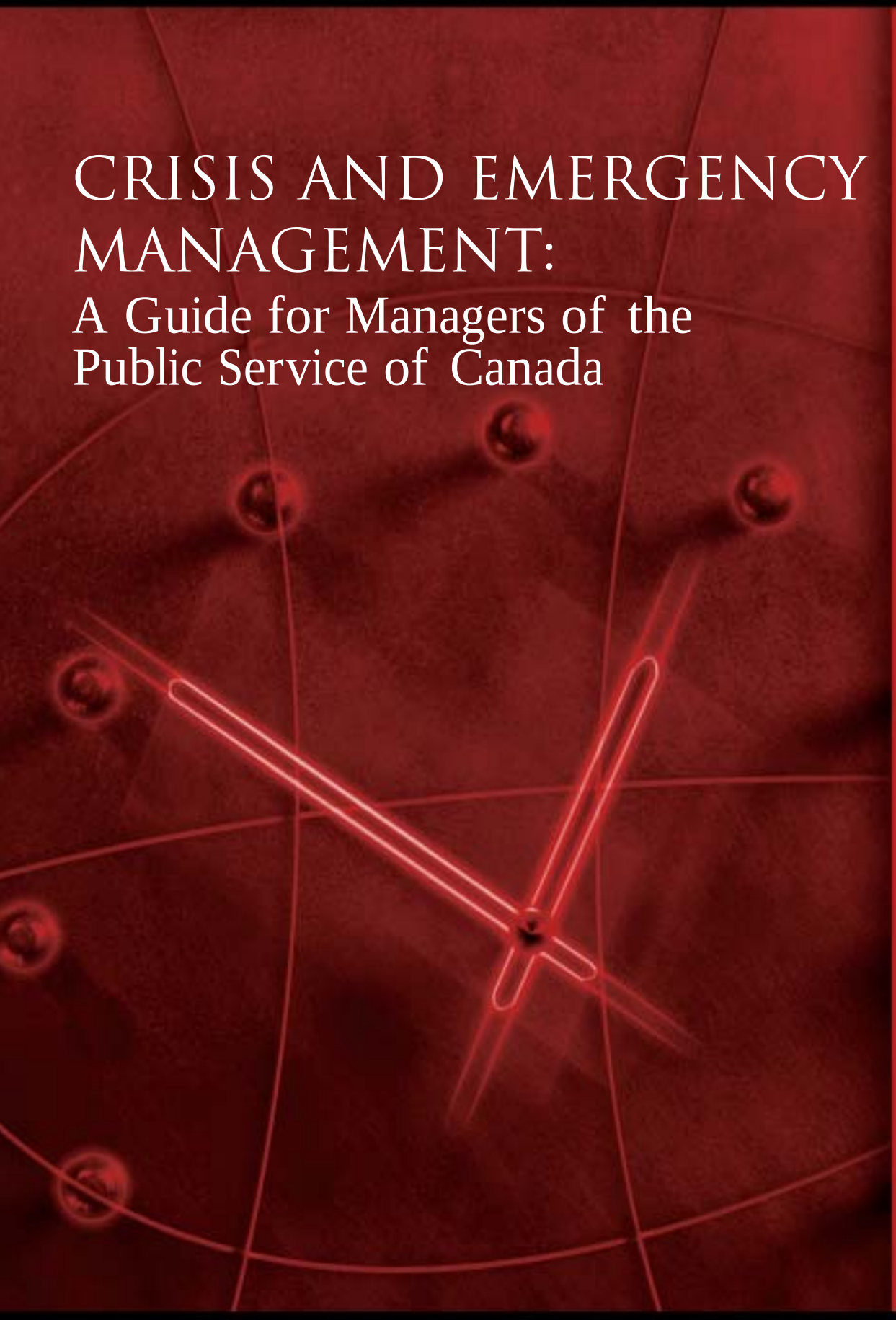

CRISIS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:

A Guide for Managers of the Public Service of Canada

CCMD
Action-Research
Roundtable on
Crisis Management

CHAIRED BY
ANDRÉ GLADU

BY
PATRICK BOISVERT
AND
RAPHAËL MOORE

For more information or copies, please contact the
Research and University Relations Branch of the
Canadian Centre for Management Development

Telephone: (613) 947-3682 / 943-8370
Facsimile: (613) 992-1736
Internet: publications@ccmd-ccg.gc.ca

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A WORD FROM CCMD

Public managers rely on many types of research to stay on top of our constantly changing government workplace. Basic research lays down a solid foundation of understanding by describing and explaining the world in which public managers live. Applied research adds a practical edge by drawing out the decision-making implications of research findings. Action-research takes this practicality a step further. It provides timely and concrete advice to pressing challenges; advice that speaks to managers' lived experience. It does this by involving managers at every stage of the research process. In short, it aims to take inquiry out of the research shop and move it onto the workplace floor — a key feature of a public service organization that learns.

This guide comes from CCMD's third wave of Action-Research Roundtables. This year our discussions with managers brought to light three research areas:

- Crisis Management
- e-Learning
- Official Languages in the Workplace

These topics relate directly to the day-to-day challenges managers face and are of strategic importance to the Public Service as a whole.

This manager's guide on crisis and emergency management is the result of the Action-Research Roundtable on Crisis Management. It fills an important gap by providing a current and accessible perspective of crisis and emergency management in the context of the Government of Canada. The guide builds upon the work of others within the Public Service of Canada such as the Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness, the Treasury Board Secretariat and the Privy Council Office. It has been designed to complement the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada and the Integrated Risk Management Framework* which are instrumental for efficient crisis and emergency management.

I am confident that you will find this guide a path-breaking contribution to our on-going journey to make the Public Service of Canada an institution recognized for its value-added to the Canadian society.

I would like to thank the Roundtable's Chair, André Gladu, former Deputy Minister of Canada Economic Development, for his commitment and leadership. I also applaud the invaluable contribution of the Roundtable members who volunteered their time and expertise because they believe in the importance of improving the practices in the field of crisis and emergency management.

Jocelyne Bourgon
President, CCMD

ACTION-RESEARCH

CCMD's action-research process brings together practitioners and experts from both inside and outside government to develop practical advice for dealing with pressing management challenges. The research process revolves around the deliberations of a diverse Roundtable – an ideal forum for rapidly pooling and scrutinizing knowledge, insights and experiences. The research is conducted over a one-year period.

The management challenges are selected by managers and senior executives according to their urgency and importance to the Public Service as a whole. The objective is to provide leading-edge, focused and practical products that public managers genuinely value and actively use in their work.

The Roundtable is supported by a secretariat composed of scholars and Public Service researchers.

A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

The Public Service of Canada evolves in a world in which risks have become increasingly complex and serious, and this in turn has greatly increased the likelihood of crises or emergencies. The events linked to the attacks of September 11, 2001 and, more recently, to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Mad Cow Disease are just a few examples that highlight the important role the Government of Canada needs to play in managing crises and emergencies. In the big picture, crises and emergencies are inevitable and it is only a question of time before one or the other occurs.

Federal public service managers are now beginning to recognize that crises, and, in some respects, emergencies can occur in any area of their sector of responsibility. Crises are bound to require action specifically designed to re-establish public confidence and government integrity, whereas emergencies are bound to involve action to limit damage to people, property and the environment. Past experience has demonstrated that emergencies can quickly turn into crises if it appears that government is not on top of the situation. Although crises and emergencies require different approaches, both types of situations involve many stakeholders and thus represent a tremendous challenge to coordinate both operational and communication demands.

Given the linkages between crises and emergencies, it seemed timely to create a guide that would cover both these concepts and attempt to identify the particular characteristics of each. However, it should be realized that this guide is not aimed at the emergency management specialists within the Government of Canada, but rather at as wide a readership as possible.

The aim of this guide is to provide all public service managers with the basic knowledge and tools to effectively manage crises and emergencies. The guide does not claim to provide a complete explanation of the subject. In fact, we have deliberately limited and adapted its content in the hope that it will become a useful reference on the key points that managers should know and use to be prepared. The guide is also accompanied by a collection of case studies based on the past experience of federal public service managers. These case studies can also be accessed on the CCMD Web site at www.ccmd-ccg.gc.ca .

In closing, I would like to thank the Roundtable members for the time they devoted to their role and for sharing their rich experience and enlightened views in the context of our work. I would also like to thank the members of the Roundtable secretariat who, despite the varied pressures, supported our work with tenacity and skill.

