
**Security and resilience — Crisis
management — Guidelines**

Sécurité et résilience — Gestion de crise — Lignes directrices

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 292, *Security and resilience*, in collaboration with the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) Technical Committee CEN/TC 391, *Societal and Citizen Security*, in accordance with the Agreement on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN (Vienna Agreement).

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

This document has been developed to aid in the design and ongoing development of an organization's crisis management capability. It sets out principles and practices needed by all organizations.

Crises present organizations with complex challenges and, possibly, opportunities that can have profound and far-reaching consequences. An organization's crisis management capability and its ability to manage a changing environment are key factors in determining whether a situation or incident has the potential to pose a serious or existential threat to the organization and its environment. The crisis affecting an organization can be part of a broader crisis.

To ensure the crisis management capability has the desired outcome, the organization should provide:

- committed leadership;
- structures (e.g. funding, communications, relationships and linkages, equipment, facilities, information management, principles, processes and procedures);
- a supportive culture (e.g. values, ethics, code of conduct);
- competent personnel (e.g. knowledge, skills and attitude, flexible thinking).

An organization's crisis management capability will be influenced by its relationship with other interdependent areas such as risk management, business continuity, information security, physical security, safety, civil protection, incident response and emergency management.

The organization should adopt a structured approach to crisis management by applying a set of principles on which a crisis management framework can be developed. These interrelated principles, framework and applicable process elements support the implementation of a crisis management capability in a purposeful, consistent and rigorous manner (see [Figure 1](#)).



Key

-  principle (see [4.5](#))
-  framework (see [5.2](#))
-  process (see [5.3](#))

Figure 1 — Building a crisis management capability — Principles, framework and process

The structure of the document is as follows:

- the core concepts of crisis management are described (see [Clause 4](#));
- then the framework and process for building a crisis management capability are outlined (see [Clause 5](#)).

The clauses that follow provide more detail on:

- crisis leadership (see [Clause 6](#));
- strategic crisis decision-making (see [Clause 7](#));
- crisis communication (see [Clause 8](#));
- training, validation and learning from crises (see [Clause 9](#)).

Continual improvement is a component of all elements of this document (see [5.3.7](#)), so that while it is part of the process, it also addresses all capability elements.

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Security and resilience — Crisis management — Guidelines

1 Scope

This document provides guidance on crisis management to help organizations plan, establish, maintain, review and continually improve a strategic crisis management capability. This guidance can help any organization to identify and manage a crisis. Elements for consideration include:

- context, core concepts, principles and challenges (see [Clause 4](#));
- developing an organization's crisis management capability (see [Clause 5](#));
- crisis leadership (see [Clause 6](#));
- the decision-making challenges and complexities facing a crisis team in action (see [Clause 7](#));
- crisis communication (see [Clause 8](#));
- training, validation and learning from crises (see [Clause 9](#)).

It is applicable to top management with strategic responsibilities for the delivery of a crisis management capability in any organization. It can also be used by those who operate under the direction of top management.

This document acknowledges the relationship and interdependencies with various disciplines but is distinct from these topics.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 22300, *Security and resilience — Vocabulary*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 22300 and the following apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <https://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

capability

ability to accomplish an undertaking with a defined intended outcome and within specified conditions

Note 1 to entry: An organizational capability depends on the available resources and organizational principles, framework (leadership, structure, culture, competences) and processes.

**3.2
crisis**

abnormal or extraordinary event or situation that threatens an *organization* (3.13) or community and requires a strategic, adaptive and timely response in order to preserve its viability and integrity

Note 1 to entry: The event or situation can include a high degree of complexity, instability and uncertainty.

Note 2 to entry: The event or situation can exceed the response capacity or *capability* (3.1) of the organization.

Note 3 to entry: Given the nature of a crisis, a flexible and dynamic approach is needed in addition to any rehearsed plans and procedures.

Note 4 to entry: Threats can impact upon the organization's ability to function, its reputation, its brand, its physical, political or intellectual property, its organizational structure and its human, environment and economic factors.

Note 5 to entry: The term "organization" also includes governmental and non-governmental agencies and national authorities in the public sector, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and charities.

**3.3
crisis management**

coordinated activities to lead, direct and control an *organization* (3.13) with regard to *crisis* (3.2)

**3.4
crisis management team**

CMT

group of individuals functionally responsible for leading the *organization's* (3.13) *crisis management* (3.3) response

**3.5
crisis management plan**

CMP

document specifying which procedures and associated resources are to be applied by whom and where in a *crisis* (3.2)

**3.6
incident**

event or situation that can be, or could lead to, a disruption, loss, emergency or *crisis* (3.2)

[SOURCE: ISO 22300:2021, 3.1.122, modified — "or situation" has been added to the definition.]

**3.7
interested party**

stakeholder

person or *organization* (3.13) that can affect, be affected by, or perceive themselves to be affected by a decision or activity

**3.8
governance**

<organizations> human-based system by which an *organization* (3.13) is directed, overseen and held accountable for achieving its defined purpose

**3.9
situation report**

summary, either verbal or written, outlining the current state and potential development of an *incident* (3.6) or *crisis* (3.2) and the response to it

**3.10
situational awareness**

perception of the elements in the environment within a volume of time and space, the comprehension of their meaning and a projection of their status in the near future

3.11**top management**

person or group of people who directs and controls an *organization* (3.13) at the highest level

3.12**issue**

event or situation that does not currently present, but can develop into, a long-term or significant negative impact on the strategic objectives, reputation or viability of the *organization* (3.13)

Note 1 to entry: Effectively responding to emerging issues can result in the successful aversion of a *crisis* (3.2).

3.13**organization**

person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives

Note 1 to entry: The concept of organization includes, but is not limited to, sole-trader, company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority, partnership, charity or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private.

3.14**crisis communication**

communications both internal and external to provide information, updates and instructions to internal and external *interested parties* (3.7)

Note 1 to entry: Adequate crisis communication can also protect the *organization's* (3.13) reputation and brand and maintain its public image.

4 Crisis management — Context, core concepts and principles**4.1 The nature of crises**

Crises can be associated with highly complex issues, the full implications and nature of which can be unclear at the time. Possible decisions and actions can have severe negative consequences, and decision-makers at all levels sometimes have to choose the least detrimental solution (see 7.4) and resolve (or recognize and accept) fundamental strategic dilemmas. This can mean that every choice comes with a penalty of some kind and there is no ideal solution.

Premature or ill-considered decisions on actions or processes to manage a crisis can have potential to cause significant consequences and cause additional harm or exacerbate the crisis situation and should be avoided. If the range of available options being considered can reduce the impact of a crisis yet have adverse consequences upon other organizational objectives, it can be necessary to choose the option that has the potential to create the least amount of loss or disruption to the organization

Crises often involve threats to people, the environment, assets (such as property or information) or reputation.

A crisis can require the organization to review its objectives, opportunities, strategies, policies, practices or procedures and culture and as part of continual improvement.

A well-managed crisis can demonstrate the positive qualities of an organization and enhance its reputation

4.2 Characteristics of a crisis

A crisis can be complex and challenging and can also provide opportunities for an organization to demonstrate core values, effective controls, governance, crisis response, review and learning.

Although many crises appear to be unique there are often consistent characteristics. Understanding these characteristics enables the improvement of the crisis management capability by comprehending their differences.

Often, a crisis is precipitated by an incident. There are some common characteristics found in both an incident and a crisis. [Table 1](#) highlights some of the differences and [Figure 2](#) shows the relationship between an incident and a crisis.

