

Preparing for a Crisis Situation Checklist

The following checklist is intended to assist in proactively preparing HR professionals for a crisis or any situation resulting in physical injury to and emotional distress of employees, damage or loss of company property, or death of an employee. Preparing for such a situation should include the following considerations:

Preparing for a Crisis:

- Develop, communicate, and practice an Emergency Action Plan.
- Create and test a Disaster Recovery Plan addressing how to protect company assets and resume business as quickly as possible after a crisis.
- Involve employees and assign roles and responsibilities for emergency evacuation and disaster recovery.
- Provide special training to employees assigned to take a leadership role in a crisis situation.
- Ensure that personal protective equipment, flashlights and other tools are readily available and in good order.
- Maintain accurate and up-to-date employee information and employee emergency contact information—address, telephone number, cell phone number, pager
- Maintain secured, off-site back up of employee information and critical paperwork that would need to be accessed should the destruction of company property occur.
- Prepare a list of resources that can immediately be used should a crisis occur.
- Identify a company representative(s) to address the media.
- Establish relationships with assistance providers, such as Employee Assistance Program liaisons, local fire and police departments, utility companies, community assistance organizations and government agencies.

Handling an Active Crisis:

- Put your Emergency Action Plan into action.
- Assess property damage as well as the emotional state of employees.
- Conduct a debriefing concerning the crisis. Allow employees to express their feelings. If appropriate, bring in professionals to help, such as an Employee Assistance Professional.
- Look for signs of traumatic stress. **Keep in mind:** Traumatic stress can impact an individual physically or emotionally. Obvious physical signs include an employee crying, shaking or displaying other behaviors that show they are visibly upset. Over a period of time, an individual may lose weight or become fatigued. A change in behavior such as missing deadlines, mood swings, or difficulty in handling assignments can also be signs of traumatic stress. Naturally, people may have immediate, strong reactions after a traumatic event. If these reactions or behavioral changes continue to be exhibited a couple of weeks after the event, the employee may be in need of professional assistance.

Managing the Aftermath of a Crisis:

- Provide employees with a list of resources to help them with their needs.
- Publicize your company Employee Assistance Program and be prepared to discuss health insurance benefit features that may be of particular interest at this time.

- Consider offering stress/anger/grief management workshops at your place of business.
- Understand that employees may not be as productive as they were before the crisis. Consider relaxing work rules or increasing break times to help employees cope with the crisis.
- Identify and communicate priorities to help employees focus on what needs to be done and help guide them back to a routine.
- Allow flexible work schedules to allow employees to take care of personal needs, increased family demands and to support community efforts.
- Be aware of your employee's well-being by preventing overwork and exhaustion.
- Look for and train managers to actively look for changes in behavior. Address behavior changes causing concern and offer assistance.
- Maintain a high level of visibility and let employees know that you are available to talk and provide support.
- Keep employees informed of information concerning the crisis.
- Form a disaster relief committee to help employees and/or the community.