André Gladu
Chair
CCMD Action-Research Roundtable
on Crisis Management

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Chair:	André Gladu	Former Deputy Minister, Canada Economic Development
Members:	Benoît Bouchard	Former President, Transportation Safety Board of Canada
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The members of the Roundtable wish to thank the many individuals who contributed to this project namely all the managers who shared their experience which was documented in case studies. The Roundtable also wishes to acknowledge the outstanding contribution of everyone who contributed to the revision of drafts. The success of this Roundtable would not have been possible without the collaboration of all these individuals.

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OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDE

This guide represents a practical resource in the field of crisis and emergency management for federal public service managers. It has been designed to provide managers with the basic knowledge and pointers that will enable them to prepare themselves to effectively manage crises and emergencies in a Public Service context.

The guide contains six sections that can be consulted separately and which managers can refer to as required. The guide is accompanied by another document containing case studies of the actual experience of federal government organizations in certain past crises and emergencies. This document is available on the CCMD Web site at www.ccmd-ccg.gc.ca. The content of the six sections in the guide is briefly summarized below:

Public Service managers need to be familiar with the most recent terminology in the field of crisis and emergency management. **Section 1** of the guide outlines the crisis and emergency management process and distinguishes between "crisis" and "emergency" in the public-sector context. This section also explains why managers need to prepare for any eventuality in a crisis or emergency.

Section 2 describes in greater detail the integrated process of crisis and emergency management in terms of four distinct phases: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. The aim of this conceptual framework is to guide managers through the main steps that need to be taken in each phase. This framework highlights the prevailing tendency in organizations to favour a high, ongoing level of risk reduction (mitigation) and response capability (preparedness). This section also includes a set of questions for assessing your particular organization's state of preparedness.

Crisis and emergency management is an integral part of the responsibilities of federal public service managers in Canada. In practice and depending on the circumstances, any branch of any federal department may be called upon to manage a crisis or emergency. That is why it is essential for managers to know their organization's obligations so as to better prepare for and react to potential crises and emergencies. **Section 3** provides an overview of the legal framework and policies related to crises and emergencies in the federal government context. This section also highlights the particular obligations of federal departments and agencies with respect to the four phases of the crisis and emergency management process.

Crisis and emergency management often involves collaboration between federal and outside organizations. In such a context, the key to a successful response basically lies on the ability of the stakeholders to coordinate efforts with respect to operations and communications. **Section 4** of the guide describes in greater detail the roles and responsibilities of the main actors who could be involved in the response phase in the federal context. The section also explains the various levels of coordination and interoperability between actors that could be required depending on the nature of the crisis or emergency.

Section 5 covers the main lessons that have been drawn from the experience of Public Service managers in various past crises. On the basis that crisis management requires prior action to mitigate and prepare for an eventual crisis, this section proposes a number of key considerations that managers should bear in mind in the response and recovery phases.

Past experience of crises and emergencies involving the Government of Canada has shown that communication can become a particularly complex challenge and can entail particularly serious consequences for the government. Breaks in the channels of communication with both the internal and external audiences can create confusion, thereby making it virtually impossible to keep on top of the situation. It is therefore necessary to manage communications at all stages of crises or emergencies – before, during and after. **Section 6** deals with the standard components of communication planning: strategy, audiences, designated spokespersons, and media relations.

What is Crisis and Emergency Management?

Crisis and emergency management is a dynamic process that starts long before the critical event breaks out and continues well beyond its conclusion. The process involves a proactive, a reactive and a reflective component. Each stage in a crisis or emergency entails specific challenges for managers and requires a different approach according to the particular phase in question. Since crises and emergencies frequently occur as a result of factors other than an unforeseen event, it is often possible to spot crisis situations ahead of time without waiting for the "roof to cave in." Small forewarnings can indicate that it is time to take mitigating activities that may even succeed in pre-empting the crisis or emergency. However, if a critical event does occur, one needs to be able to respond to contain the damage, undertake recovery and draw the required lessons to reduce the risk of recurrence. In short, the management process is integrated so as to operate before, during and after a crisis or emergency. Section 2 provides further explanation of the four main stages of crisis and emergency management which are: 1) mitigation, 2) preparedness, 3) response, and 4) recovery.

What is an 'Emergency' and What is a Crisis?

The words, "emergency" and "crisis" are often used interchangeably in the media and even within the Government of Canada. That is why it has become useful to make a distinction between emergencies and crises from the Public Service's point of view. The Treasury Board Secretariat defines emergencies and crises as follows:

"An 'emergency' is an abnormal situation that requires prompt action, beyond normal procedures, in order to limit damage to persons, property or the environment."

"A 'crisis' is a situation that somehow challenges the public's sense of appropriateness, tradition, values, safety, security or the integrity of the government."

Emergencies and crises share several characteristics in management terms, including the need to be proactive and coordinate a vast network of operations and communications.

The management of emergency situation involves having to deal with the problematic consequences of situations like a natural or man-made disaster. In such circumstances, the primary objective of emergency communications is to ensure an uninterrupted flow of information to the audiences affected in order to reduce risks and minimize fear or undesirable anxiety. Moreover, an emergency can turn into a crisis if it appears that the government is not in control of the situation. For example, the recent SARS epidemic (emergency) raised important questions about the effectiveness of the federal government's public-health monitoring measures (crisis).

On the other hand, crises do not always begin with an emergency and do not necessarily represent a serious threat to human life or property. Crises can be triggered simply by apparent failures in policies, regulations or programs, as, for example, in the crisis surrounding the management of grants and contributions at Human Resources Development Canada in 2000. In a government context, it is necessary to understand that crises are largely based on perception of a problem, regardless of whether the problem is real or only apparent. As the Privy Council Office points out, a situation degenerates into a crisis when it is designated as such by the media, Parliament, or by powerful or credible interest groups. In the final analysis, a crisis occurs: 1) when the government's attitude appears too oppressive, self-interested, discriminatory or unprepared, or 2) when it is felt that the government is not doing enough. Needless to say, all government operations are susceptible to crisis. That is why the aim of crisis communications is to coordinate the flow of information and opinions to the target audiences in such a way as to maintain and restore the government's credibility and integrity.

Table 1 - Features of Crisis and Emergency Management

TYPE OF INTERVENTION	POSSIBLE CAUSES	EXAMPLES	CHARACTERISTICS
Emergency management	• Natural catastrophes • Man-made disasters • Epidemics • Accidents • Terrorism • War • Sabotage • Cyber-attack • Breakdown or major failure of computer systems • Interruption of services to the public	• Canada Customs and Revenue Agency – Canada – US Border Security in Response to September 11, 2001 • Transport Canada – Shutdown of airspace in response to September 11, 2001 • Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Canadian Red Cross – Kosovar Relief Operation Parasol (1999) • Treasury Board of Canada, Secretariat – Code Red and Love Bug Hacker Incident (2002)	• Focuses on the consequences of the problem • The situation or problem is broad in scope • Complex repercussions possible on public institutions (risk of a crisis) • Requires extensive mobilization and coordination with regard to management of operations and communications • Focuses on limiting physical harm to individuals and damage to property or the environment
Crisis management	• Error of judgement (politician and/or public service) • Identified failures in policies, programs and regulations • Rumours • Damage to reputation • Mismanagement of an emergency	• Human Resources Development Canada – Management of Grants and Contributions (2000) • Department of National Defense – Somalia Affair (1993) • Department of Fisheries and Oceans – Mussels Crisis (1987) • Health Canada and the Red Cross – Tainted Blood Crisis (1998)	• Focuses on fundamental questioning of a problem (real or perceived) • The scope of the problem is very extensive • Loss of trust in public institutions • Requires extensive mobilization with regard to management of operations and communications • Focuses on restoring trust and on seeking a consensus

Why is Crisis and Emergency Management Important?

Crises and emergencies are inevitable and tend to multiply and become more complex:

- Crises and emergencies happen all the time and are inherent in all large organizations. The past has shown that it is not a question of knowing whether an organization will experience a crisis or major emergency, but rather one of knowing when this will take place, how serious it will be, and to what extent the organization itself will be prepared. For approximately 20 years, public and private organizations have increasingly come to rely on technology to support their communication, information and service-delivery systems. This factor has resulted in crisis and emergency management becoming more complex and systematized, even though this type of response existed well before a name was put to it. Thus, when an organization's systems stop working, we become practically helpless — hostages, as it were, to our own tools. Now, more than ever before, a catastrophe can upset the delicate balance of an organization and precipitate it down a slippery slope. Modern environment has increased tenfold the impact of work interruptions.

