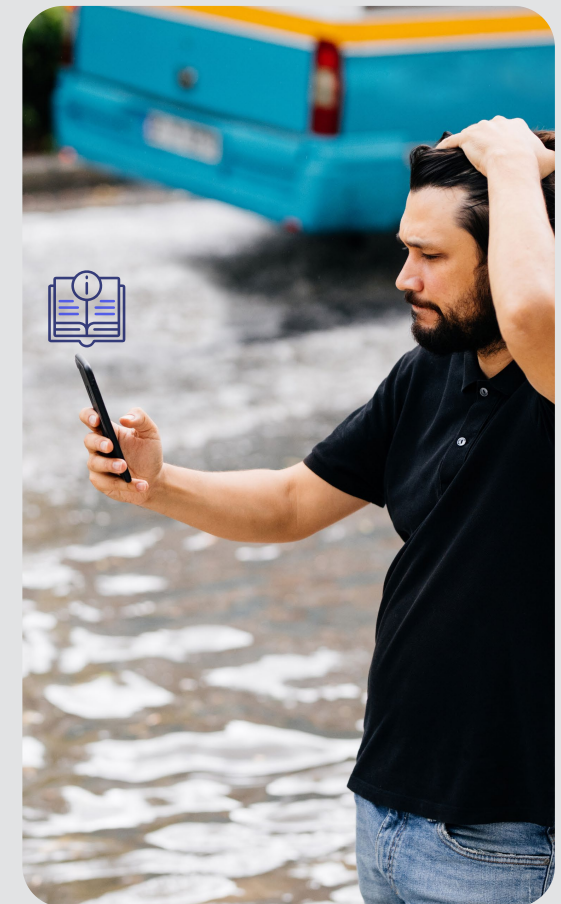


Communication protocols are critical in the management of a catastrophic event. During a crisis situation, local residents will look to your emergency communications center for instructions and guidance. Clear communications are essential both internally and to the public; a lack of communication can also be a safety issue.

Notifications

Your emergency communication protocol should include the following for each potential crisis type:

- 01** | The people, teams and departments who must be notified of this emergency, and the order in which they should be notified.
- 02** | Which teams will be required to provide aid, such as SWAT, FEMA, Police, Negotiator and ICS (Incident Command System).
- 03** | Which teams will manage community outreach, such as the PIO (Public Information Officer).
- 04** | Specify who will be the spokesperson(s) in the event of a crisis.
- 05** | Clear instructions and employee training, so that everyone on your team knows how to raise the issue up the chain of command.
- 06** | Standard statements to respond to families or reporters who call into the 911 system.



Staffing

It is vital to have a staffing plan in place, to ensure coverage for the event, and reduce staff burnout in the days and weeks following a catastrophic event.



What are your staffing requirements during the event?



How will you staff later shifts?



If you work on an A/B/C shift rotation, make sure you have prepared a version of this rotation dedicated to emergencies, so that you can ramp up the needed shift during the emergency and still have staff reserves ready to relieve them at the next shift.



How will you support your staff emotionally during and after the event?



Designated Roles

Every member of your team should know their designated role in the event of an emergency.



Ensure that each team member understands their role and the chain of command.



If the person responsible for practicing the emergency protocols is on vacation or unavailable when an incident occurs, does the next person in line know how to take action?



Your protocol should include who is responsible for contacting and calling up all the emergency response teams who were not at work when the emergency began.



Consider overtime tracking requirement

Call Management

Your communications center should have a call management system in place that can handle these protocols:

- 01** | A clearly defined system for identifying whether callers are reporting from a safe location; not safe and hiding; unsafe and at risk.
- 02** | Provide critical scene management information to first responders, such as visual confirmation of a shooter.
- 03** | Track all inbound callers
- 04** | Enable a defined message and call to action for families seeking information about their loved ones.
- 05** | An orderly triage system based on life-threatening risk; injuries, casualties, and crowd management.
- 06** | After your first responders have cleared the scene and removed the threat, is there a planned process to find and communicate with people in hiding to inform them it is safe?