Table 1 — Key characteristics between incidents and crises

Characteristics	Incidents	Crises
Predictability	Incidents are generally foreseeable, although their specific timing, type and impact are variable.	Crises are typically unique, rare events or situations. Some crises can be anticipated; however, timing and impact usually are not always foreseeable.
Onset	Incidents can be no-notice or short-notice disruptive events, or they can emerge through a gradual failure or loss of control.	Crises can also occur from a no-notice or short-notice event. They can also emerge from an incident that has not been contained, has been managed badly or further escalates to have reputational consequences, and which requires a crisis-level response.
Urgency and pressure	In managing an incident, there is usually a high sense of urgency to act to either prevent the situation from getting worse or to minimize its impact.	A crisis always needs urgent attention as the impact can be very high. Given the potential impact and the fact that a crisis has more visibility it is common that it places a high level of pressure on the organization.
Impacts	<p>Incidents are events which, although they can take considerable resources to manage, rarely threaten the existence of the organization or have a major long-term impact on its reputation. The impacts are usually local or affect only a part of the organization.</p> <p>Incidents are generally manageable, and although the impact on interested parties can be severe, it is manageable and temporary.</p>	<p>Crises can disrupt or affect the entire organization, transcending organizational, geographical and sectoral boundaries. As crises tend to be complex and inherently uncertain, the long-term impacts can be difficult to assess. A badly handled crisis can lead to a catastrophic loss of functionality, values, trust and reputation. These negative impacts can have a lasting detrimental effect on the organization. Crisis can lead to the conclusion that the legal situation should be adjusted during the crisis.</p> <p>The size, location and type of an organization can make it more susceptible to certain incidents which can become a crisis.</p>
Scrutiny by public, media and other interested parties	<p>Effective incident management, whereby adverse events are quickly identified, impacts rapidly mitigated and business-as-usual quickly restored, will probably attract little or no negative media attention.</p> <p>Where there is adverse publicity, this can be confined to a locality or a specific group. However, there is always the possibility of the adverse publicity growing and spreading to additional groups, leading to the event becoming a crisis.</p>	<p>Crises are likely to result in significant scrutiny and interest among interested parties including members of the public, product and service users, specific groups (such as regulators, shareholders or industry bodies) and the media, including social media.</p> <p>The specific parties taking an interest in the crisis will depend on the type of event, who it threatens, and who it impacts. It is very likely that all actions and responses by the organization will be scrutinized and any perceived poor decisions, attempts to avoid responsibility, blaming of others, poor treatment of victims or attempts to cut costs on the response can lead to further sustained criticism and a deepening of the crisis, or can create new challenges.</p>

Table 1 (continued)

Characteristics	Incidents	Crises
Manageability through established plans and procedures	Incidents can often be resolved by using plans which contain incident management procedures and structures and details of predetermined solutions and available resources. Top management can potentially be informed or need to provide direction and supervision	Crises, through a combination of their novelty, inherent uncertainty and potential scale and duration of impact, are rarely resolvable through the application of predefined procedures and plans alone. They demand a flexible, creative, strategic and sustained leadership response. Values and behaviour can be challenged and amended. The organization will rely on its crisis management structure, methods, planning, training and exercising. Crises challenge the capabilities of the organization beyond its inherent coping capacity.

An issue could escalate to an incident, then a crisis. The organization should recognize the change in the situation and be flexible so it can adjust its response accordingly.

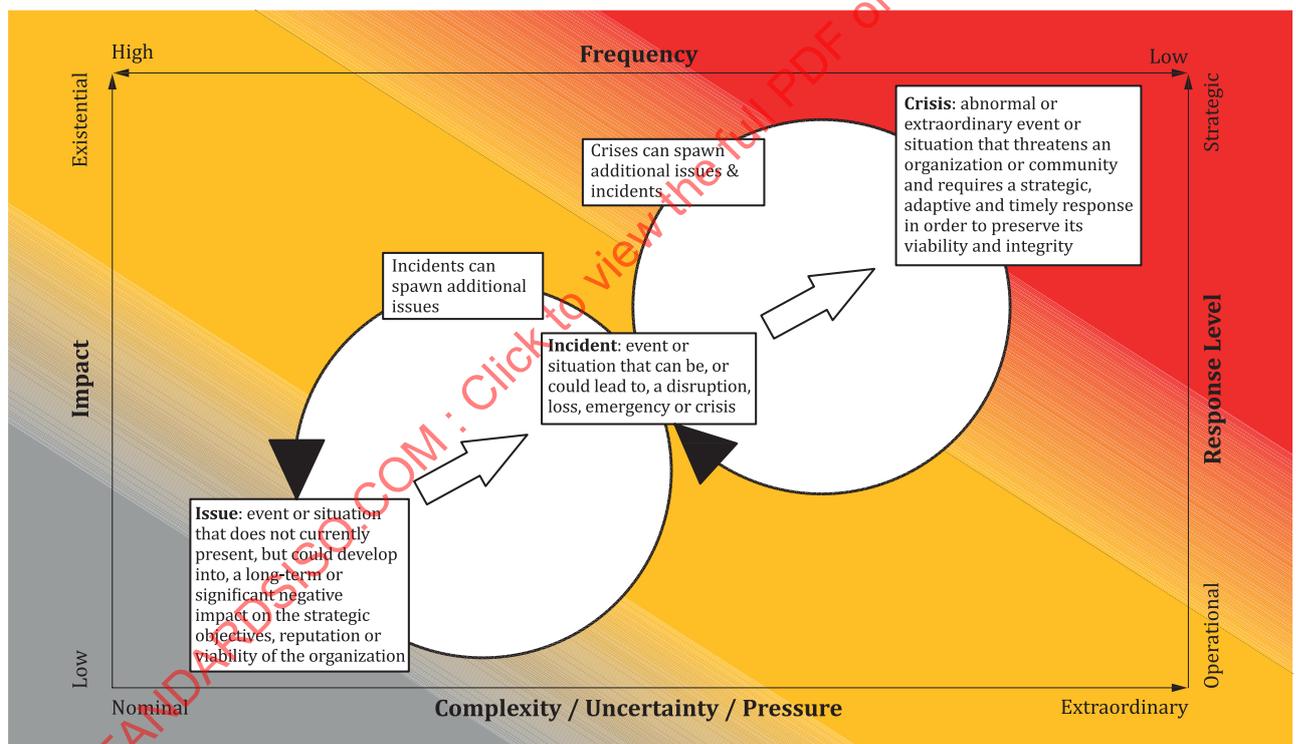


Figure 2 — Relationships and characteristics between an issue, incident and crisis

4.3 Potential origins of crises

Crises can be caused in a number of ways, including:

- a) disruptive incidents that have immediate and strategic implications: these can arise from acts of malice, misconduct or negligence, or a failure (perceived or actual) to deliver products or services that meet the expected standards or legal requirements of quality or safety, unpopular (political) decisions or actions, rumours and false information;

- b) operating fluctuations such as changes in the public reporting in the market, and interested parties' preferences, technological development, changes in laws and regulations, competitions and threats of takeover;
- c) poorly managed incidents and the emergence of latent and hidden issues with unacceptable consequences for trust in an organization's reputation and brand; such issues can "incubate" over time, typically as a result of:
 - 1) inadequate governance allowing for gradual and incremental slippages in standards of quality, reliability, safety or management control to go unchecked and become accepted as a normal way of working;
 - 2) convenient, but unofficial, "workaround" strategies becoming the routine, due, for example, to overcomplicated processes, unrealistic schedules, chronic personnel shortages and relaxed supervision;
 - 3) flaws in supervision and process monitoring, which promote an expectation of "getting away with" undesirable behaviours or being able to survive minor failures without reporting them, or over-reliance on controls to catch all errors, rather than an expectation of quality checks that catch only occasional issues;
 - 4) blame cultures that encourage risk and issue cover-ups and the lack of a shared sense of mission and purpose, which generates a defensive (if not hostile) "them and us" attitude between personnel and management, between different parts of the organization and between the organization and external interested parties;
 - 5) poor behaviour (or what is perceived to be poor behaviour) by the organization's executives, a single executive or the organization as a whole (such as lying, misrepresenting services or products and results, failure to revise decisions or recall products when knowing they pose a danger to their purchaser or the public, actions which are in conflict with the organization's values, illegal activity or willingly breaching regulations);
 - 6) poor training and development of personnel and managers, or incremental loss of skills and knowledge;
 - 7) human factors including fatigue, stress, personal issues and working in unfamiliar circumstances;
 - 8) ineffective human resource management (such as failure to learn from historical events, unrealistic schedules, chronic personnel shortages and relaxed supervision);
 - 9) external factors that can impact the organization's people, operations, reputation, technology and assets, both tangible and intangible, such as extreme weather events, and incidents triggered by critical vendors or data loss;
 - 10) inadequate preparation (plans, procedures and organization) for dealing with incidents;
 - 11) failure to escalate appropriately due to ability, choice or culture.