Crises and emergencies can be managed but you have to be well prepared:

- Crises and emergencies are different from routine action. In crises and emergencies, managers and their employees are often required to perform novel and unfamiliar tasks. Every procedure, priority, and assignment of work or resources is altered. Moreover, crises and emergencies generally involve close collaboration with various organizations that we do not normally deal with. When an organization is in the heat of the action, there is very little time to discuss who will be responsible for managing the crisis or emergency. That is why, like any other management challenge, we have to generally anticipate and prepare for crises and emergencies — in other words, we have to agree ahead of time on what current responsibilities and procedures to follow in cases of crises or emergencies. Experience has shown that crises and emergencies are handled much more effectively when the organization concerned is well prepared.

- Crisis and emergency management also call into play the strengths and weaknesses of learning organizations, pointing up the need for the organization to deal with its weak points and thereby become less vulnerable. Organizations must also be capable of "imagining the unthinkable," "thinking outside the box," and preparing for as many scenarios as possible. The example that comes most readily to mind and which is generally considered as the starting point for modern crisis management is what happened to the Johnson & Johnson corporation when it was forced to react to a series of Tylenol-linked deaths in fall 1982. At the time, this type of product-tampering was unimaginable, but since then the company has changed its packaging and method of manufacturing. The way in which this situation was handled by Johnson & Johnson management — with candour, honesty and a concern to ensure its customers' safety — has become a benchmark in terms of effective crisis management and is often cited in management texts. One of the consequences of the incredible events of September 11, 2001 is that we are now better prepared to imagine previously unthinkable threats to our organizations.

Crises and emergencies are part of a manager's responsibilities:

- Crises and emergencies constitute an integral part of a federal public service manager's responsibilities. At some time or other, every department or departmental directorate may find

itself having to manage a crisis or emergency. Indeed, a crisis or emergency may get considerably worse if it seems, even just for an instant, that confusion reigns within the organization and that "no one is at the controls." A crisis or major emergency places an organization on a "double-edged sword." The organization's credibility and even your own may be at risk if you are ill-prepared and, as a result, do not manage the crisis or emergency properly. On the other hand, if the crisis or emergency is effectively handled, the repercussions for your organization can be extremely positive. The word "crisis" in Chinese is "wei-ji," a term that refers to both the dangers and opportunities that a potentially negative situation can represent. We do not want crises to occur and make every effort to try and avoid them; on the other hand, it is possible to take advantage of the situation and enhance our organization's image by the way we handle them.

Reaction to Crises and Emergencies

Crises and emergencies may often involve natural human reactions of surprise, denial, anger and or fear. How an organization handles the emotions will determine how the organization deals with the crisis or emergency itself. The fight or flight syndrome can only be overcome by internal trust. With internal mistrust, the stage is set for recrimination, panic and collapse. When the climax of a crisis or emergency arrives, the prevailing attitude should be deliberation, consensus and confidence. The emphasis should be on understanding, on explaining the facts and on redirecting events.

Qualities of good managers in emergencies and crises:

- perceptive
- intuitive
- knowledgeable in one or more fields
- able to take on additional responsibilities
- able to think clearly
- decisive
- calm under pressure

THE PROCESS OF CRISIS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

This section provides a conceptual framework to help managers improve their understanding of the main phases of the crisis and emergency management process. Drawing on the most recent literature on the subject, the framework is based on an integrated process made up of four phases: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. This process reflects the current tendency in organizations to favour a high, ongoing level of both risk reduction (mitigation) and response capability (preparedness). Managers are called upon to act according to the main actions prescribed for each phase in the process.

Table 2 - The Process of Crisis and Emergency Management

BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
1) **Mitigation**: actions taken to reduce the consequences of a crisis or an emergency. • Conduct a review • Assess risks • Study worst-case scenarios • Study previous situations • Arrange for expertise • Set up continuous monitoring systems	3) **Response**: actions taken to deal with the consequences of a crisis or an emergency. • Assess the situation • Activate the operational plan • Activate the communications plan	4) **Recovery**: actions taken in the aftermath of a crisis or an emergency. • Declare the end of the crisis or emergency (return to normal operations) • Maintain communications with media and partners • Provide support to employees • Assess and draw lessons from experience
2) **Preparedness**: actions taken to prepare for effective crisis or emergency response. • Develop plans (operations and communications) • Form the team • Designate partners • Set up systems • Train and exercise the plans		

Mitigation Phase

The mitigation phase includes actions taken to reduce the consequences of a crisis or an emergency. The mitigation activities aim at identifying and anticipating at best possible crises and emergencies. They consist in identifying the vulnerabilities of the organization and in taking proactive measures on the latter. Managers should refer to the *Integrated Risk Management Framework* to conduct mitigation activities which consist in:

- conducting a review (identification or risks and critical situations);
- assessing the risks (risks that are most likely by order of importance);
- studying worst-case scenarios (scenario analyses and forecasting models);
- studying previous situations (retrospective review of similar crises and emergencies);
- arranging for expertise (identify specialists required for potential crises or emergencies);
- setting up continuous monitoring systems.

It is generally accepted that it is impossible to totally prevent crises and emergencies. Nonetheless, continued efforts to anticipate crises and emergencies increase the likelihood of avoiding the consequences. Mitigation activities are essential to guide and put forward the activities at the preparedness stage.

Preparedness Phase

The preparedness phase includes actions taken to prepare for effective crisis or emergency response. The preparedness activities consist in planning, both in terms of operations and communications, the main parameters of the response, the administrative modalities, the resources required as well as training and exercising the plans.

Planning (operations and communications)

Crisis and emergency management involves the development of two types of plans: operational and communications. The operational plan is the framework document that contains all of the information that managers will need to effectively manage crises or emergencies. In other words, the plan must provide guidelines to be followed in such situations. When managers design the plan, they should avoid making it too long or complicated. When a crisis or emergency strikes and the tension level is at its highest, there is no time to waste in looking through a voluminous plan full of narrative. The goal is to compile a document that contains all of the information managers will need to effectively manage crises and emergencies. An operational crisis plan should include the following basic components:

- a definition of crises and emergencies covered in plan;
- command structures, e.g. the management team, lead-agency responsibilities, relationships with other departments or agencies, and headquarters;
- administrative policies and procedures necessary for activating and facilitating decision making during the crisis or emergency;
- facilities (crisis or emergency management centre and logistics).

It is necessary to develop a communications plan to go along with the operational plan. The communications plan provides strategic guidelines and tactics that are necessary before, during and after crises or emergencies. The plan will help all responders to have the same terms of reference and reactions during the response. The communications plan also determines the designated spokespersons, the target audiences, the facilities and training needs. Section 6 provides in more details the typical elements of crisis and emergency communications planning.

Establishing a Response Team

The response team assembles the organization's employees who may be called upon to manage a crisis or emergency. Such a team usually comprises key individuals in the organization, bearing in mind their areas of specialization and expertise. The roles and responsibilities of each team member can be defined and the powers assigned to the team can be specified in the operational plan.

Designating Partners

The designation of partners implies the establishment of early contacts between the lead department and partner organizations that will provide support during the response. The lead department should share its crisis or emergency management program and harmonize it with partner organizations. The relationships and agreements established with partners prior to crises or emergencies could help significantly to improve the coordination of response.

Setting up Systems

Systems include all the resources that will be necessary to ensure that crisis or emergency operations function smoothly, i.e., infrastructure, technology and human resources. A lack or insufficiency of one of these factors may contribute to paralyzing the action taken by the response team. It is therefore necessary to ensure in advance that these resources are available and that the equipment works. Here are some examples of the response resources required:

- facilities (crisis or emergency management centre);
- communication equipment (telephone lines, fax machines, 1-800 line, cellphones, computer networks, teleconference capability, computers, recorder, and so on);
- back-up equipment and premises;
- support personnel (especially the clerk that assigns each of the team's actions).

Training and Exercising the Plans

The plans may turn out to be useless and ineffective if it is not tested. In itself, it can give managers a false feeling of security concerning the state of their organization's preparedness. To avoid the "paper plan" syndrome, the plans need to be periodically tested and the response team and their support personnel need to receive appropriate training. Although a small-scale or large-scale simulation exercise can be carried out, it is highly recommended that senior management be involved in the exercise itself, since they are the ones that will order the activation of the plans and related measures in a crisis or emergency. Training and exercise mainly help to:

- maintain an appropriately high level of awareness;
- familiarize personnel with the plans (operations and communications);
- make sure that all personnel involved know their role in the plans (roles and responsibilities);
- familiarize personnel with the mechanisms, equipment and procedures required to implement the plans;
- convert abstract plans into concrete actions;
- provide an opportunity to ask questions and express concerns.