Equipment

It is essential to make sure the most critical components of your operation can quickly be set up and run at an alternative backup location.



Identify the equipment required for call-center portability if you need to move locations.



Prepare for the possibility your communications center may be inaccessible, by ensuring that you have copies or alternative options for all vital equipment, such as radios, keys and laptops.



In your ERP drills and practice, go to this backup location regularly, to ensure that everything is working and in order, so you don't have to waste precious time troubleshooting in the event of an actual disaster.



Run a 24-hour rotation in the backup location from time to time to get your staff accustomed to working from your backup location.



Location & Call Center Portability

- 01** Can you remain within your current call-center location? If not, do you have a backup center that is secure?
- 02** If your main location is threatened by a natural disaster, your backup location must be far enough away to remain safe, not up the block.
- 03** A clearly defined CoOP (Continuity of Operations Plan) is vital in the event of a natural or human-created disaster that requires you to relocate your operations. Just as important is that your team knows how to implement it?
- 04** The best way to keep your call center portable is to maintain it in the cloud.
- 05** A cloud-native call center ensures that your staff has anytime/anywhere access to critical resources.
- 06** If your servers are in the main call center location, and that location is flooded, in a fire or otherwise inaccessible or destroyed, you have no redundancy.
- 07** Using cloud-native technology ensures that you have automatic disaster recovery to continue your life-saving operations in the face of a catastrophic event.
- 08** A designated individual outside the affected area can go to the new location, set up the call center, and direct staff to report to the new location.
- 09** Using a cloud-native communications center ensures that your operators and dispatchers can operate from a safe location, with technology that looks and feels exactly the same as the tech stack they use every day.



Training

A woman in a dark blue firefighter's uniform with reflective yellow and silver stripes is smiling as she puts on a silver helmet. Two men in tan firefighter jackets are assisting her. One man is adjusting the helmet, and the other is adjusting her jacket. They are in a training environment with a fire truck visible in the background.

Your communications center should be prepared for catastrophic events in whatever form they take.

- Build a well-documented plan that covers every possible eventuality.
- Make sure your notifications list is updated frequently and you host training sessions and drills with regularity.
- Build your backup center on the opposite side of your jurisdiction from your main call center, and ensure that you have a cloud-native platform that is portable to go with you in whatever location your team ends up working.

Create a training program that teaches all staff what the plan is and specifically how to implement it.

- Ensure that all shifts have completed the training, and practice drills on a regular basis.
- Every new employee should complete the ERP training, so that the entire staff knows what to do, and where to find critical information during an emergency.

It is important to be aware that after a communications center is faced with a catastrophic event, even after the event is over your team members will require recovery and support themselves, both short-term and long-term. It is important to actively monitor their behavior for signs of stress and emotional distress and plan to proactively support their mental health needs and PTSD recovery.

Benefits of Cloud Preparedness

The advantages of maintaining your communication technology in the cloud cannot be overstated:

Redundancy

Even if your communications center is inaccessible, or your equipment destroyed, when all of your data and systems are stored in the cloud, they can be quickly retrieved and up-and-running in minutes.



Agility

Cloud technology enables managers and responders to think and respond out-of-the-box, by enabling communications anywhere in the world, independent of specific hardware.



Mobility

In the event of a disaster or pandemic, when it is safest for your team members to work from home or relocated, a cloud-native communications center enables your team to check in wherever they are based, with the same system they are used to, so that they can continue to fulfill their roles.



Automation

When staff resources are stretched thin during a mass event or disaster, a cloud communications platform with predefined automated emergency call response mechanisms, helps to ensure that callers can be quickly and accurately connected to help.



CASE STUDY

After the recent earthquakes in Turkey, international rescue responders using Carbyne at the site of the disaster were able to utilize the resources of a support team located in a different country.



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For more information or to schedule a demo, visit carbyne.com