50 Questions You Need To Ask
When Preparing Crisis Coverage

Planning
1. Is a crisis coverage plan needed for this station in this market?
2. Should an existing plan be updated?
3. Are there clear lines of emergency authority in the station and newsroom?
4. Has a clear plan been circulated in writing and discussed with employees?
5. Are any crisis coverage procedures worth rehearsing?
6. What are the first steps expected in a crisis coverage situation?
7. What is next in planning for extended coverage?
8. Should supervisors be placed in the field in hazardous situations?
9. Are journalistic policies clear for hostage situations, acts of violence, terrorism, health emergencies and other crisis?

Communications
10. Is the station’s phone system up to a crisis situation?
11. Are there enough cell phones for reporters, crews and managers?
12. Can all senior managers and personnel be reached at all times?
13. If phone systems go down, what is the option?
14. What role could two-way radios or quick-buy “radio store” equipment play?
15. Can scanner information be updated to include special operations channels for police, fire and EMS, civil defense, military and health?
16. Are new crisis coverage microwave and satellite truck field surveys needed? What about maps of cell towers for cellular live units?

Special Equipment/Computers
17. Where can specialized road vehicles be rented in an emergency?
18. Where can specialized clothing and gear be quickly obtained to cope with hazardous materials or other special needs?
19. What is the station’s access to helicopters, airplanes and boats?
20. What are the options if the newsroom and/or master control computers go out?
21. Should the station arrange for off-premises computer backup for all computers including news, routing, sales and personnel?
22. Are there up-to-date building directories, and crisscross phone directories and area maps for communities in the market?
Health/Hospitals/Medical
23. Do the strongest lines of communications exist with area hospitals? Would they cooperate with information and allow broadcasting from their facility if necessary?
24. Does the station have access to health professionals who can contribute to broadcasts in health and medical emergencies?
25. Do you have a plan and medical personnel to provide stress management to the staff, or immunization and other medical help that may not be available in a crisis?

Station
26. How quickly can the station mobilize and actually get on the air?
27. Should plans for station evacuation routes and procedures, and alternative power and transmission be updated?
28. Should there arrangements for sleeping and feeding staff members and guests at the station, or at hotels and restaurants near the station, if dictated by the crisis?
29. Is an alternative newsroom site possible if the station was no longer accessible?
30. How are staffers notified in an emergency? What is a backup plan?
31. Is broadcasting possible if the normal ability to transmit is lost?
33. Should there be practical meetings with other stations on pooling of coverage, resources and possible joint broadcasting in a severe local or national crisis?
34. What is the plan if the network can no longer feed the station?

Personnel/Security
35. Are employee security identification cards adequate, with ID photos?
36. Is more station and newsroom security personnel needed 24/7?
37. Should gear be sent home with crews (including live units, cameras, editing capability)?
38. Should the station create a crisis task force cutting across all station functions?
39. Is the staff address list up to date with home and cell phone numbers and addresses and those with four-wheel drive vehicles or other equipment that may be helpful in bad weather?
40. Are the arrangements clear about contacting people on days off and vacations?
41. What is the plan for supplying and feeding remote crews and relieving them, and for creating a system of platoon staffing?
42. Should non-newsroom station personnel be used to augment the newsroom staff in crisis situations?
Contacts
43. What police, fire and EMS phone numbers and scanner frequencies are needed beyond the normal, everyday ones?
44. What additional federal law enforcement contacts are needed?
45. How can the station improve contact with local government command centers, health officials and National Guard officials?
46. Are hurricane, flooding, snow, and hot weather contacts and resources updated?
47. Are traffic report arrangements adequate in a crisis and what is the backup?
48. Can the station improve plane crash, train crash, bus crash coverage preparedness?
49. Are local university, foundation or government resources available in providing experts on health, geography, language, law, or other appropriate subjects?
50. What can we learn from the crisis experiences of Oklahoma City and New York City television stations, and KJBR-TV in Duluth, MN, which burned down? How about flooded stations in Houston?