Each simulation exercise should be followed by a debriefing session that brings out what worked and what did not. This type of session provides an opportunity to recalibrate the plans and reassess the responsibilities that the organization's personnel and partners would take on in a real crisis or emergency.

Response Phase

The response phase includes actions taken to deal with the consequence of a crisis or an emergency. The response activities are put forward to take control and contain negative impacts. It should be understood that the response activities are iterative or simultaneous because of the uncertainty surrounding crises or emergencies. The response will require a complex level of coordination of operations and communications depending on the nature of the crisis or emergency. Sections 4 and 5 provide more details on the issue of coordination and the lessons learned during the response phase. The main activities of the response phase follow:

Assessing the situation

The assessment of the situation consists primarily in assembling information on the crisis or emergency and determining the reliability of information sources. This initial step helps assessing the scope of the problem and determining the lead department. The concerned level of authority authorizes the activation of the operational and communications plans if it deems necessary.

Activating the operational plan

The activation of the operational plan initially implies setting up the designated team to manage the response. It is usually accompanied by contact with federal and external partners to re-examine the problem and establish response priorities. The lead department quickly puts forward short-term solutions to contain damages and reduce danger, and pursues to seek long-term solutions.

Activating the communications plan

The activation of the communications plan will initially consist in quickly preparing the official position of the lead department. The initial activities will involve:

- determining how interested the media could be in the situation;
- choosing and informing the designated spokesperson;
- drafting and coordinating the transmission of the government's message; and
- preparing what the media needs.

The response to the media will recognize and explain the scope of the problem and reassure the public that immediate measures are deployed to contain the situation. The lead department will maintain continuous communications with its internal and external audiences throughout the response phase in order to provide updates and share all appropriate information.

Recovery Phase

The recovery phase consists of the various types of action taken in the aftermath of a crisis or emergency. Recovery activities include:

- An official declaration that the crisis or emergency is over;
- Keeping in touch with the media and partner organizations;
- Providing support to employees;
- Assessing organizational learning (lessons learned).

The return to normal operations requires an official statement to the effect that the crisis or emergency is over. Although the situation gradually disappears "into the woodwork," the department concerned needs to maintain contact with the media and its partner organizations. This makes it possible to take stock of progress achieved in terms of implementing the long-

term solutions identified during the response phase. Particular attention should also be paid to supporting the organization's employees who could be suffering from stress or extreme fatigue as a result of the crisis or emergency.

Lastly, the recovery phase should also include a process of organizational learning to assess the lessons learned from the experience. Crises or emergencies can have positive or negative effects on both the professional and public image of an organization. In either scenario, the organization concerned might be tempted to overlook the reflective component of crisis and emergency management. On the one hand, an organization that has just successfully emerged from a crisis or emergency might believe that it is now ready to overcome all other similar situations. On the other hand, other organizations that have barely survived a crisis or emergency may find it extremely difficult to look back and try to draw what must be painful lessons from the experience. Conscientious organizations will seize the opportunity to conduct a formal review and carefully examine, without assigning blame, what worked well and what did not. Such organizations will place the emphasis on improving their organizational ability to anticipate and prepare for other crises and emergencies in the future.

Questionnaire on Your Organization's Preparedness

In responding to the following questions, managers can assess broadly their organization's capability to respond to crises and emergencies. The questions are intended to identify the strengths and weaknesses of organizations regarding the activities to put forward in the stages of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery:

1. Does your organization have a corporate vision for crisis and emergency management? What is it? Does it address the various phases?
2. Has the proper planning been done regarding who will be involved in each of the phases of crisis and emergency management?
3. List the actual capabilities that your organization has in each area, as well as plans to improve your organization's capabilities.
4. On which phase(s) are the majority of your organization's crisis and emergency management efforts concentrated?
5. On which phase(s) is there a shortage of crisis and emergency management efforts?
6. What kind of attention and rewards do people receive when they contribute to each of the phases?
7. Are there phases for which employees' responsibilities and rewards could be increased or improved?
8. How well does your organization plan for all four phases?
9. What barriers keep people from planning all four phases?
10. How could these barriers be overcome?

Source adapted from: Ian I. Mitroff and Christine M. Pearson, *Crisis Management. A Diagnostic Guide for Improving Your Organization's Crisis-Preparedness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993.

OVERVIEW OF THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK AND POLICIES

Managers must be on the lookout for the legislation and policies that pertain to crises and emergencies, since it is this framework that serves as the basis for setting the rules of conduct and laying the groundwork for action. A thorough knowledge of your organization's role and responsibilities will help to orient implementation of steps during the mitigation and preparation phases of the process and also make the response phase easier when a crisis or emergency actually occurs. However, it is essential to point out that, in some cases, the legislation and policies presented apply to all federal departments and agencies, whereas, in other cases, they only apply to the particular areas of jurisdiction of certain departments or agencies.

Table 3 - Overview of the Legal Framework and Policies

CRISES

Legislative framework and policies

Enabling statutes of departments and agencies

Legislation and regulations (full or partial responsibility)

Regulations, programs and policies of sector hit by crisis

EMERGENCIES

Legislative framework and policies

Emergencies Act (1988)
Emergency Preparedness Act (1988)
Anti-Terrorism Act (2001)
Public Safety Act, 2002
Federal Policy for Emergencies (1995)
Government Security Policy (2002)

Common Policies

Integrated Risk Management Framework (2001)

Communications Policy of the Government of Canada (2002)

Legislative Framework and Policies Governing Crises

Legislation

Managers must have a thorough knowledge of two types of legislation pertaining to crises, i.e. the enabling statutes of their department or agency, and legislation and regulations for which their department or agency is wholly or partially responsible. The enabling statutes of government departments and agencies define the powers of public organizations and thus help to define their mandate. The number of statutes and regulations for which a department or agency is responsible can vary widely from one organization to the next. Managers need to be fully aware of their organization's obligations and responsibilities before a crisis arises. A wise manager will be able to ascertain more rapidly whether his/her organization must act as the lead department for the management of a crisis that appears to be escalating. Consequently, the implementation of response activities will be made easier.

Relevant Policies

As we emphasized earlier, the crises facing public service managers usually concern their day-to-day responsibilities, e.g. the implementation of programs, the administration of regulations or the interpretation of policies. Potential crises cover the entire range of a public organization's areas of activity. However, there is no clear government policy that requires managers to maintain operational plans for crises, as is the case for emergencies. This does not prevent managers from implementing operational plans covering their organizations' most vulnerable areas of activity. As noted below, the *Integrated Risk Management Framework* and the *Communications Policy of the Government of Canada* are valuable tools to bolster the mitigation and preparedness activities for potential crises.

Legislative Framework and Policies Governing Emergencies

Emergencies Act and *Emergency Preparedness Act*

The *Emergencies Act*, adopted by the Canadian Parliament in 1988 in conjunction with the *Emergency Preparedness Act*, replaced the *War Measures Act* with respect to national emergencies. In addition to empowering the federal government to intervene in national emergencies, the Act also specifies which situations are deemed to be national emergencies. There are four kinds of emergencies, i.e. public welfare emergencies, public order emergencies, international emergencies, and war emergencies. The Emergencies Act fully protects the rights and freedoms of Canadians in these emergencies and also provides for reasonable compensation for any loss or injury resulting from its application.

The *Emergency Preparedness Act* makes all departments and agencies of the federal government of Canada responsible for developing and coordinating programs for dealing with emergencies. The Act sets out the responsibilities of all federal ministers with regard to emergency preparedness in their areas of accountability. It also takes the interests of the provinces into account by providing for federal assistance in case of emergencies at the provincial level. Moreover, the Act sets out the responsibilities of the minister responsible for emergency preparedness and those of the Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness (OCIPEP), the agency for which the minister is responsible.