Crises invariably have multiple contributing factors, which can originate from inside or outside the organization. These can interact in a complex manner, making them difficult to identify and manage, resulting in the need for flexible planning approaches. While the origin of an incident can seem simple at the onset, further review can expose systemic weakness in how the organization is managed. If an incident is not managed effectively, it can escalate into a crisis.

Crisis management strategies and actions should reflect the organization's objectives and values. Failure to adhere to its core values can make the situation worse.

4.4 Readiness to respond and recover

The uncertainty of crisis situations demands that crisis roles and responsibilities are understood, and actions clearly and methodically overseen and directed. Decisions should be intrinsically linked to the core values of the organization. The organization should prepare to face difficult decision-making and emphasize the importance of clear and coherent actions and communications during the crisis.

The organization should determine ways to mobilize its crisis management resources and activate the associated processes. Timely response to a crisis is critical. Denial, complacency or delay among strategic decision-makers can increase the impact and the organization's vulnerability, hamper response, and degrade capacity to recover. Crises can be so extraordinarily demanding that no assumptions should be made about the ability of personnel (of any seniority, grade or experience) to manage them and steer the organization out of a crisis.

Successful crisis management requires flexibility and creativity. It can involve stepping outside the normal "rules" of the organization or its business environment and being prepared to defend or justify its actions. For the organization's leaders, this requires clarity of thought, strategic vision, decisiveness and the ability to act in ways that reflect the core values of the organization. In particular, leaders should behave with compassion toward those affected by the crisis and expect and encourage this behaviour across the whole organization.

4.5 Principles for crisis management

4.5.1 General

The principles given in [4.5.2](#) to [4.5.8](#) are the foundation for establishing and building the organization's crisis management capability that is underpinned by operational capability.

4.5.2 Principle A: Governance

Crisis management is dependent upon effective governance at all levels of the organization.

A crisis management capability is dependent upon clearly understood structures, roles, responsibilities and competence.

The capacity of employees to respond to a crisis is impacted by their understanding of their roles and responsibilities, being adequately trained to competently and confidently meet the demands of the crisis.

4.5.3 Principle B: Strategy

Crisis management is a strategic capability.

Building and maintaining a crisis management capability is dependent upon leadership communicating its value and importance to the organization, setting objectives and allocating resources to achieve these.

The crisis management capability is guided by the core values, priorities of the organization, and the potential consequences and impact of the crisis.

4.5.4 Principle C: Risk management

The crisis management capability is dynamic and is founded upon the management of risk.

Adaptive and timely crisis management is dependent upon situational and risk awareness, enabling the organization to actively monitor its internal and external environments and assess its potential vulnerabilities and opportunities.

Effectively managing change, risk and a dynamic environment enables the organization to anticipate, identify and respond to crises.

An organization's capability to manage crises is a measure of its capacity to transform and adapt, to create opportunities under changing circumstances, and to work in an agile and flexible manner.

The organization should integrate its risk management activities with core business functions to increase its capacity to anticipate and respond to a potential crisis and changing circumstances.

4.5.5 Principle D: Decision-making

Effective decision-making is reliant upon good information management, situational awareness and an understanding of the needs and expectations of interested parties.

Leaders across the organization should seek an understanding through situational awareness and information management in order to make decisions that are based on evidence, logic and judgement and understanding of the impact of potential consequences.

The organization should take into account its strategic objectives, core values and priorities in all decisions.

4.5.6 Principle E: Communication

Crisis management requires effective communications.

The organization should communicate accurate, credible and timely information to interested parties (including those within the organization) so as to increase its crisis management effectiveness and protect its reputation and integrity.

4.5.7 Principle F: Ethics

An organization's response to a potential or actual crisis is guided by its core values and ethical expectations.

The demonstration of appropriate ethics and values increases interested party support, builds trust, and helps to protect and enhance brand and reputation.

4.5.8 Principle G: Learning

An organization's crisis management capability is enhanced through organizational learning.

An organization learns by ensuring people with crisis management roles and responsibilities are competent through training, exercising and learning from internal and external experience.

5 Building a crisis management capability

5.1 General

A well-developed and embedded crisis management capability can assist the organization in anticipating, responding and recovering from crises in a manner that protects its assets and objectives.

Crisis management should include:

- recognition of situations that require activation of crisis management;
- people who are competent and responsible for quickly analysing situations, setting strategies, determining options, making decisions and evaluating their potential impact;
- a common understanding of the principles that underpin crisis management;

- structures and processes to translate decisions into actions, assign activities and evaluate the results;
- personnel who are able to share, support and implement top management's vision, intentions and policies;
- the ability to support solutions by applying the appropriate resources in a timely manner;
- an organizational structure that supports and maintains the ongoing crisis response capability;
- a culture that supports the crisis management principles.

To build a crisis management capability, the organization should establish a framework and a process. The framework includes leadership, structure, culture and competence. The crisis management process includes anticipation, assessment, prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. The framework and the process should be continually improved.

5.2 Crisis management framework

5.2.1 General

The purpose of the crisis management framework is to assist the organization in integrating crisis management into its activities and functions. The crisis management framework is used to support the relationship between the crisis management principles, core attributes of crisis management and the key elements of the management process that are informed by the crisis management principles. Adopting the framework should facilitate an understanding of the relationship between the crisis management process and other management processes.

5.2.2 Leadership

Top management engagement in crisis management is pivotal in developing and continually improving a crisis management capability. Top management should ensure:

- crisis management objectives are compatible with the strategic direction and core values of the organization;
- crisis management is customized to the organization's context;
- demonstrated commitment to the crisis management capability;
- direction and support for crisis management to achieve its intended outcome;
- communication of the importance and benefits of crisis management;
- integration of crisis management into the organization's processes;
- availability of resources for crisis management;
- promotion of continual improvement of crisis management.

Top management should define and document a policy for crisis management. The policy should serve as the basis for the further activities related to the planning and implementation of crisis management arrangements. The policy should:

- state top management's commitment to crisis management;
- outline the objectives in managing a crisis;
- describe in broad terms how the objectives are intended to be realized;
- establish priorities and guidance for the delivery of key elements of the organization's crisis management capability, as well as corresponding financial, technical and human resources required;

- identify those responsible for its different elements, overall coordination and embedding;
- identify, document and communicate the roles and responsibilities required to implement and the crisis management capabilities;
- include mechanisms to review and ensure that the policy continues to be supported and remains consistent with the overall strategic objectives of the organization, and that progress is monitored and evaluated against the agreed deliverables;
- be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains current.

Top management is responsible for the overall resiliency of its organization and should appoint a person(s) with appropriate authority to be accountable for the development and implementation of the crisis management capability, and to maintain and manage it across the whole organization. Top management should also consider the resources needed for each element of the capability and the associated requirements for training, exercising and testing.

5.2.3 Structure

The organization should establish an organizational structure and provide the means to develop and continually improve a crisis management capability including:

- roles, authorities, responsibilities and accountabilities (these can sit outside of and be different to day-to-day roles and responsibilities);
- regulations and guidelines for involvement, information and communication;
- processes and methods;
- facilities and tools;
- quality assurance and control;
- a system for storing and sharing/transferring knowledge, especially in organizations with changing top management.

The organization should integrate crisis management with other relevant organizational activities.

5.2.4 Culture

The organization should encourage the development of a positive attitude and culture among all employees that uphold the organization's core values and the consistent application of its expectations, policies and procedures, recognizing:

- risk awareness: continual identification and understanding of organizational risks, leveraging available competence;
- commitment to crisis management: commitment to, and acknowledgement of, the importance of crisis management;
- early warning: encouraging people to address potential early warning signs;
- organizational resilience: supporting resilience planning and encouraging everyone to understand their role and contribution to helping the organization succeed;
- organizational awareness: open communication of goals, objectives and visions through training and exercises;
- psychological safety: helping with "appropriate challenge" or helping people feel comfortable in raising the small instances that can escalate.

The organization should develop its ability to detect, assess and communicate the latent conditions internal and external to the organization, individually or in combination, that contribute to a successful crisis management culture.

