

## Definitions

**Category : School Crisis Plans**

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**A Crisis Plan vs. a Crisis Communications Plan** One of the greatest problems in crisis management today is a lack of consistent definitions and names for the various plans a school needs. **Crisis Plan** Many schools have a document that they call a Crisis Plan. What they actually have is a rudimentary public relations 101 outline that will fail them in a time of crisis because it does not contain the elements needed to communicate honestly and rapidly when adrenaline is flowing and emotions are high. Since 2005 I have been giving away copies of such plans that I have found on the internet, as I admonish schools that such a document is a recipe for disaster. Sadly, this is the same type of document used by Virginia Tech on the day of their shooting. To download a [FREE PDF, click here](#). Note that I strongly suggest you not use this as a model. **Emergency Operations Plans, Incident Command Plans & NIMS Plans** Other schools claim to have a Crisis Plan, which might better be defined as an Emergency Operations Plan, Incident Command Plan or NIMS Plan. Such plans coordinate police, fire, EMS and rescue. Generally these plans have no communications instructions in them as it relates to communicating with the media, your students, your parents, your faculty and staff or other key audiences. Hence, when news crews show up at the scene, responders and administrators are thrown for a loop and caught off guard. Some of these plans make provisions to communicate with students, faculty and parents via text messaging, but they fail to provide all of the communications systems provided by a true crisis communications plan. **Crisis Communications Plan** A Crisis Communications Plan is a step-by-step manual that tells you what to do, what to say and when to say it. All decisions are made on a clear sunny day when you are of sound mind and body -- free of the adrenaline and emotions that exist on the day of a crisis. Communications templates are created for a wide variety of crisis scenarios. When the crisis strikes, communications can happen rapidly because of the fill-in-the-blank format of the templates. The goal is to communicate with critical audiences, such as students, faculty, parents, media and others within one hour of the onset of the crisis. By the top of the second hour, the plan calls for a second round of communications and a full news conference as needed. **Why the Crisis Communications Plan + Plus System Works** The Crisis Communications Plan + Plus system is designed to be so simple that if you can read, you can execute the plan. Do what it says to do on page 1, then turn to page 2. Do what it says to do on page 2, then turn to page 3 and so on. Its sequential instructions make it thorough, yet easy to use. **Why Communications Often Fails During a Crisis** It takes a lot of time to write a news release from scratch, then get it through the approval process of administrators and the legal staff. The Crisis Communications Plan + Plus system works because it uses pre-written templates that have been approved by administrators and the legal staff. The messages have also been tested during an emergency drill. On the day of the crisis you simply fill in the blanks of the who, what, when, where, why and how and you are ready to communicate honestly and in a timely manner. Often timely communications is a matter of life and death. To discuss this more, call me at 985-624-9976 or send an e-mail to: [gerard@braudcommunications.com](mailto:gerard@braudcommunications.com)