Anti-Terrorism Act and *Public Safety Act, 2002*

In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack, the Government of Canada adopted a twofold anti-terrorism plan, the first part of which, *the Anti-Terrorism Act*, received royal assent in December 2001. In

particular, the Act stipulates measures aimed at dissuading, defeating, identifying, prosecuting, indicting and punishing terrorists. It also makes provision for new investigative tools for the departments that administer the Act and national security agencies that allow them to collect information on terrorist groups and take action against them. The *Anti-Terrorism Act* also introduces rigorous measures aimed at protecting the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

The second component of the government's anti-terrorism plan is the *Public Safety Act*, 2002, or Bill C-17, tabled in 2002. The draft legislation will eliminate shortcomings in the federal legislative framework respecting public security and protection. The Act will significantly bolster the federal government's ability to prevent terrorist attacks, protect Canadians and react rapidly to major threats. It is of particular interest to managers responsible for combatting terrorism and ensuring national security. The legislation contains provisions that allow federal government departments and agencies concerned with combatting terrorism and ensuring national security to more efficiently exchange essential information and coordinate their work. Moreover, it calls for the smoother flow of information between Canada and its international partners in order to prevent terrorism and protect public security.

Federal Policy for Emergencies

The *Federal Policy for Emergencies* (1995) stems from the *Emergencies Act* (1988) and the *Emergency Preparedness Act* (1988) and centres on the basic principle that emergency preparedness must be integrated at all levels of government and among all responders. It encourages collaboration and the coordination of the efforts of everyone concerned.

The federal government advocates the decentralization of emergency preparedness planning in order to take advantage of each federal government department's skills, resources and regulatory tools. Moreover, the federal government automatically assumes leadership in all emergencies that are under its jurisdiction. Practice in Canada, in keeping with the country's constitutional and legal system, calls for individuals to first assume responsibility for acting in an emergency and to be aware of the appropriate measures to ensure their security. Various levels of government only respond as their skills and resources are required to control the situation and mitigate its impact. Responsibility starts with the individual, then shifts to the municipality and the province or territory. The province or territory must officially request federal government response. The Government of Canada only acts when asked to do so or when the situation clearly affects one of its areas of jurisdiction or in the event of a national emergency.

If federal government response is necessary, the government can designate a government department to assume responsibility for coordinating its response overall. This role is usually assigned to the department whose usual responsibilities are most closely linked to the circumstances surrounding the catastrophe. Federal government response is usually directed and monitored by the provincial government concerned or, in a situation that falls essentially under federal jurisdiction or in a national emergency, in close collaboration with the provinces.

Government Security Policy

The *Government Security Policy* (2002) prescribes the application of safeguards to reduce the risk of harm, supports the national interest and the Government of Canada's operational objectives. It is designed to protect employees, preserve the confidentiality, integrity, availability and value of assets, and assure the continued delivery of services. Since the Government of Canada relies extensively on information technology (IT) to provide its services, this policy emphasizes the need for departments to monitor their electronic operations. Deputy heads are accountable for safeguarding employees and assets under their area of responsibility and for implementing this policy. Departments are required to carry on mitigation activities (threat and risk

assessment) and preparedness (emergency and continuity plan). The requirements of this policy support other governmental measures related to emergency management.

Common Policies

Integrated Risk Management Framework

The *Integrated Risk Management Framework* (2001) provides an organization with a mechanism to develop an overall approach to manage strategic risks by creating the means to discuss, compare and evaluate substantially different risks on the same page. The policy covers the organization overall and the entire array of risks that the organization faces, from a strategic, operational, financial, human resources, legal, health, security and environmental standpoint and as regards its reputation. Deputy Heads, senior officers, managers and all employees are called upon to play an important role in establishing an integrated risk management function. The framework is an essential tool to carry out mitigation activities.

The purposes of the *Integrated Risk Management Framework* are to:

- provide guidance to advance the use of a more corporate and systematic approach to risk management;
- contribute to building a risk-smart workforce and environment that allows for innovation and responsible risk-taking while ensuring that legitimate precautions are taken to protect the public interest, maintain public trust and ensure diligence;
- propose a set of risk management practices that departments can adopt, or adapt to their specific circumstances.

Communications Policy of the Government of Canada

The *Communications Policy of the Government* of Canada (2002) is designed to ensure that communications throughout the government are properly coordinated and effectively managed. It deals with many important issues, including crisis and emergency communications. It is intended to provide public service managers with guidelines for ensuring that the public receives timely, accurate, objective and complete information about the government's policies, programs, services and initiatives. It indicates that the necessary plans, partnerships, tools and methods must be in place to allow government officials to effectively and efficiently communicate in both official languages during an emergency or crisis. As crises and emergencies often require inter-governmental collaboration, the policy suggests that there be an agreement among governments and their institutions on which government authority will have the lead responsibility for communications during a crisis or emergency. However, where it is unclear which government authority may have the lead in particular circumstances, institutions must seek guidance from the Privy Council Office. In essence, this policy requires departments to complete communications activities for mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery phases.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESPONDERS AND COORDINATION

The intention of this section is to describe, from a federal government perspective, the roles and responsibilities of the main actors who could be involved in crises and emergencies. We will also cover the continuum of coordination and interoperability that is required between these actors so as to ensure effective management of the response phase.

Table 4 - Responders in the Government of Canada

Prime Minister's Office(PMO)
Privy Council Office (PCO)
Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness (OCIPEP)
Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS)
Lead Department Minister Response Team • Team leader • Designated spokesperson • Communications • Finance • Policy • Technical services • Legal department • Security
Federal and External Partners

Roles and Responsibilities

Prime Minister's Office

As the head of the federal government decision-making process, the Prime Minister has the power to decide on all measures deemed necessary in crises or emergencies. In fact, experience shows that the Prime Minister usually relies on the decisions of his ministers in crisis and emergency situations, the latter being accountable for all matters under the competencies of their department. Exceptionally and by request of the Privy Council Office (PCO), the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) will issue an executive order when there is confusion or disagreement in the determination of the lead department for the crisis. When the ministerial authority has been established, the decision-making

process revolves around the minister who is supported by the management team in charge of the operations in his department. The minister, PMO and Cabinet are kept abreast of all developments for the duration of the crisis by the lead department.

Privy Council Office

The PCO is primarily responsible for ensuring that the public service effectively supports the Prime Minister. It helps government departments and agencies to effectively assume their responsibilities and ensures overall consultation and coordination. The PCO provides significant support during crises or emergencies. Specifically, it (1) offers advice on the establishment of lead agencies responsible for managing the crises or emergencies; (2) supports and advises the lead agency in managing the crisis or emergency; and (3) coordinates and facilitates the dissemination of information in the government (Office of the Prime Minister, Cabinet and other central agencies).The Consultations and Communications Secretariate of the PCO is the main contact point for lead department responsible for managing a crisis or emergency.

Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness

The Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness (OCIPEP) is a civilian organization operating within the Department of National Defence. Its mission is to enhance the safety and security of Canadians in their physical and cyber environments. OCIPEP has a two-pronged mandate:

- to provide national leadership of a new, modern and comprehensive approach to protecting Canada's critical infrastructure - the key physical and cyber components of the energy and utilities, communications, services, transportation, safety and government sectors; and
- to be the government's primary agency for ensuring national civil emergency preparedness for all types of emergencies.

OCIPEP leads the Government of Canada's emergency and business continuity planning. It monitors all threats and emergencies and serves as the focal point for the coordination of the Government of Canada's response and recovery efforts. OCIPEP also enhances the awareness and capacity of Canadians and their communities, businesses and governments to manage risks to their physical and cyber environments.

Treasury Board Secretariat

The Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) plays a supporting role to federal government activities in times of crises or emergencies in the allocation of human, financial, information and technological resources. The TBS could help lead departments and agencies in:

- expediting the allocation of supplementary funds to cover departmental crisis or emergency response expenditures;
- temporarily amending financial administration procedures, regulations or authorities to avoid delay in the urgent provision of federal resources, services or assistance;
- promoting and providing policy guidance to departments and agencies respecting the rapid resumption of essential government services disrupted by any emergency; and
- expediting the approval of provincial requests for disaster financial assistance.

Lead Department

Minister

Given the administrative and technical complexity surrounding crises or emergencies, the minister relies, by and large, on the competency of the department's public servants (i.e. the response team and designated spokespersons) to manage the situation and collaborate with the media. The minister will fulfill his/her obligation to report the response activities of his/her department to Cabinet and Parliament, and could, in some circumstances, exercise more visibility with the media and the public. The response team must therefore

work closely with the minister's office in order to determine and confirm the needs and expectations of the minister.

Response team

The division of the organization affected by the crisis or emergency must have in place a response team that focuses exclusively on the problem until it is solved. The team comprises a leader and all specialists and advisors such as the designated spokesperson, and the heads of communications, finances, and policy. The management team assumes decision-making powers in order to manage the response. The response team's authority and the team members' roles and responsibilities are usually determined in advance in the crisis or emergency management plans.