5.2.5 Competence

It is important to understand the desired state, success criteria and steps to establish competency levels in all parts of crisis management.

The organization should integrate crisis management into the approaches taken for developing and maintaining competence and organizational learning. This integration should include:

- development of crisis management awareness, knowledge, skills and positive attitude at individual, team, organizational and inter-organizational levels;
- utilization of competence management processes and procedures within crisis management;
- systematic processes for reviews and learning related to crisis management;
- organizational learning as a means for continual improvement of crisis management capability.

5.3 Crisis management process

5.3.1 Anticipation

The organization should anticipate potential crises by establishing:

- horizon scanning processes to identify potential crises that can emerge in the medium to long term, and those which can emerge with very little warning;
- processes which will identify potential crises and manage how to escalate the warning to the appropriate level and inform the crisis response;
- systems to provide early warning of potential crises;
- an environment for appropriate challenge to decisions and strategies.

5.3.2 Assessment

The organization should assess potential crises by establishing:

- an understanding of the risks in the environment in which the organization operates;
- a well understood and integrated relationship between risk management activities and the business operations and leadership;
- a recognition and acceptance that crises can develop regardless of the effectiveness of existing controls and that the organization needs to be prepared to manage these effectively;
- behaviours that facilitate situational awareness;
- timely recognition and escalation of issues and incidents.

5.3.3 Prevention and mitigation

The organization should recognize that crises can be caused in different ways and try to prevent them using a combination of organizational, technical and human efforts. The organization should consider both preventive and mitigation strategies to prevent and minimize escalation.

The organization should integrate crisis prevention with other hazard, threat and risk-based activities.

In addition, the organization should establish policies, practices and procedures that provide employees and interested parties guidance on:

- prevention and mitigation through effective risk management practices;
- value awareness, involving the recognition and compliance to values such as ethics, sustainability and codes of conduct;
- early warning by communicating potential risks at an early stage to enable appropriate attention and assessment of potential consequences;
- capacity to respond to evolving conditions in a proportionate, meaningful and coordinated manner;
- redundancy and adaptation, which ensure organizational flexibility when experiencing unanticipated circumstances and needs.

Crisis prevention should be a continual effort.

5.3.4 Preparedness

5.3.4.1 General

The organization should ensure resilience in the CMT structure by appointing primary and alternate delegates for each CMT function and ensuring that all CMT members are suitably trained, competent and adequately resourced to perform their duties. It should also prepare for crises by developing generic capabilities that will enable it to deliver an appropriate response in any situation. This includes the development of the following key elements:

- the crisis management plan (CMP) and any other relevant plans;
- information management;
- shared situational awareness;
- structure, composition, authority and expectations of the crisis management team (CMT), with appropriate governance.

To be able to respond in a timely and well-organized manner, the organization should:

- inform and notify the appropriate members of the CMT;
- provide information management and situational awareness.

5.3.4.2 Crisis management plan

The organization should develop a concise CMP that can be understood, implemented and exercised before it is needed, and used when a crisis occurs. The CMP should not be scenario dependant but can contain information for dealing with specific crises and include:

- legal and regulatory requirements;
- the activation and escalation mechanism for a crisis response and how it works;
- the assignment of authority and responsibility for decisions and actions in a crisis;
- primary and alternative details for personnel that are to be contacted in the event of a crisis;
- details of levels of response across the organization (i.e. who is to be contacted for what level of problem) and a flow chart showing the sequence of actions;
- the structure and role of the CMT and what is expected of it;

- the identification of physical or virtual meeting locations and the equipment and support required;
- crisis communication (internal and external) (see [Clause 8](#));
- templates for CMT meeting agenda, situation reports and record of decisions and actions.

The plan can be supported by setting out the policy and more procedural elements about how the CMT works and the necessary training and evaluation arrangements, but these should not detract from the plan itself. The plan should be reviewed periodically at appropriate intervals, especially the contact details.

The CMP should:

- provide for generic response capability that will be appropriate for events and situations that are not covered by existing procedures and practices;
- provide for flexibility and improvisation (“thinking outside the box”);
- produce viable responses using the available multidisciplinary expertise;
- consider formal and informal sources of information available as the crisis unfolds under real constraints;
- encourage flexible thinking and action, and recognize the generally unforeseeable crises that are impossible to plan for in precise detail.

The organization should provide tools and templates to support the CMP including:

- methods for physical and virtual visualization of the crisis situation;
- sources of relevant information;
- aides-memoires, standard agendas and checklists of key decision points and required actions;
- defined roles and responsibilities;
- a list of items necessary for a practical response;
- tools and systems to help manage social media monitoring and engagement;
- a list of interested parties and tools for categorizing and prioritizing their relevance;
- templates for decision logging and situation reporting.

5.3.4.3 Information management

Uncertainty is one of the defining features of a crisis such that finding out what is happening and understanding the implications are of paramount importance. It is necessary to accept and understand that information can be incomplete or incorrect when decisions are taken and acted upon. This requires pre-planning and appropriate training.

When responding to a crisis, the organization should be able to:

- identify and gather relevant information on the crisis;
- filter, analyse, prioritize and understand the available information;
- evaluate information in terms of validity, quality and relevance to the crisis;
- manage the ambiguity, uncertainty, complexity and volatility of the crisis;
- consider protecting confidential or sensitive data;
- present information to decision-makers in an appropriate form in a timely manner;

- communicate the information within the organization and externally as required. It should not be understood in such a way that important information is withheld from the public authorities where this is important for the prevention of threats to the general public.

5.3.4.4 Shared situational awareness

To build shared situational awareness, the organization should establish policies, practices and procedures that encourage the development of a shared understanding across its leadership and among its employees and key interested parties. This will help create an environment in which factors that contribute to crisis situations and their potential impacts will be clearly identified at the earliest opportunity.

This will provide a broader perspective on:

- what is going on and what the impacts can be on goals and objectives;
- the degree of uncertainty;
- the degree of control;
- exacerbating issues;
- other organizations involved and their relationships;
- what can happen in the future.

In addition, any existing requirements of higher-level authorities should be understood.

This information, together with foresight, can inform the organization's crisis decision-making (see [Clause 7](#)).

Attaining situational awareness is inherently difficult in a crisis because usually many things are happening, the rate of change is rapid, various interpretations of cause and effect can be plausible, and the spread of impacts and potential impacts is unclear.

The organization should encourage a common appreciation among the people involved in managing the crisis, recognizing that:

- information can be deliberately withheld from others for various reasons;
- technical knowledge or specialist skills can be required to interpret certain facts;
- terminology is not always commonly understood.

The organization should collect information from a range of sources and assess the credibility of new information if received from unknown or unverified sources. The information should then be systematically collated, analysed, evaluated and presented in a format appropriate to the situation, which can be called a "situation report". As information changes, the report should be updated.

The organization should not assume its ability to build shared situational awareness in a crisis on the basis of normal operations. It requires effort to understand the requirements and develop the structures, processes and competence needed to meet them. To build situational awareness, the organization should have the following:

- Trusted channels to source relevant information during a crisis.
- Ways of working to find relevant information when there are no existing channels. There is a tendency to rely on the news media but the timeliness and reliability of even the major news corporations cannot be taken for granted, especially at the early stage of a crisis.
- Structures and processes to analyse and evaluate the quality and relevance of the information to the crisis situation as not all information circulating during a crisis is equally reliable or unreliable.

It is vital that the organization has the skills and ways of working to make informed judgements about source reliability, relative accuracy, timeliness and relevance.

- The capacity to analyse, interpret, understand and turn information about the crisis situation into intelligence. This intelligence can add value to the organization and provide targeted and specific context to inform the prioritization and direction of the response effort, which can require specialist skills or specific technical, product or policy knowledge.
- The capacity to consider the meaning, implications and possible alternative interpretations of the available information. Decisions, and the rationales for these, should be recorded to provide an auditable trail for potential post-incident review or investigations. An inventory of skills in the organization can enable their rapid recruitment to the crisis response.
- The means to present information to decision-makers in the most effective format possible. The specifics of the crisis and the requirements and interests of the decision-makers will determine what is appropriate. Those in a decision-support role need to understand the specific concerns, background knowledge and other requirements of the decision-makers.

