



Carriage Trade PR  
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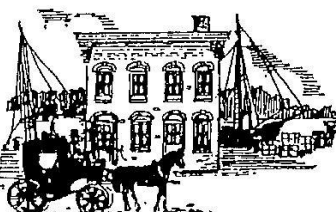
Carriage Trade Public Relations®, Inc.  
REPUTATION CONTENT MARKETING  
Marjorie Young, Founder, CEO & President  
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## WHAT IS CRISIS PR?

A crisis can arise from any number of events that may affect the corporation. In the absence of adequate internal and external communications, your organization may be perceived as inept, at best, and, at worst, criminally negligent.

## 10 TIPS TO PREPARE FOR A CRISIS

1. **List Your Top Crisis** – What is the #1 crisis that COULD happen at your business?
2. **Designate a Crisis PR Team:** Team leader, spokesperson, media contact, social
3. media monitor, writer, expert, security, photographer, HR, attorney, IT and PR firm.
4. **Create a Fact Sheet:** A one page “press-kit” can help the media pull background information quickly for their story. You can post this on your website or include with your holding statement.
5. **Create a Social Media Policy:** Which staff members are authorized to create, maintain, and delete official company accounts?
6. **Create a Media List:** Develop media list and relations and keep it up-to-date.
7. **Build a Positive Reputation:** Implement a proactive PR plan that highlights your
8. business news, awards, care for the community, leadership and expertise in your area.
9. **Prep for Press Conference: Determine location(s);** Written agenda, who will speak, printed statements to hand out; entry/exit is clear for spokesperson; place media at a distance; appropriate clothing (safety hat/vest, business attire?), IT team coordination (live stream, cords taped down), podium or table for media to place or clip mics, secure area to prevent media wandering.
10. **Draft a Holding Statement Ahead of Time:** Brainstorm possible immediate responses. A holding statement should address the basic questions of what happened, who was involved, when it happened, where it happened and why it happened. A short response within the first hour of a crisis is helpful in maintaining your reputation.
11. **Tips for Talking to the Media:** Have legal team review what you plan to say. It’s ok to say you don’t have all of the information yet. Stand tall. Speak with clarity, confidence, concern and control. Make eye contact. Keep answers short and factual. Stay focused. Use main statement at beginning and end to reinforce your point. Reiterate what the company does. There is no such thing as “off the record” and “No comment” is not an acceptable answer. Respond to questions quickly and fairly.



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Provide all information to all media and be sensitive to deadlines. Do not offer speculations. Provide your contact information for follow-up questions.

12. **When a Crisis is Happening:** The clock is ticking. Within the first few minutes, make sure everybody is safe, gather information and create a timeline of events. Determine if a press conference will be held. During the first hour, prepare and issue a statement for the media and social media using your holding statement and timeline.

## **FOUR QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN A CRISIS HAPPENS**

*Should you speak out about the issue?*

1. Will those who matter to you expect you to do something now?
2. Will silence be seen either as indifference or as an affirmation of guilt?
3. Are others talking about you now and shaping the narrative?
4. If you wait, will you lose the ability to influence the outcome?

**If you answered 'yes' to any one of these, you need to respond immediately.**

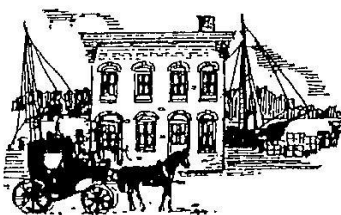
## **HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU HAVE TO RESPOND?**

*PRSA RESEARCH SHOWS • Silence isn't golden. It allows adversaries and the media to define the crisis.*

- **45 MINUTES:** If we can show we care within the first 45 minutes after an incident, we have a chance to control the narrative and loss of trust will be minimal. Post your STATEMENT ASAP.
- **6 HOURS:** If we have not taken control six hours in, we can expect news of the incident and our response or lack thereof to be part of the evening and morning news. That doesn't just mean we have lost control for the day but we have lost control for three days as the news media cover both the initial story and reaction along with the second-day story and reaction.
- **3 DAYS:** If we miss the three-day window, the story will become part of weekly newspapers, magazines, podcasts and other media.
- **2 WEEKS:** If our response is outside the two-week window, the situation becomes dire.

## **Press Conference Prep: 10 tips**

1. Determine ahead of time, two potential locations to hold the press conference.
2. Create a written agenda for the press conference, There should be a defined beginning and end.
3. Set expectations. Let the audience know what the rules are. Is it a 5-minute or 30-minute press conference?
4. Determine who will be the first to speak.
5. Have printed statements available to handout to reporters.
6. Make sure the entry and exit is clear for the spokesperson so they don't have to pass through reporters.
7. Place media at a distance.
8. Determine appropriate clothing for the spokesperson. Safety hat, safety jacket, suit and tie?