Partners (federal and external)

Crisis and emergency management necessarily implies close collaboration between the lead department and various stakeholders. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the crisis or emergency, partners can include supporting federal departments, provincial and municipal bodies, and non-governmental organizations. The lead department should normally establish contacts with federal and external partners during the mitigation and preparedness activities.

Coordination and Interoperability During the Response Phase

In view of the large number of actors who could be involved in a given crisis or emergency, coordination and interoperability are key components of an effective response. The level of coordination required will increase depending on the nature and complexity of the crisis or emergency. For instance, the degree of coordination could be increased when an emergency becomes more serious or when the nature of the federal government's involvement needs to change or when it looks as if the emergency is going to turn into a crisis.

Depending on their respective areas of jurisdiction, the various federal departments and agencies are expected to respond immediately and proactively when an emergency occurs or when a potential crisis is identified. In such a context, every departmental or agency employee should immediately signal any problem or serious incident to their immediate superior. Each level of authority must take appropriate action to inform the next higher level of authority who will determine whether other action is called for.

This process will lead to the designation of authority at the most appropriate level. For instance, in the context of the Government of Canada, it is possible to refer to three possible degrees of coordination during the response phase: low, high and very high.

Low degree of coordination: The lead department assumes entire responsibility for the response. The lead department manages the operations and communications (strategy and support) relating to its areas of jurisdiction. In such a context, the coordination involved mainly takes place between headquarters and the regional offices depending on the particular circumstances. The involvement of central agencies or of other federal or external partners is minimal.

High degree of coordination: The lead department assumes entire responsibility for the response. While the lead department manages the operations and communications (strategy and support) during the response phase, it also works closely with the central agencies and both its federal and external partners. In such a context, the PCO or the OCIPEP provides communication-related advice and support to the lead department.

Very high degree of coordination: The PMO or the PCO plays the primary leadership role at the national level and the several lead departments concerned are called on to act in conjunction depending on their particular areas of jurisdiction. These departments manage their own respective operations and support the

communication strategy which is coordinated from the very top. In emergencies, OCIPEP also provides communications support.

Table 5 - Levels of Coordination During the Response Phase

DEGREE OF COORDINATION REQUIRED	FEDERAL RESPONDERS	RESPONSIBILITIES
Low	• Lead department (headquarters and regional offices)	• Lead department manages operations and communications (strategy and support) in its areas of jurisdiction
High	• Lead department (headquarters and regional offices) • Federal and external partners • PCO/OCIPEP	• Lead department manages operations and communications (strategy and support) in its areas of jurisdiction • Federal and external partners support the lead department • PCO or OCIPEP collaborates with the lead department (communications support)
Very high	• PMO or PCO • Several lead departments (headquarters and regional offices) • Collaboration with federal and external partners • OCIPEP	• PMO or PCO directs and coordinates all operations and communications (strategy) at the national level • Lead departments manage the operations within their areas of jurisdiction and support the communications strategy coordinated from the top • Federal and external partners support the lead departments • OCIPEP supports the lead departments (communications support)

As a precondition of being able to manage successfully during crises, organizations need to accept that crises are inevitable and that they need to prepare for the "worst case" scenarios. It is essential to proactively forestall crises by accurately pinpointing problems and setting up an effective warning system to detect new situations that could turn into crises. As is true for all major management challenges, you have to prepare by making a plan and setting up a work team that will operate according to clearly understood guidelines. The training and the testing of plans also prepare the main responders to confront the inherent uncertainty and ambiguity in crises. Ultimately, crises challenge us to demonstrate exceptional management and not to be panic-stricken or abandon sound management practices.

The content of this section primarily consists of the main lessons drawn from the past experience of federal public service managers in various crises. Of particular importance are the key pointers that managers need to bear in mind during and after the response phase.

Lessons learned

1) Acknowledge the problem
2) Confirm roles and responsibilities
3) Exercise leadership
4) Consult and set response priorities
5) React and work with the media
6) Ensure ongoing communications
7) Restore normal operations, draw lessons and prevent

Acknowledge the Problem

- Managers must pay close attention to precursors of potentially more serious problems. Previous experience reveals that, when a situation appears to gradually escalate to crisis proportions, information is often lacking, inaccurate or contradictory. For this reason, managers must avoid falling into a trap when initial reports are inaccurate. Managers must bear in mind that perceptions often mirror reality. It is useful for managers to conduct their own research to assess the situation from several points of view in order to perceive it accurately. Moreover, it is important to ensure that your organization is the lead agency as defined by legislation and policy. Managers are urged to consult the appropriate central agencies to obtain advice and validate their organization's authority with respect to the pinpointed problem.

- This initial assessment of the situation will make it possible to determine the possibility of immediate action. In some instances, remedial measures might

suffice. However, if the problem is deemed to be sufficiently serious, managers must not forget that the declaration of a state of crisis and the activation of response activities will seriously affect management and heighten the interest of politicians and the general public. At this stage, the manager must rely on his good judgement when making decisions.

Confirm Roles and Responsibilities

- The roles and responsibilities of the key responders in the event of a crisis should normally be stipulated in the response plan of the lead department. Once the crisis has been confirmed, it is important to immediately establish a management team to oversee the response. The designated members of the response team and spokespersons must suspend their normal activities and devote themselves fully to the crisis. It is essential to ensure that team members are prepared to assume the responsibilities assigned to them.

- The lead department must also confirm its expectations of partner and central agencies to avoid contradictions and misunderstandings that could hamper collaboration and to ensure coherent intervention. Similarly, the response team must inform the minister of the situation and seek to ascertain the minister's expectations. The minister's involvement in resolving the crisis may vary depending on the circumstances.

Interference by other players in the system must be avoided to prevent the emergence of conflicts and contradictions which usually fuel and prolong damaging parliamentary/media "stories". Other players in the system with a stake in the issue (central agencies, departments or agencies with a related or peripheral interest in the crisis), must be included in the management process from the outset, under a single accountability structure.

Mussels Crisis, Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Exercise Leadership

- The leadership style used will be determined by the character of the response team leader and by the imperatives of the crisis itself. Experience has shown that good leaders in crises have been open, positive and flexible, but also decisive and expeditious when they have to be. The leader has to be on the scene and ask the right kind of questions to stimulate thinking and action.

- So-called heroes do not make good crisis managers. The "post mortems" conducted in the wake of a large number of crises in the public and private sectors have shown that the given situation has turned into a crisis (rather than an emergency) because the first hierarchical manager concerned tried to solve the problem himself instead of asking for help. Asking for help should not be seen as a sign of weakness. Indeed, not asking for the help of a specialist when a situation deteriorates could be a mistake that only makes matters worse.

It is essential to both manage and lead in crises. Leadership is perhaps the key facet. The effective leader is present, visible and curious and sets an example in addition to supporting those who are suffering.

Member of the Roundtable

Consult and Set Response Priorities

- Both the federal and external partners supporting the lead department possess information, knowledge and expertise that could help provide a more accurate assessment of the situation. Through a process of ongoing consultation, the lead department needs to gather the facts and require its partners to supply as much relevant information as they can. In this way, those in charge can determine as quickly as possible which elements are known and which are not.

- Ongoing consultation with the federal and external partners makes it possible to determine action priorities and look for both short and longer term solutions. It is especially important for the lead department to communicate and explain the objectives and solutions that have been formulated to all the partners and thereby ensure, in particular, that uniform action is taken in both operations and communications. Although, in practice, a given crisis is managed by the department responsible, this department itself cannot directly look after all aspects of the response phase. The federal and external partners can also have an important supporting role to play in carrying out the various tasks involved in implementing the short and longer term solutions. That is why it is necessary to trust the partners' expertise and abilities in this respect.

React and Work With the Media

- Experience has shown that the first reaction of the main spokesperson was often the one that had the most determining effect on public attitudes. In such cases, the designated spokespersons should already have received suitable training so as to be at ease in front of the media.

- The spokesperson needs to provide an adequate response (i.e., not too extreme) so as to pre-empt other perceptions that might be generated by the crisis. The spokesperson should try to be reassuring and give the impression to the public that the situation is in hand.

- The initial reaction of the lead department is not required to give the impression that all the answers and solutions are readily available. The main thing is to describe the nature of the problem as it is understood at the time and outline the immediate steps the department has taken to rectify it. The relationship with the media should be open and transparent, and should primarily consist of presenting clear, accurate and timely information. The information released to the media and the public should be based solely on known facts. This normally helps to reassure or satisfy the pockets of discontent that inevitably emerge in times of crisis and minimize the kind of speculation the media are prone to.