5.3.4.5 Composition and responsibilities of the crisis management team (CMT)

The CMT should generally include top management because it can provide strategic vision, the authority to make decisions in a crisis situation and enact its leadership function. Individuals with the appropriate level of authority, experience and capabilities should be appointed to the CMT.

The CMT should be supported by operational and tactical teams. This can allow the CMT to remain strategic in its thinking and approach, giving direction to the tactical team for the planning and then the operational team for active implementation.

The size of the CMT varies according to the size of an organization and the nature of the crisis, but typically consists of strategic decision-makers and representatives from key business areas. Teams can be expanded to include internal or external specialists or expertise as required. Roles can include the following:

- a) **Leader:** responsible for leading the CMT and acting as the primary contact for the operational elements of the crisis response. The leader should be an authoritative, respected senior executive with a long-term perspective, who is trusted and decisive without being impulsive. It is important to maintain appropriate representation within the CMT that does not leave the wider business without leadership while the crisis is being managed.
- b) **Human resources (HR):** ensures that people issues are being addressed. The role holder should have broad HR expertise or be able to contact an appropriate resource. They should be able to provide quick access to employee data for personnel accountability, contacting next of kin, and can need to address trauma support and trauma counselling as required.
- c) **Operations:** ensures that delivery of the ongoing services and business priorities is maintained and coordinated appropriately. This function should be able to apply priorities across the organization as needed and allocate additional resources if required.
- d) **Legal:** provides legal counsel to the team and arranges for external legal support as necessary, participates in communication preparation, and advises on other crisis-specific issues.
- e) **Communications:** prepares the communication strategy and coordinates the media response which should incorporate legal advice for all communications. The communications lead is responsible for drafting, overseeing the approval process, and disseminating all finalized messaging on behalf of the organization to all relevant internal and external interested parties. Communications has a key role in protecting the brand and reputation of the organization (see also [8.3](#) and [8.9](#)).
- f) **Finance:** assesses the financial impact of the crisis and the organization's response, monitors developments, and advises on/authorizes contingency budgets and emergency spending.

- g) Log keeper: an essential part of the crisis team who maintains a log of all decisions and actions for later reference and use with reviews and reports, insurance or liability issues, enquiries or investigations.
- h) Business continuity representative: advises on appropriate recovery measures.
- i) Other business teams: additional support for the core team is provided by specialist teams, such as risk, facilities, security, information security and information technology (IT), which assess damage and advise on the appropriate recovery plans and available facilities.
- j) Administrative support: depending on the extent of the crisis, the leader and CMT can require administrative support, which can include record-keeping, updating information boards and systems, tracking documents, updating team members and monitoring information channels.

5.3.5 Response

5.3.5.1 General

The CMT should respond to the crisis and take appropriate action depending on the dynamic and complex nature of crises. The CMT should note that each crisis will be unique and include consideration of:

- a) pursuing situational awareness, with the team confirming their (individual and shared) understanding of the situation and its dynamics, and continually reviewing it;
- b) examining and monitoring the impact and management of the crisis on business as usual;
- c) identifying issues and risks, making decisions, assigning actions and confirming the implementation and results of actions;
- d) setting an operating rhythm for the response, so that meetings, briefings, information dissemination, press releases, conferences, etc., can be arranged coherently and can require 24/7 or protracted resourcing;
- e) managing meeting agendas and ensuring brevity;
- f) defining (and continually reviewing) the strategic direction of the response by setting response objectives;
- g) confirming and reviewing internal and external communications, strategy and media (including social) monitoring;
- h) reviewing and monitoring the crisis management response to ensure that priorities are understood clearly and that its performance, and the flow of information, are appropriate to the demands of the situation;
- i) continual identification, monitoring and oversight, and review analysis of interactions with interested parties, to ensure that the right people receive the right messages and information, and that their views, advice and assistance are actively sought;
- j) monitoring and reviewing the objectives and effectiveness of any subordinate team to ensure their activities are aligned;
- k) active monitoring and horizon scanning of the situation, including realistic worst-case-scenario planning to inform escalation, potential and proactive mitigatory activities during the response to all CMT members at all times;
- l) monitoring if there are cascade effects or hidden interdependencies within or outside the organization, and new developments requiring additional or new responses;
- m) ensuring that strategic crisis response and conflicts of interest or resources are managed;

n) ensuring that strategic planning for recovery starts as early as possible.

5.3.5.2 Process for CMT response

The organization should establish and monitor a generic, continual process for the CMT response, including the following (see [Figure 3](#)).

- Situational awareness: the CMT should develop a shared situation awareness by promoting active participation and utilizing relevant information from all the CMT members.
- Assessment of potential consequences: the CMT should assess the potential consequences introduced by the specific situation. The assessment should include assessment of the potential consequences to important values and functions, such as people, environment, the organization's integrity (e.g. ethics, liability and reputation) and its viability (e.g. assets, production and services).
- Defining goals and objectives: the CMT should define goals and objectives that align with the organization's strategy.
- Planning and prioritization: although the organization has established a predefined generic plan for crisis, the CMT should establish a situation-specific plan for handling the current crisis' potential. The plan should include objectives and corresponding strategic activities (e.g. HR, communications, production, legal, financial). Responsibilities for activities should be specific and coordinated, as appropriate. The CMT should prioritize its activities based on its objectives and capacity, to ensure that priority is given to the most important strategic decisions.
- Implementation: the CMT should ensure proper implementation of the prioritized work streams and corresponding strategic measures according to its responsibilities. Teamwork should be promoted to ensure the best use of resources and to optimize achievement of objectives.
- Evaluation: The CMT should ensure necessary feedback on implementation for the evaluation of progress. The evaluation should be shared to the CMT as the basis for continual updating of the shared situation awareness, potential assessment and situation-specific plan with corresponding objectives and priorities. Critical thinking should be an integral part of evaluation.

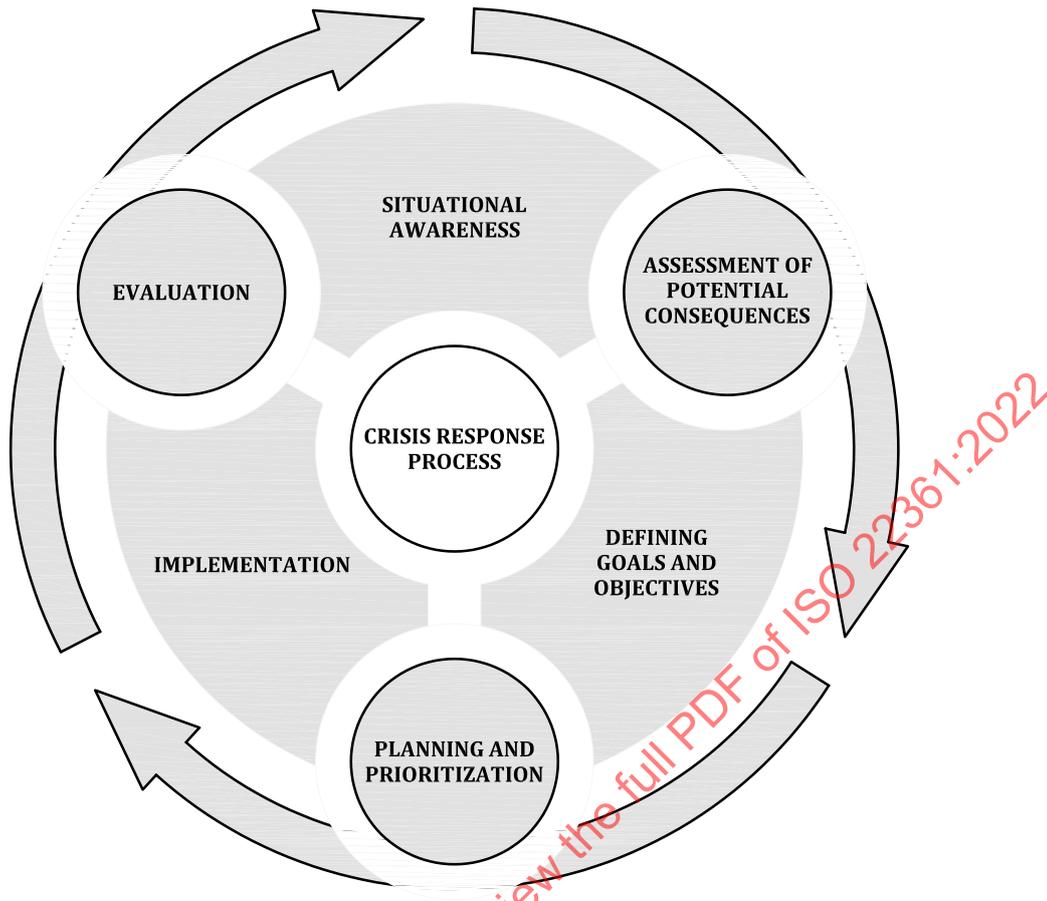


Figure 3 — Process for the crisis management team response

To conform to the response process, the CMT should, as a minimum, ensure the meeting agenda for the strategic meetings to include: a) situation, b) potentials, and c) plan (objectives, work streams and priorities).

