

JTC 560: Managing Communications Systems

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# ACCIDENT AT THE BALLPARK



After a sold-out Colorado Rockies baseball game and fireworks show on July 3rd, an escalator failure throws more than 150 people to the bottom of the escalator and injures 30.

# THE PLAN

Develop and implement a crisis communications plan to manage communications from the time of the incident to twelve hours after the event, making sure to strategically use both internal and external communication systems.



## Who

### **Rapid Response Team**

Individuals such as the stadium and Club's communications teams, Club's owners, and leaders who can make decisions quickly and efficiently.

### **Invested and Involved**

First responders such as police, fire, and EMTs, as well as ballpark operations, stadium security, and guest relations staff who are responding and implementing on-the-ground crisis management.

### **Impacted Individuals**

Injured and their families, fans at the stadium, team's players and staff, major media outlets, social media audiences.

## What

### **Key Issues**

Prompt and concise communications to all persons impacted by the situation starting at the time of the incident until the re-opening of the ballpark the following day.

Relay correct information to those still at the stadium, media outlets, and across social media channels to mitigate reputation damage and reassure fans and public that the incident is being addressed.

## When

**July 3rd at 10:20pm**

After a sold-out  
baseball game.

## Where

**Coors Stadium**

Denver, Colorado

## How

### **Twelve-hour Communications Timeline**

We propose to solve the communications issue by determining a timeline of the event, examining existing protocols from other similar institutions and other communications theory to determine a 12-hour response to present-day media concerns and provide clear and concise information to impacted and involved parties, based on need.



# THE PROBLEM

# **A THREE-STORY ESCALATOR FAILED AFTER A SOLD-OUT COLORADO ROCKIES BASEBALL GAME.**

The majority of the 47,000 people in the stadium are exiting the stadium through all available concourses, steps, elevators, and escalators at the time of the incident. The escalator's sudden malfunction threw 150 people to the bottom and injures 30.

The problem is immediate and urgent. The Rapid Response Team must convene and make decisions immediately to ensure that all the important persons are contacted in an appropriate timeframe, with clear information, to mitigate impact on all important persons.



# THE GOALS

## ■ **Develop a Plan**

Determine steps needed to immediately manage the accident scene with Club leadership, ballpark staff, police, fire, officials, and media outlets.

## ■ **Implement a Strategy**

Develop and implement a strategy to communicate with injured fans still hospitalized. Consider HIPAA factors.

## ■ **Define a Protocol**

Define the communications protocol, including identification of Rapid Response Team, spokespersons, expert sources; media relations and crisis plan for immediate response, then for next day information sharing.

## ■ **Reopen the Park**

Develop a plan to communicate the decision to re-open the ballpark the following day: the rationale, safety issues, and communication plan.

# TIMELINE OF EVENTS

00 Minutes

05 Minutes

10 Minutes



## Incident Occurs

**Contact:** Emergency Officials

## First Responders Arrive

**Contact:** Rapid Response Team  
**Consider:** Potential for live social media content on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

## Secure Area and Tend to Injured

**Contact:** Victims' families  
**Consider:** Fan and attendee social media content posted, and possibility for topic to trend on Twitter.

## 15 Minutes

### Contact Leadership

**Contact:** Club's leadership, Metro Baseball Authority, Kone Escalator Company to inform of incident.

## 30 Minutes

### Convene Rapid Response Team

Make decisions and implement pre-existing emergency communications plan. Designate Spokesperson(s).

## 40 Minutes

### Preliminary Communications

Through social media, stadium communications system, and other channels about emergency.

**Contact:** Remaining game attendees in stadium, general social media audience.

**Consider:** Local live news broadcasts already present at stadium.

2 Hours



## First Response Statement

Clear statements with legal and families. Concise and clear social media communications released on major social media platforms for baseball team.

**Contact:** Club's leadership and Metro Baseball Authority to brief about communications plan, victims in hospital and their families, with personalized messages.

4 Hours



## Stadium Cleared

6 Hours



## Press Contact and Release

Press conference for local tv, radio stations and press release for print and online news outlets. Official statements made via major social media platforms.

**Consider:** Potential to go viral on social media.

12 Hours

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**Final Decision**

Communicate final decision to reopen stadium for tonight's game with announcements on social media and via press release.



# THE ANALYSIS

**“It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you’ll do things differently.” – Warren Buffett, Chairman and CEO, Berkshire Hathaway**

# COMMUNICATION ISSUES



## Planning

- Proactive participation, advance planning with local partners

## Response Team Roles

- Facilities, operations, IT, legal, medical, Public Relations

## Managing Media

- Honesty, openness and clarity

# CRISIS MODEL

- Document, Prepare, and Distribute Plan
- Appoint Rapid Response Team
- Define Roles
- Determine Spokespeople
- Media Train
- Media Plan for Information Release
- Review and Update Crisis Communications Plan



# TEAM ROLES

## Directors

- Provide overall direction
- Establish Chain of Command
- Make decisions (cancellation) and official requests to team and other divisions (emergency personnel)

## Communications

- Maintain communication log with procedures, contacts, information
- Determine talking points for spokespeople
- Coordinate and notify Public Info Officers

## Public Information Officer

- Person who speaks to the public/media, responsible for crafting messages for review and approval

## Media Relations

- Provide notification plan for media
- Coordinate release of official info through spokespeople, news, socials
- Monitor coverage and online

# AHEAD OF THE EMERGENCY



## **Make list of who can fill roles**

Communications Commander, Public Information Officer, Liaison, Listener/Monitor, Scribe



## **Establish contact lists**

Anticipated sources, including communications personnel, hospitals, police stations, other key stakeholders



## **Established comms avenues**

Social Media: FB, IG, Twitter, etc.  
News: TV, newspaper, radio



## **Run regular drills**

Practice; place people in different roles

# ACTIONS NEEDED IN EVERY EMERGENCY

## ■ Organize Response

Identify/contact for essential communication roles

## ■ Determine Scale of Emergency

**Major emergency:** completely interrupts ordinary course of business for extended period of time

**Critical incident:** could get worse and *might* interrupt other business

**Limited emergency:** minor business interruption

## ■ Scale Your Response

Ensure sufficient comms resources in place (all hands; on alert; just a few)

## ■ Establish SOCO

What is the key message?

Why is it important to convey it?

Who needs to hear it?

What facts support it?

Who are the spokespersons?

# COMMUNICATING WITH FANS, MEDIA, AND INJURED PARTIES



- Social media platforms
- TV/newspapers/radio
- Direct contact

CONSISTENCY \* HONESTY \* CLARITY \* COMPASSION

# AFTER-CRISIS ANALYSIS



**How did protocols fit into reality?**

- What worked?
- What didn't?



**Does anything need to be changed?**

- Which protocols can be bolstered?
- Does anything need to be adjusted? Added? Eliminated?

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# REPUTATION

## Maintenance / Repair

**01**

### **Reach out to injured parties**

Show empathy; send representative to hospital; Assist parties when feasible

**02**

### **Reassure public of stadium safety**

Be honest, be accurate; Don't make promises you can't keep; Provide updates

**03**

### **Admit mistakes**

Admit mistakes; Communicate intended changes; Follow through