Somes pointers:

- Take the initiative, make headlines
- Communicate mistakes and deficiencies
- Communicate only confirmed, accurate information
- Remain open and transparent
- Do not be defensive
- Never hypothesize

Never underestimate the potential for criticism and be prepared for it. In releasing the results of the internal audit Human Resources Development Canada expected strong criticism but never expected the virulence of the attack from the Opposition and media. While most accusations eventually proved untrue, myth did become reality in the blink of an eye. The power of outside influences to misinterpret actions (whether intentionally or not) and to set the agenda should never be underestimated.

Grants and Contributions Crisis, HRDC

Ensure Ongoing Communications

- A major portion of crisis management relates to the communication aspect. A well-orchestrated communication program can significantly help neutralize a crisis. Specifically, maintaining a constant, coordinated flow of information can go a long way to dissipating the confusion and uncertainty inherent in crises. That is why it is supremely important that the lead department clearly identifies its target audiences and bases its communications on them.

- What is referred to as internal audiences include the federal partners who will be consulted, informed and fully integrated into the management process during the response phase. It is a fundamental principle to draw on the same source of information used for operations in order to effectively mesh the communication activities aimed at the common target audiences. For the entire period of the crisis, the lead department will designate a primary spokesperson and several backups and these people will be responsible for all oral communication with the media and the general public. This approach ensures that a single, coherent message is communicated to the external audiences.

- The media almost always constitute part of the external audience and represent an important means of transmitting information to the public. However, it would be a mistake to take it for granted that the public receives all its information from the media. The group of external audiences can also include interest groups and strategic partners (e.g., another level of government, NGOs, the private sector, etc). Indeed, enlightened, informed external partners can also have a major influence on public opinion – they can constitute a less obvious line of defence and can even articulate other viewpoints that can help confine the crisis. It is also important for the lead department to consult these stakeholders, keep them regularly abreast of progress and of the various types of action taken.

Restore Normal Operations, Draw Lessons and Prevent

- When a crisis begins to settle down and the organization in charge regains control of the situation, it is necessary to make an official declaration that the crisis is over. For the employees most directly involved in the response phase, crises can entail a very high degree of stress and fatigue. For instance, overall employee morale might be severely affected if virulent attacks have been directed against their organization's credibility. That is why it is necessary not to lose sight of the importance of employees' well-being by keeping them continually informed of developments and providing supporting measures for them both during and after crises.

- However, the return-to-normal also implies the need to continue efforts to implement the long-term solutions identified during the response phase. The end of a crisis always represents an opportunity to fix the root causes of the original problem. In some cases, it is necessary to apply additional resources to prevent the problem from recurring. At the same time, it is also necessary to maintain communication with the external audiences and keep them informed about the progress accomplished so as to rekindle and even restore public confidence in the institutions affected.

- Crises can have a devastating impact on an organization that was ill-prepared, but they can also be an opportunity for the organization to change its image. For example, several organizations have only understood the importance of preparing for crises after being severely tested by one. That is why it is so important to conduct a retrospective analysis of what has taken place and draw the lessons, both good and bad, from it. Organizations that do so are then in a much stronger position to face future crises.

Communications Plan

The scope of most crises and emergencies mean that communications can become complex and unusually loaded with implications for the Government of Canada. Experience shows that information tend to be inaccurate, contradictory, and incomplete during crisis and emergencies (especially at the initial stage). The latter are also continuously changing and there is often breakdowns of normal communication channels. Keeping on top of things can be next to impossible without some kind of guideline. This is where a communications plan comes in; it will give you the strategic and tactical guidance you need before, during and after a crisis or emergency. The communications plan should parallel and support the overall crisis and emergency management plan. It should be developed with the response team, and agreed to by all major players. The communications plan will help all potential responders to have the same terms of reference, and the same reflexes during the response.

A well-developed crisis and emergency communications plan should:

- Define response strategies that can be implemented when a crisis or emergency occurs;
- Assign communications resources and responsibilities;
- Outline techniques for defining target audiences and messages; and
- Enable communications managers to launch public information and media relations campaigns during a crisis or emergency.

A good communications plan is built around four basic elements:

- Strategy
- Audiences
- Designated spokespersons (the message)
- Media relations

Strategy

When a crisis or emergency hits, time compresses. You may have only a few hours - or less - to respond to a deluge of requests for the government's position, for more information, for answers about what is being done.

Your public's perception of the government's control of the situation will hinge on communication. You need to be proactive and fast. That means compressing approval stages and cutting through normal procedural red tape.

Strategic planning involves anticipation. Begin by "forecasting" potential crises and emergencies. Information can be gathered from technical and scientific experts, regional personnel, operations and communications managers, parliamentary sources, interest groups, the news media, polls, and available literature. The communications plan should include a list of crises or emergencies you might potentially face.

Then take a look at past crises and emergencies and how they were handled. Here, your sources include situation reports, crisis audits and post-mortems, historical studies, liability assessments, and the production of "worst-case" scenarios. Incorporate the experience garnered from the management of past crises and emergencies into your plan, and update as new experience warrants.

The communications plan should clearly set out your organization's policies, 'procedures' and obligations. It should also outline a hierarchical reporting framework, with sign-off authority stated, keeping in mind the necessity for speeding up the flow of approvals and information.

The plan should specifically describe the communications team that will support the response team. Review the experience available, identity key roles and assign responsibilities. As much as possible, you should identify the specific individuals who will be fulfilling these roles, and provide contact numbers where they can be reached. Backup personnel should also be identified.

The communications plan should recognize and "institutionalize" the principle of the designated spokesperson; you should identify primary and alternate spokespersons and make sure they are onboard and available, with relevant contact information.

Your partners - your strategic alliances - are critical. Government and non-governmental partners are your allies. You should have a resource network in place and identified in your plan. Each region and service should identify its potential crisis and emergency communications partners and integrate them into the planning process.

On a practical note, make sure your plan covers "infrastructure": the equipment and facilities you will need, such as telephones, fax lines, a media briefing room, necessary support and back-up systems, etc. Be realistic in estimating what will be required, and pre-plan so you will not be caught without resources.

Make sure your plan includes media monitoring and public opinion tracking. Analyzing public opinion and the media's reporting of a crisis or emergency helps assess the effectiveness of your communications efforts, and aids in strategic positioning and the development of new communications products.

Test your plan and establish a training program to ensure that managers are qualified to perform their duties during a crisis or emergency. Then, conduct drills to test your crisis or emergency communications system. Exercises should be conducted across multiple regions and services, and senior crisis communications managers should share the results of the exercises. Establish performance standards and targets based on the exercises, or revise the plan as necessary.

Audiences

Knowing your audiences is critical. The media will almost always be one of them, but it is certainly not the only one, and may not even be the most important. You should identify all potential audiences in your communications plan. External audiences might include the general public, lobby of special interest groups, scientific communities, the technical press, and strategic partners (e.g. other levels of government, NGO, private sector, etc.). Set up networks and develop contact lists now - so you will not be floundering when a crisis or emergency hits. Prepare for their anticipated

information needs so that you can be proactive rather than reactive in opening up communications channels.

Of particular importance is your internal audience (e.g. the minister, federal partners and your own organization). Governmental and external partners can be available allies. During a crisis or emergency, partners can direct joint communications activities at mutual target audiences. Pay particular attention to their concerns and agendas. Above all, make sure they are consulted, kept informed and included in the management process. Again, if you have established networks before the crisis or emergency hits, this process will be much easier.

A key role of the response and communications team is preparing government positions, as well as the Qs&As for Question Period. Ministers and other politicians are often your most immediate audience. It is your responsibility to understand what they expect.

Finally, a word about an internal audience often overlooked - your own staff. When a crisis or emergency hits, there is a tendency to hunker down. Do not leave your own staff out of the loop - to do so is to encourage speculation and rumours. Make sure they are kept informed so that they can support the crisis and emergency management effort and contribute to the stabilization of the event.

To summarize:

- Identify all potential audiences - internal and external;
- Analyze their anticipated information requirements;
- Develop contact lists and networks so you can be proactive, not reactive;
- Keep your own staff informed.

The Designated Spokespersons

The designated spokespersons represent the response team and are the face of the organization before the media. Under the direction of the response team leader, the designated spokespersons are responsible for:

- Providing any verbal information to the media and the public; and
- Briefing senior departmental management, including the Minister.