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9. IT team: live streaming, extension cords taped down, post online. For example:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZF8tIMMYcl>
10. Provide podium or table so media can clip or place their mics.
11. If PC is held in your building make sure it doesn't allow the journalists to wander through the open office and pick up random information from casual gossiping employees.

### **INITIAL ADVISORY, PRESS RELEASE, MEDIA ADVISORY, SITUATION UPDATES**

- **initial advisory** should be issued within **6 hours** of the incident to acknowledge the situation and position that you are the authority in control.
- **Press release** provides more comprehensive information to the media and public.
- **Media advisory** invites the media to attend a press conference or tour the facility.
- **Situation updates** can be brief statements that may not have enough weight to warrant a press release on their own.

All of the above should be posted in a timely manner on the company website, incident landing page and/or social media pages, along with press conference videos, photos/cutlines, etc.

### **ELEMENTS OF AN INITIAL ADVISORY**

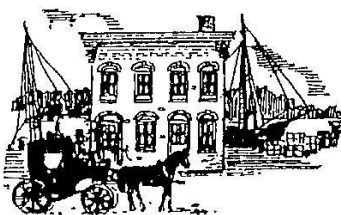
The clock is ticking. This advisory should be issued no more than 6 hours after the incident occurs. It should be more personal in tone than a standard press release.

Initial information should include:

- actions the public should take
- impact of the incident
- actions the response agencies are taking
- actions businesses and industries should take
- a summary of the incident
- overall steps to be taken by the company, government agencies and by citizens to return to normal after the incident.

### **ELEMENTS OF A PRESS RELEASE**

- **For Immediate Release:** This phrase goes at the beginning of your press release unless the press release is to be embargoed until a certain time.
- **A headline:** Bold, concise, compelling, timely
- **A subheading:** if needed, is usually in italics and provides more pertinent information. Include keywords and write as a sentence.
- **Dateline:** Put the city and date of the release at the beginning of the first paragraph. Example: (SAVANNAH, GA—Oct 4, 2023)
- **Lede (lead):** The lede is the first sentence or two of the release, which contains the most essential information about the 'who, what, where, when, why, and how' of the story.
- **Body:** The body contains the rest of the relevant details.
- **Quote:** Quotes from company officials, industry experts and community influencers add authority to the press release.



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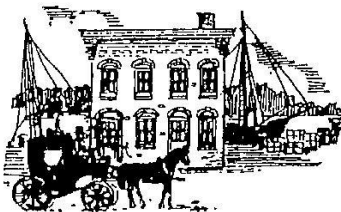
- **Boilerplate:** Boilerplate text is standard text that appears at the end of every release to give the reader more information about the company or organization. Make sure to include a URL to your website and/or social media site(s) and specifics about where future situation updates will be posted.
- **Contact information:** Give your contact information so that reporters can contact you with follow-up questions. Make sure that the person who's listed as a contact is available immediately throughout the day.
- **End-of-release mark:** (Optional) Use – 30 – or ### to indicate that the press release is over. Many writers put these marks before their contact information.

## ELEMENTS OF A MEDIA ADVISORY

- **For Immediate Release:** This phrase goes at the TOP.
- **A headline:** Bold, concise, compelling, timely.
- **A subheading:** if needed, is usually in italics and provides more pertinent information. Include keywords and write as a sentence.
- **Dateline:** Put the city and date of the release at the beginning of the first paragraph. Example: (SAVANNAH, GA—Oct 4, 2023) along with a brief statement about the purpose of the advisory.
- **WHO:** Organization(s) involved at the event
- **WHAT:** Brief description of what type of event – press conference, media tour, etc. and who is invited (Press only?)
- **WHERE:** Location, physical address, pertinent directions and instructions, especially if clearance is necessary.
- **WHEN:** Day, date, time of event.
- **WHY:** Purpose of the event (provide a situation update, allow video gathering, etc.)
- **Boilerplate:** Boilerplate text is standard text that appears at the end of every release to give the reader more information about the company or organization. Make sure to include a URL to your website and/or social media site(s) and specifics about where future situation updates will be posted.
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## COMMUNICATION TRAINERS

- Carriage Trade Public Relations® is the official PR media training partner with Savannah Spill Response Corporation, SSRC. <https://savannahspillresponse.com>
- Marjorie Young is certified in Crisis Communications with the Public Relations Society of America. Owner of a PR firm for over 28 years. Author of Reputation Matrix™. [www.carriagetradepr.com](http://www.carriagetradepr.com) 912-844-9990.
- Carmel Hearn is a FEMA-certified advanced public information officer. With more than 30 years of experience in PR, she served as Emergency Operations Center public information officer for City of Savannah and Chatham County during joint emergency situations and exercises; worked as a producer and writer at The Weather Channel in Atlanta; and was a news and weather anchor at WSAV TV in Savannah. [Carmelhearn.com](http://Carmelhearn.com)



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