This information is provided to you by
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For other suggestions, visit the web sites of the following organizations: Columbia Journalism Review (www.cjr.org), The Poynter Institute (www.poynter.org), or NewsLab (www.newslab.org).
Radio Television Digital News Foundation
Crisis Coverage Phone List

These are telephone numbers to be used in crisis coverage situations.
(customize for local conditions and needs)

Station
Station Manager Emergency # _______________________________
News Director Emergency # _________________________________
Chief Engineer Emergency # _________________________________
Station Crisis Team (1) (manager/desk)___________________________
Station Crisis Team (2) (producer)_______________________________
Station Crisis Team (3) (anchor)_______________________________
Station Crisis Team (4) (reporter)_______________________________
Station Crisis Team (5) (photographer)___________________________
Station Crisis Team (6) (editor)_______________________________
Station Crisis Team (7) (Chyron/PA)___________________________
Station Crisis Team (8) (ENG/master)___________________________

Crisis Only Reporter-Producer-Guest Line ___________________________
Microwave Phone # ___________________________
Satellite Truck Phone # ___________________________
IFB # ___________________________
IFB # ___________________________
Affiliate Network Operations Center # ___________________________
Affiliate Network News Emergency # ___________________________

Officials
Local Government Command Center ___________________________
Chief Executive Cell Phone ___________________________
Police Special Operations ___________________________
Police Chief ___________________________
Fire/Rescue Task Force ___________________________
Fire Chief ___________________________
EMS ___________________________
HazMat Contact ___________________________
FBI Field Office ___________________________
Local National Guard ___________________________
Harbor Patrol ___________________________
Coast Guard ___________________________
FAA Police/Airport ___________________________
Health/Medical/Relief
Crisis Contact Hospital (1) ___________________________
Crisis Contact Hospital (2) ___________________________
Crisis Contact Hospital (3) ___________________________
Local Health Director ___________________________
Local Red Cross ___________________________
Local Salvation Army ___________________________
Center For Disease Control (Atlanta) ___________________________
Station Medical Provider ___________________________
Station Stress Management Provider ___________________________

Additional Sources
Airport Control Tower ___________________________
Airport Police ___________________________
Hurricane Center ___________________________
Flood Control ___________________________
Army Corps of Engineers (flood) ___________________________
Snow Emergency Center ___________________________
Local Mass Transit Contact ___________________________
Amtrak Contact ___________________________
Greyhound/Trailways Contact ___________________________
Metro Traffic/Shadow Traffic ___________________________
Government Traffic Official ___________________________
University Expert Contact (1) ___________________________
University Expert Contact (2) ___________________________
Government Expert Contact ___________________________
Foundation Expert Contact ___________________________

Vehicles
Automobile/Truck Rental ___________________________
Boat Rental ___________________________
Boat Captains for Hire ___________________________
Specialized Vehicle Rental ___________________________
Drivers for Hire ___________________________
Helicopter/Airplane Rental ___________________________
Pilots for Hire ___________________________

Communications/Computers/Safety Equipment
Additional Cell Phones ___________________________
Emergency 2-Way Radio Repair ___________________________
Radio Equipment Store ___________________________
Handheld Devices (Reading Wires) ___________________________
Portable Microwave Dish Source ___________________________
Portable Generators ___________________________
Safety Equipment Rental ______________________________________
Safety Clothing Source _____________________________________
Computer Troubleshooter _____________________________________
Laptop Rental ______________________________________________
Word Processor or Typewriter Source ___________________________
Phone/Cell Phone Troubleshooters _____________________________

Food/Lodging
Station/Hotel (1) __________________________________________
Station/Hotel (2) __________________________________________
Station/Restaurant (1) _______________________________________  
Station/Caterer _____________________________________________
Food Delivery Service ________________________________________

Crisis Partners/Contacts
TV News Director ____________________________________________
TV News Operations __________________________________________
Radio News Director or Station Manager __________________________
Public Broadcasting Station Manager ____________________________
Newspaper Editor ____________________________________________

Offsite Broadcasting
Off-Site Broadcasting Facility Contact __________________________
Computer Service ____________________________________________
Construction Assistance ______________________________________
Electrician Service __________________________________________
Furniture Rental _____________________________________________
Phone Company Expediter ____________________________________
Power ______________________________________________________

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