The principle

The concept of the designated spokesperson is absolutely critical to crisis and emergency communications. Bluntly said, the person you put out front can make or break you. Their actions and reactions in informing the news media will largely define both the content and the context of news coverage, and so, the public's perception of your organization. Using only designated spokespersons ensures that a consistent message is being delivered to your external audiences. For this reason, only designated spokespersons should speak to the media during a crisis or emergency.

Because of their pivotal role, designated spokespersons must have a thorough understanding of departmental policies, parliamentary processes, and the overall machinery of government. They must be informed and recognize the limits of their authority. They must be careful in responding to the media, thus avoiding damage either to their own credibility or to the integrity of the department.

Generally, there should be more than one designated spokesperson appointed. One person cannot be expected to handle all the workload that an ongoing crisis will engender. Each response team should pick several spokespersons in advance, and make sure they have access to training and simulations soon after they are named. The designated spokesperson reports either to the regional or to the headquarters response team leader, depending on the level of the event.

Qualifications

What does it take to be a designated spokesperson? First, in the context of this course, they **must** be fluent in both official languages. If they are not, appoint alternates who are fluent in the other official language.

Your designated spokesperson should possess the qualifications necessary to speak with authority and to provide background for the many reporters who will not understand the underlying elements of the story. They should understand that being a designated spokesperson means giving up personal and professional privacy for the duration of the crisis or emergency. They will become public figures, inexorably linked by the media with the news event itself. For this reason, nobody should be forced to take the job.

A designated spokesperson must remain unflappable in a pressure-packed media environment. They must be able to communicate precisely and clearly, answering any question - no matter how inane - in a calm, lucid, interesting manner. They should come across as confident, relaxed and sincere about what they are saying. A good designated spokesperson is consistently truthful and open - and ideally, has a sense of humour.

Role

Being a spokesperson goes way beyond media contact; your designated spokesperson connects you to your public. By speaking for the participants in a crisis or emergency, the spokesperson frees them to focus on managing the response.

Your designated spokesperson is part of your response team. He or she must be aware of important or sensitive issues - both within the crisis and beyond, in your larger policy and program areas. One of your spokesperson's essential functions is to weigh the potential impact of the response team's decisions on the perceptions of your various audiences.

The spokesperson is responsible for maintaining a level of disclosure that is acceptable to both sides. This can be tough in the face of constant media questioning. To combat this, many spokespersons use a "mantra" - a pre-planned response used to deflect questions they do not want to answer. The mantra must, of course, be developed in consultation with the response team and communications teams.

Designated spokespersons also have to know as much as possible about the coverage of a crisis or emergency so they can correct errors and inaccuracies in reporting, and anticipate what reporters are likely to ask during question-and-answer sessions. If a story is not accurate, they must set the record straight, without naming the offending news media.

Media Relations

First, let's get one thing straight - media relations are not about "handling" the media; they are about working with the media. In the pressure-cooker environment of a crisis or emergency, your relationship with the media, your ability to respond quickly and effectively to their requests, will directly affect the way the story gets reported and consequently, the way your various audiences form their perceptions about how the crisis or emergency is being managed. What follows are some guidelines to help you prepare for, and navigate, this complex subject area.

Establish a network

Before you get started, do an inventory of the media community. Develop a media contact list, with phone and fax numbers, for all news organizations likely to cover the event. When a crisis or emergency hits, you need to be able to contact key media people quickly; if they already know you, the process will be more effective. Update the list continually.

Media requirements

Think about what the media want. Reporters are trained to ask: Who, What, Where, When, Why and How. Try to anticipate the least-expected as well as the most-expected questions. Remember, the media are not the real audience, the public is. Consider how the media will present the interview to the public. You can - and should - anticipate all possible questions you will be facing, and prepare answers in conjunction with your designated spokespersons.

These are some of the questions reporters ask:

- What happened? Where? When?
- Are there any injuries or deaths? How many and to whom?
- Do you not have mechanisms in place to prevent this sort of situation?
- What actions are you taking to control the situation?
- How much money is this going to cost? And who will pay?
- Has this happened elsewhere of before? Why were you not ready?

Working with the media

Be available. Reporters have deadlines. They need to be able to get to your communications staff frequently and fast, at all hours of the day or night, in order to satisfy national or worldwide time deadlines. You may have to arrange for 24-hour rotating phone duty among your communications team to satisfy the media's requirements.

Media facilities should be chosen to provide the media with easy access and technical support. Lead and support agencies should agree upon who will provide the facilities.

Be proactive. Do not wait for the media to come to you if you have information which can contribute to the stabilization and depoliticization of the crisis. You are likely to get more favourable consideration if you go out of your way to help them. Never speculate. If you do not have all the facts, say so.

Stay on the record. The term "off the record" means different things to different people. Going off the record is dangerous because you have no idea how the reporter will use the information.

Understand that reporters are trained to be skeptical. The questions they ask are legitimate, and it is the responsibility of the crisis communications team and the designated spokesperson to be truthful and consistent in answering them.

Delivering the message

You have an array of communication tools at your disposal; all play a part in delivering your message.

Presslines: Presslines present the department's position on a developing crisis and are the first official response statement. Before going out, they must be checked for:

- factual accuracy, by the national response team program specialist, as appropriate;
- style, message and departmental positioning, by the response team Communications Advisor; and
- governmental position, by the Privy Council Office (Communications Secretariat).

News releases: These are fully elaborated official statements that present new developments. They need to be written in journalistic style to facilitate their use by the media. News releases can be written by communications teams at all levels, but regional releases should be forwarded to the response team headquarters for input. News releases need to be approved by the response team, the Director General, Communications, and the Minister's office, prior to release.

Press conferences: Press conferences enable designated spokespersons to deliver the same message to all the media at the same time. The decision to hold a press conference should be made in conjunction with the response team. Representatives of both the regional and headquarters communications teams should assist with press conferences.

Media interviews: Interviews can be requested by the media, or suggested by the response and communications team. They are useful tools for damage and rumour control. They also help build media support, and give response teams opportunities to provide leadership in the media's handling of the crisis or emergency.

Media kits: Media kits include news releases, backgrounders, fact sheets, and speeches packaged for use by the media. They are distributed at press conferences and interviews and list key contacts on the communications team. Media kits, press conference material, and other material can be repackaged for use during on-site tours and for responding to special information requests. Stock footage and other visual aids may be added from other sources.

To summarize:

- Establish a network (develop a media contact list)
- Answer media requirements (anticipate all possible questions: Who? What? Where? When? and Why?)
- Work with the media (be available, be proactive and stay on the record)
- Deliver the message (choose the appropriate communications tools)

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THE FEDERAL EXPERIENCE: CASE STUDIES ON CRISIS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Based mainly upon the federal experience, the CCMD Action-Research Roundtable documented the following case studies:

Crises

- Human Resources Development Canada – Management of Grants and Contributions (2000)
- Department of Fisheries and Oceans – Mussels Crisis (1987)
- Health Canada and the Red Cross – Tainted Blood Crisis (1998)

Emergencies

- Treasury Board Secretariat Year 2000 Project Office – Y2K Emergency Avoidance
- Treasury Board Secretariat – Code Red and Love Bug Hacker Incident (2002)
- Canada Customs and Revenue Agency – Canada – US Border Security in Response to September 11, 2001
- Transport Canada – Shutdown of Airspace in Response to September 11, 2001
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Canadian Red Cross – Kosovar Relief Operation Parasol (1999)

The case studies are available on the Web at **www.ccmd-ccg.gc.ca**.

GUIDELINES ON CRISIS AND EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

These guidelines are designed to help institutions in carrying out the requirements of the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada that deals with crisis and emergency communications. They provide communications managers and processionals at all levels with advice on planning, implementing, and evaluating effective crisis and emergency communications. These guidelines also contain a useful checklist for crisis and emergency communications. The guidelines are available on the Web at **www.tbs-sct.gc.ca** (under policies).

EMERGENCY AND CRISIS VOCABULARY

The OCIPEP developed a document entitled *Emergency and Crisis Communication Vocabulary* which currently includes over one hundred terms and definitions that respect existing Government of Canada legislation, policies and frameworks and represent the results of extensive research on emergency and crisis communication. This document should serve as a valuable tool for anyone involved in these fields. The vocabulary document is available on the Web at **www.ocipep.gc.ca** or **www.termium.gc.ca** (under publications).