The time of meeting and implementation should be balanced to ensure a favourable mix of planning and execution capability.

The transition from response to recovery of the operations by the CMT should be planned at an appropriate time to refocus priorities and objectives. It can be considered when:

- an organization's viability and integrity are largely assured;
- the response capacity or capability of the organization is sufficient;
- the majority of upcoming challenges and tasks is foreseeable;
- the majority of tasks can be planned.

The transition can be implemented by:

- longer intervals between CMT conferences or shorter meetings;
- transfer of tasks to business as usual operation;
- change in the focus and resources of the CMT;

When the work of the CMT concludes, it should be communicated to those involved including information on who is the point of contact for enquiries.

The response and the recovery activities are not necessarily consecutive and can overlap.

5.3.6 Recovery

The recovery phase involves dealing with the effects of a crisis and how to return to “normal”, or adapting to new circumstances, particularly if a major change has taken place following the crisis. Throughout recovery, decisions should still consider risk and options for modifying risk. Emerging issues that are not identified and addressed during recovery can cause further harm and can give rise to another crisis.

Plans and protocols should recognize there is a transition and handover from the response phase to the recovery phase. Recovery planning can be directly affected by decisions made as part of the response. Longer-term recovery objectives and issues can inform response managers who are making decisions on immediate issues. The recovery team should be led by a member of the CMT and adequately resourced.

The recovery effort can be long term and can need resources long after the response phase is over. Issues often characterized by reputational damage, investor concerns, economic impacts and ongoing legal and insurance challenges can continue for a considerable period of time. The organization should also consider that the recovery needs to be adequately resourced.

The social cost should be considered as interested parties can be affected. In addition to the physical rebuilding or replacement of infrastructure, the organization can be required to support investigations or enquiries by the police or regulatory authorities. The CMT should also be aware of sensitivities attached to the natural processes of healing and grieving, where individuals and their families have been directly affected by the events.

As part of recovery, the organization should:

- have a strategic direction for recovery from the outset;
- start recovery as early as possible;
- consider strategic opportunities.

Giving adequate strategic attention to the recovery effort prevents good work from being undone, the neglect of critical relationships with interested parties, and a failure to realize potential opportunities.

Lost opportunities can include a failure to:

- regenerate the organization;
- cease problematic activities;
- bring forward long-term development plans.

Recovery can present an opportunity to regenerate, restructure or realign an organization. The essence of recovery is not necessarily a return to previous normality. It can entail moving towards a model of operations and organizational structures that represent a new normality, confronting harsh realities and realizing potential opportunities revealed by the crisis.

5.3.7 Continual improvement

Continual improvement is a core element of crisis management (see [Clause 9](#)). Experiences from exercises and crisis events support this objective.

The organization should:

- undertake a review of the crisis or exercises, including an evaluation of the response, the plans and procedures, and the tools and facilities, to identify areas for improvement;

- identify lessons to be learned and make recommendations for change, including the responsibilities and timelines to drive changes forward and ensure they are completed;
- learn from the crisis and exercises and make improvements to become better prepared and build resilience, including making changes in the organization, its people, its plans and its procedures;
- conduct debriefs and follow-up communication with individuals, teams and interested parties involved in the crisis to identify learning opportunities;
- reflect and act on lessons so that latent problems and vulnerabilities do not persist and predispose the organization to future crises.

6 Crisis leadership

6.1 Core leadership skills and attributes

6.1.1 General

The capability to lead effectively in a crisis should not be assumed, or taken for granted, as a result of an individual's appointment or status (see [5.2.2](#)). Managers reviewing their training and development needs can find it useful to refer to the crisis management skills (see [Figure 4](#)). It is important to recognize that some people are not suited to addressing crisis situations and enforcing crisis management which can be identified as part of their training and exercising.

An important function of a leader in a crisis is to stabilize the situation. To help do this, a leader should instil confidence and bring out the best from everyone involved, providing clear direction and control in handling the situation. It is not always possible to quickly impose order on a chaotic situation, but the leader should demonstrate integrity, empathy, compassion, authority and determination. This will defuse tensions, provide a focus for activity and reassure interested parties that responsible and competent leadership is in charge of the situation.

The leader should provide calm, caring and assertive engagement while leveraging team strengths, encouraging creative thinking, promoting accountability within a no-blame culture, taking timely action, and unequivocally assuming appropriate and ultimate responsibility for the crisis management.

Leadership needs excellent interpersonal skills such as consensus-building, teamwork, flexibility, communication and the ability to find options within existing time constraints. Leaders need to be comfortable dealing with the uncertainties that crises present and capable of driving an organization coherently through very confused situations.

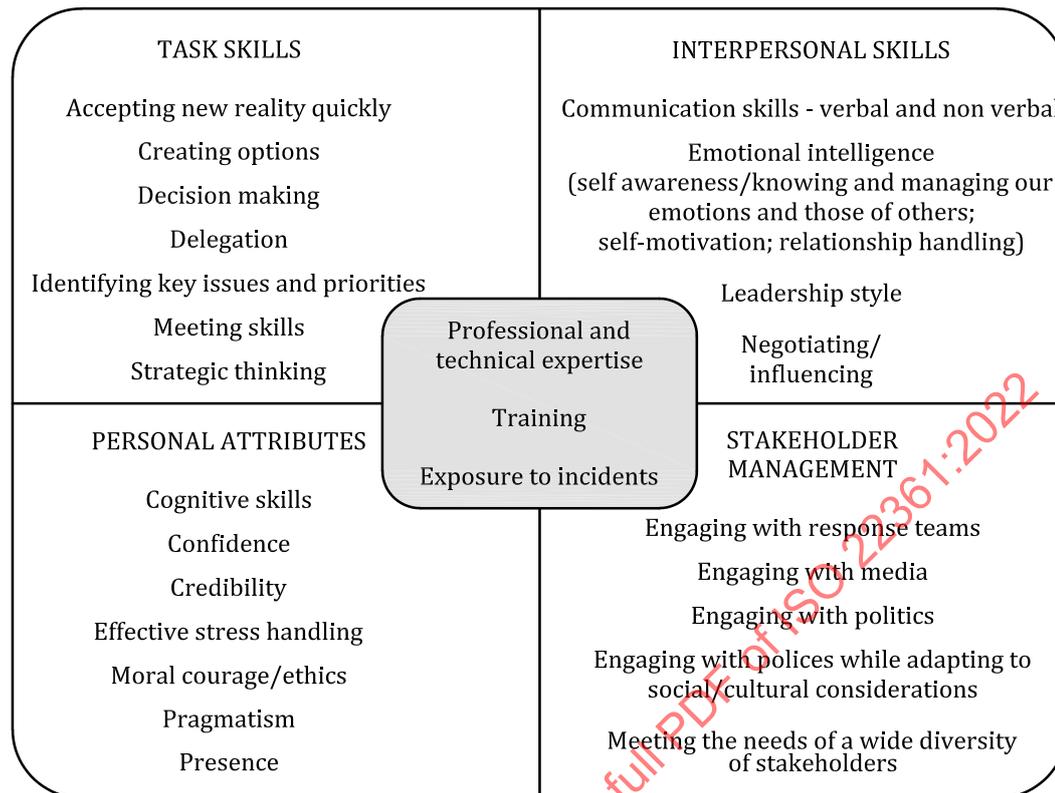


Figure 4 — Crisis leadership skills

An important aspect of crisis leadership at the start of the response is to follow the agreed management process to identify and take steps that will eliminate the cause where possible, limit the extent of further damage, contain it and reduce further escalation so that subsequent response activities have a firm basis.

