



School Safety and Security

April 2019

Crisis Communication

One of the most important aspects of managing a crisis is proactive communication. Having a plan in place ahead of time is critical to reducing anxiety for students, parents, faculty and staff.

When a crisis occurs, it's important to accurately communicate as quickly as possible. Steps taken in the first 30 minutes of a crisis will help determine public perceptions of how the situation was handled.

Specific recommendations for consideration include:

- Identify the appropriate person to handle the situation and a back-up in their absence. For example, the school principal or designee should take charge of the situation, implementing the crisis plan.
- Understand the situation and identify the risks.
- Consider the options and act to ensure the health and safety of students and staff and protection of property.
- Communicate with faculty and staff.
- Keep the news media informed; consider a specific media staging area to keep media out of harm's way and schedule regular briefings for updates, as needed.
- Update students periodically in their classrooms. Avoid gathering large groups in one location.
- Send the central office regular updates that include the following:
 - Brief description of crisis.
 - Actions completed.
 - Expectations for the next two hours.
 - Resource needs.
- Inform parents by text alerts and automated phone calls when immediate notification is necessary. Tell them where they can go to meet their children, if necessary. This may prevent them from converging on the school, further adding to a confusing environment or potentially putting themselves in danger. If appropriate, e-mail could also be used to inform parents quickly.
- Send a letter home with students at the end of the day, explaining what occurred and what has been done about it.
- Keep the community informed. To reduce fears and demonstrate competence in handling the situation, get accurate, consistent, information out through the news media and other methods such as your key communicators group.



For more information on the bulletin topic, please contact the MEMA Public Information Officer Susan Faloon at susan.faloon@maine.gov