6.1.2 Role and responsibility of the crisis leader(s)

The crisis leader(s) should:

- ensure that the teams are activated and operating;
- lead the team's executive meetings, determine their timings and frequency, and set the agenda;
- review the composition and performance of the CMT and its supporting personnel as the crisis evolves and adjust if necessary;
- promote a shared situational awareness;
- challenge the evidence and thinking in a crisis and encourage the CMT to do the same (this can include remonstrations);
- determine the strategy, set the strategic aim and identify objectives for the different teams and departments contributing to the response;
- continually review and make changes as necessary, ensuring that departments, teams and agencies report regularly against their objectives and make appropriate progress;
- consult widely and advise top management of progress, strategy and required actions;
- promote the creation of a cross-organizational consensus, as appropriate, indicating the reasons for overriding any advice or recommendation;

- j) recognize dilemmas, and understand that a decision needs to be taken based on what is known at the time;
- k) ensure that decisions are based on the best information available at the time, and are compassionate, proportionate, necessary, ethical, legal and aligned with the organization's values;
- l) ensure that decisions and underlying rationale are recorded and documented to permit scrutiny and analysis after the event so that lessons can be identified;
- m) review and authorize strategies for key internal and interested-party communications, and for public and media information produced by the communications team;
- n) stay in their assigned strategic role;
- o) direct and empower subordinate leaders;
- p) encourage the CMT to concentrate on defining what has to be done and not the operational and technical detail of how it is to be done;
- q) provide strategic direction for the recovery as early as is practicable, and commit resources for it;
- r) think creatively, be prepared to think outside the paradigms of normal operations and organizational culture, and consider radical solutions;
- s) determine when it is desirable and safe to scale down or stand down the response;
- t) ensure identification and follow-up of important experiences, lessons and learning (see [Clause 9](#)).

6.2 Well-being and sustainable crisis response

6.2.1 Crisis management responders

Crises can place exceptional demands on those assuming crisis management roles and responsibilities and can result in an unacceptable impact on the well-being of individuals. Crises can be persistent in nature, and responders can be required to manage multiple crises simultaneously.

Top management should investigate, review and implement measures to mitigate such impact and assist if individuals, or their families, need support including:

- a) assigning responsibility for monitoring well-being of individuals or their families;
- b) identifying sufficient personnel to fulfil crisis management roles;
- c) supporting well-being and fatigue management for those responding, by providing food and beverages, rest areas and accommodation;
- d) training, validation and awareness;
- e) resources for dealing with distressing issues;
- f) providing access to specialist resources and timely individual support to address well-being concerns that cannot be triaged by the organization (psychological support).

6.2.2 Wider interested-party impact

Top management should:

- emphasize the investigation, review and implementation of measures to mitigate the impact on well-being and provide support;
- be visible, contactable and available to interested parties.

7 Strategic crisis decision-making

7.1 General

Decision-making is the process that leads to the selection of a course of action from more than one option. This selection is based on the values, weight factors (including legal, technical, operational, etc.), priorities and preferences of the decision-maker(s), which can be reached on a singular or group decision basis. The quality of the precise meaning and exchange of information and data in the decision-making process can impact on the decision or the level of consensus achieved.

The challenge of crisis decision-making is frequently underestimated, ignored or unknown, except with the benefit of hindsight. Decision-makers need to be aware of “hindsight bias” whereby decisions, with the benefit of hindsight, seem flawed or erroneous. Consequently, the basis for making decisions or taking subsequent actions should be recorded with the relevant context and information so that they can be adequately justified.

Even the most clear-headed and decisive senior executive in day-to-day settings can be overwhelmed in a crisis, leading to uncharacteristic errors, hasty reactions, decision avoidance or delays.

Poor decision-making almost certainly exacerbates an already difficult situation and has potentially long-term negative impacts on the reputation and value of the organization.

At its core, crisis response involves making decisions based on the best information available and turning those decisions into direction and action that control the organization’s response to the events and minimize the impacts of the crisis that is compatible with the organization’s strategic direction.

A wide range of decision-making models exists with three primary considerations:

- Situation: Situational awareness involves an appropriate knowledge of these factors: What is happening? What are the impacts? What are the issues? What are the risks? What can happen? What is being done about it?
- Direction: What end-state is desired? What is the aim and objectives of the crisis response? What overarching values and priorities will inform and guide this?
- Action: The effectiveness of actions should be monitored and reported on. What needs to be decided? What needs to be done? When to resolve the situation and achieve the desired end-state?

Basic decision-making includes establishing the situation, identifying the relevant issues, generating options, evaluating the options with reference to the desired end-state, and making a decision or choice, all of which should be consistent with the values and the strategic priorities of the organization. Ideally, strategic decision-making in a crisis also follows a process, such as in [Figure 5](#).

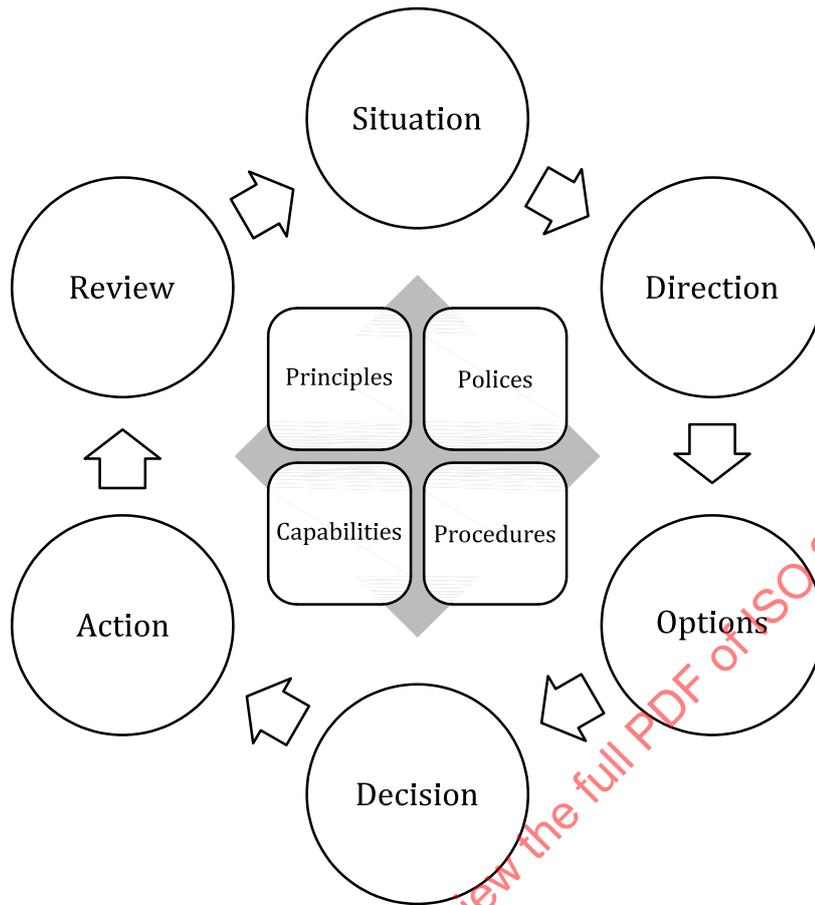


Figure 5 — Strategic decision-making in a crisis

This process seems logical and straightforward, except that these types of rational models assume the decision-maker is fully informed, can determine the outcomes of a choice with perfect accuracy and is thinking entirely rationally. The reality, however, is often different.

7.2 Why decision-making can be challenging

Decision-making by people in a crisis does not always follow a clear-cut decision process. The nature of crises creates an environment that potentially derails the rational decision-making process at both strategic and tactical levels during crisis response.

Crisis management takes human and cultural factors into account as these factors significantly influence all aspects of crisis management. Human behaviour and culture include values, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, competencies and capabilities. It is important to be aware of human and cultural factors as they can both cause stress and comfort when working as individuals and as part of a group.

All of these factors place extreme psychological pressures on the CMT and other affected personnel across the organization. However, the high levels of uncertainty that characterize the majority of crises, caused by lack of knowledge and abundance of rumours, assumptions and misinformation, are particularly threatening to effective decision-making. Uncertainty significantly increases a decision-maker’s stress levels, which can negatively affect their cognitive processes, and increase the likelihood of flawed decision processes and poor decisions.

The challenges to effective decision-making are clear but even overcoming these challenges does not guarantee a successful outcome. However, effective decision-making significantly increases the likelihood of success.

7.3 Dilemmas, decision delay, decision avoidance

Crisis decision-making is sometimes characterized by dilemmas for which apparent solutions are not right or wrong but better or worse and where solutions to one problem potentially generate further issue(s). Such dilemmas often have an element of moral hazard or adverse selection (making a decision that will have a less bad outcome than other decisions) and are therefore perceived as having no good outcome and potentially leading to undesirable outcomes. These dilemmas induce particularly high levels of stress and anxiety in the decision-maker.

While uncertainty does not always increase the chances of the CMT actively making large-scale errors or wrong choices, uncertainty over the potential outcome of a decision can block or delay the CMT from implementing decisions.

One of the main reasons for this is the CMT's perceived accountability over a decision that can, with hindsight, be judged by interested parties as having been the wrong choice. Doing nothing can be perceived as less blameworthy than an actively made mistake. However, the failure to make crucial decisions and act when required is one of the most pervasive issues that decreases the effectiveness and efficiency of the crisis response, and which has produced tragic outcomes to crises. It should be made clear that members of the CMT should not be held liable for decisions made in good faith during a crisis. However, it should also be recognized that the organization can still be held responsible and accountable for its actions.

The CMT can be influenced in its decision-making by specific interested party interests in order to achieve a particular outcome. The organization should monitor external influences so that they do not run contrary to the needs of the organization.

7.4 Decision-making issues

This document cannot present the full range of potential biases and pitfalls, but self-awareness is critical. Crisis leaders and decision-makers should be mindful of potential issues, such as:

- groupthink;
- confirmation bias: the tendency to seek or prioritize information that confirms a preferred interpretation or option at the expense of contradictory information (which can be correct and relevant);
- tunnel vision and fixation errors;
- wishful thinking;
- stereotyping;
- disproportionate emphasis given to preferred sources;
- a failure to challenge assumptions of various types (not allowing lateral thinking);
- premature closure on a particular interpretation, position or path of action.

7.5 Effective crisis decision-making

The organization should identify the factors that improve the effectiveness of strategic decision-making in a crisis, including:

- a) implementing, at an organizational level, policies, structures (teams and roles), plans, processes and tools to support the organization's crisis management capability as a whole and the CMT in particular;
- b) gaining experience in crisis decision-making environments as individuals and teams;

- c) training CMT members in the use of decision techniques to reduce the effect of uncertainty on their cognitive abilities;
- d) recognizing the signs of weak decision-making, including a failure to challenge evidence, assumptions, methods, logic and conclusions, and the adoption of measures to provide alternative perspectives;
- e) developing the ability to keep the scope of the decision-making process at the strategic level, providing the adequate framework, delegation, high-level direction for dependent decisions and actions at the tactical and operational levels, without micromanaging and unnecessarily limiting them;
- f) enhancing CMT decision-making culture by leaders creating and supporting the development of team characteristics that address task conflicts and allow members to feel safe in displaying proactive behaviour in a climate of psychological safety.

The organization should make decision-makers aware of the challenges faced and the tools and techniques available to manage uncertainty and reduce the potential for individual or collective decision errors.

8 Crisis communication

8.1 General

Effective communication is a key component of successful crisis management and forms an integral part of the organization's response to any crisis. It covers both internal and external communication, designed and delivered in support of the crisis management function.

Crisis communication positions the organization as the central source of information, demonstrates its control of the situation and reassures interested parties.

The organization should:

- develop an effective capability to communicate internally and externally during a crisis;
- develop and deliver a consistent message that conveys the organization's reaction to a crisis;
- provide information that is known at the time, and what it is doing to address the issues and its responses at both a human and organizational level.

8.2 Pre-crisis preparation

The organization should ensure the seamless transition between day-to-day management of communications and the activity undertaken to manage a potential or actual crisis. With modern communications, information can be available in near real time, which is key, given that time is a scarce resource in crisis situations. The organization should prepare to respond effectively and to quickly move from a reactive to a proactive phase.

The organization should develop a crisis communication plan that sets out the roles, responsibilities and actions to be taken by members of the communications team and those supporting them.

The crisis communication plan should include:

- draft holding statements;
- guidance for call takers;
- fact sheets and press kits;
- locations for press conferences;

- list of media channels to be utilized;
- tools and systems to help manage social media monitoring and engagement;
- list of interested parties and a management matrix;
- contact information for resources, including spokespeople.

The crisis communication plan should:

- set out a structured approach to managing a communications response;
- assign clear responsibilities and accountabilities;
- establish procedures and tested arrangements for invocation;
- identify the options for resourcing to meet high levels of demand.

The organization should regularly rehearse its crisis communication process to ensure that the systems are effective and that teams are prepared.

8.3 Managing relationships and reputation

Engaging with the media is an opportunity to send purposefully structured messaging to interested parties. This can help avoid misinformation and rumours about the situation and the crisis management strategy, actions and decisions.

The organization should proactively engage with the media to provide an accurate account of the incident, protect its reputation, and communicate its own message to counter what can be said by uninformed people or those with harmful intentions.

The extent of this relationship needs to address different media in order to have the most extensive coverage. Special attention should be paid to social media given its potential to spread information quickly, increasing the risk of misinformation.

The organization should identify and take into account the concerns and views of interested parties including customers, employees, shareholders, suppliers, regulators, partner organizations, public bodies and the wider community. Crisis response arrangements should include the capability to assess and understand the factors that are important to interested parties and which can impact the organization's reputation.

The organization should have a process to identify, categorize and prioritize key interested parties, their concerns, their potential impact on the success of the crisis response anticipated questions, and appropriate means of communication. The communications team should track which interested parties have been communicated with, when, by whom and when the next communications will be.

NOTE For more information, see ISO 22329.

8.4 Key roles

8.4.1 Communication team

The organization should establish a communication team, including:

- communications lead on the CMT;
- spokespeople or press officer (see [8.4.2](#));
- writers and translators;
- media relations (see [8.4.3](#));

- social media (see 8.6 and 8.9);
- call-takers;
- internal communications;
- interested-party communications.

These roles should be covered within the resources available, but not necessarily by individual personnel.

The crisis leader should review and authorize key communications produced by the communications team (see 6.1) and work in collaboration with those who have authority to approve communications (see 8.6).

8.4.2 Spokespeople

The organization should train and prepare spokespeople to engage with the external interested parties (such as the media, community and next of kin) so that they are comfortable in the role. The training should also take into account the various media channels that will be utilized.

The choice of spokespeople should be appropriate to the target audience and is dependent on the type and impact of the crisis. The organization should ensure the consistency of the message when more than one spokesperson is providing information on its behalf.

8.4.3 Media relations

The organization should engage with and monitor the media (including social media) to gain an early warning of crises, and to assess the level and focus of external interest and the wider impacts not reported through other channels.

Engagement and monitoring of the media is also important during the crisis response phase and for post-crisis recovery.

The organization should analyse the detailed information being reported and the external “conversations” and “trends” to allow for validation of the organization’s position and measure how effective it is in engaging with the issues, conveying its message and generating the conversation it wishes to engage in.

The organization should identify incorrect media reports, shifts in interest, correlated interests, peaks of engagement, and the extent of rumour and misinformation that interested parties can access.

8.5 Crisis communication strategy

The organization should develop a crisis communication strategy that is approved by top management and supported by appropriate training. It should align with and promote the organization’s core values and include:

- communication needs for employees and internal interested parties;
- coordinated internal and external communication;
- the organization’s core message to be adapted in the approach (style and tone) for different audiences and across all mediums (channels);
- key themes within the message;
- supporting material behind those themes;
- a list of identified and prioritized interested parties to receive information;