

PAS 200:2011

Crisis management –
Guidance and good practice



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Foreword

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Use of this document

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Any user claiming compliance with this PAS is expected to be able to justify any course of action that deviates from its recommendations.

It has been assumed in the preparation of this PAS that the execution of its provisions will be entrusted to appropriately qualified and experienced people, for whose use it has been produced.

Presentational conventions

The word "should" is used to express the recommendations of this standard, given in clearly labelled "Recommendations" boxes throughout the text (and conveniently summarized in Annex A). The "Recommendations" boxes (and Annex A) constitute the normative elements of this PAS.

All other elements of this standard are normative. Non-boxed elements text give the background to and justification for the recommendations, with "Information Boxes" used to contain particular arguments or points of detail.

The word "may" is used in the text to express permissibility (e.g. as an alternative to a primary recommendation). The word "can" is used to express possibility (e.g. a consequence of an action or an event).

Contractual and legal considerations

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

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Introduction

This PAS is aimed primarily at top managers with strategic responsibilities who have a role in shaping, directing and developing the crisis management capability of their organization. It will give them the means to:

- identify and understand the issues and challenges of crisis management from a strategic perspective;
- evaluate their implications for their organization;
- take practical steps to improve their organization's crisis management capability.

However, the PAS will also be useful to those whose roles are more concerned with the implementation, maintenance and testing of the procedures associated with that capability, who operate under the direction of, and within policy guidelines decided by, top managers.

It is the basic tenet of this PAS that organizations can be made:

- a) more aware of the potential for, and the general nature of, crises;
- b) better able to withstand their effects;
- c) better able to recover from those effects;
- d) better able to identify useful lessons and learn from them.

This PAS is a practical document, and references are made to theoretical models and research literature only when they add underpinning value and provide explanation or examples. It reflects the view that distinctions should be made between crisis management and other management disciplines, even though there will be overlaps, similarities and some differences that may only be questions of temporary emphasis, priority or urgency. These relationships are examined, to give readers an overview of the way crisis management activities relate to other management activities and processes.

Terminology matters because it is the means by which we express and develop concepts. Readers will find the terms "incident" and "crisis" defined to mean different things in different contexts, and that reflects different underlying contexts, ideas and worldviews held by their authors. Consequently, some readers may feel this PAS is at odds with the implicit or explicit positions set out in other documents. Progress necessarily introduces

friction and departure from previous approaches, but where this is the case the intent is to progress the thinking and practice relating to crisis management, and to clarify its relationships, both practical and conceptual, with other significant management and resilience disciplines, perhaps most notably that of business continuity.

The definition of a crisis as an inherently abnormal, unstable and complex situation that represents a threat to the strategic objectives, reputation or existence of an organization is fundamental to all that follows in this document. Crises present organizations with complex and difficult challenges that may have profound and far-reaching consequences, sometimes irrespective of how successfully they are seen to be managed. These consequences can be very damaging, especially where it is perceived that the organization failed to prepare for, manage or recover from a crisis. There is a risk of significant damage to reputation, and possibly of the collapse of the business and its operations. In short, crises are of potentially existential significance to an organization.

BS 25999 defines an incident as follows: "[a] situation that might be, or could lead to, a business disruption, loss, emergency or crisis." This is entirely coherent with this PAS: crises may emerge from strategic shocks such as the catastrophic loss of a production facility involving severe loss of life; equally, they can arise from an initially operational-scale incident that cascades and escalates into an event of profound strategic significance for the organization, a crisis.

Crises may emerge as a result of inadequately managed incidents that are allowed to escalate in scale, duration and impact. They may also be the product of multiple incidents that present new types and compound levels of risk. For all of these, crisis management is essentially and primarily a strategic function.

Business continuity is a critical management function in mitigating such cascading impacts, potentially preventing their escalation into crises. Business continuity does not subsume crisis management, nor is it subordinate to crisis management; they are complementary activities when considered in the broader corporate context. Business continuity management cannot guarantee that all potential crises are intercepted, and a crisis management capability in

an organization that had failed to sufficiently invest and give strategic leadership to its business continuity arrangements would be incoherent and leave the organization vulnerable to crises emerging from weakly managed breaks in the continuity of operations.

So, situations may require both types of response (incident and crisis management) to run in parallel, looking after their respective concerns but with very close coordination to ensure that information and understanding are shared, aims and objectives are in harmony, decisions are strategically coherent and the overall response is seamless and integrated. Although the management of crises is seen as an inherently strategic challenge, it should also be remembered that some of the actions it requires will be carried out by staff at other managerial and operational levels.

Crises may also start without a recognizable incident. These are sometimes called “smouldering”, “long-wave” or “rising tide” crises. They are discussed in Information Box 1 in Clause 3.

In sum, crises are not synonymous with incidents, and it is argued that their management presents special challenges that require different approaches. The

relationship between incident and crisis management is further discussed in Clause 3.

An organization’s crisis management capability needs to be developed within the unique context of that organization and will be sensitively dependent on it. The requirements of a crisis management capability are discussed in Information Box 3 in Clause 4. It should be developed and maintained alongside all the other capabilities the organization needs to meet its objectives.

The capability to manage crises should not be seen as something that can simply be developed as and when needed. It requires a systematic approach that creates structures and processes, trains people to work within them and is evaluated and developed in a continuous, purposeful and rigorous way. In developing the capability there will be many opportunities for synergy with ordinary business management processes and business continuity arrangements. The development of a crisis management capability should be viewed as a mainstream activity and one that is proportionate to an organization’s size and capacity. Information Box 2 in Clause 3 identifies ways in which it adds value to an organization.



However, any solution should be adopted only after careful consideration of the extent to which it is appropriate to the size, environment, culture, objectives and existing structures of the organization. With that in mind, this PAS provides general recommendations that are accepted as having widespread validity and that constitute good practice, with guidance as to how to implement them in organizations.

The document is structured as follows (see below).

Each clause discusses key themes consistent with the scope of this PAS. Information boxes are used when it is helpful to expand or develop a point or a concept. Recommendations are given in separate boxes at appropriate points in the text and are summarized in a single list in Annex A.



Clause	Description
Clause 3	Describes the general and observable nature of crises, their origin and their potential impacts. Identifies how organizations may develop systemic vulnerabilities. Makes recommendations as to how to develop greater resilience. Identifies the general benefits that should accrue from developing a crisis management capability.
Clause 4	Discusses the nature of capability in general terms. Gives practical advice on how to develop it. Describes the structures and processes that are needed. Identifies how information management systems may support decision-makers.
Clause 5	Gives summary information about crisis management plans. Suggests treating plans as evolving documents that are subject to continuous evaluation and review. Addresses the key issues of competences in crisis management, leadership and decision-making.
Clause 6	Discusses internal and stakeholder communications, but also includes outline guidance on preparing to communicate with the media and the general public.
Clause 7	Describes techniques and processes for evaluating the organization's preparedness and capability.

1 Scope

This PAS is written for a strategic audience and is a general guide to established good practice. It provides guidance on crisis management that will help top managers in an organization to implement and develop a crisis management capability. It will be of benefit to any organization regardless of location, size, type, industry or sector.



2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this PAS, the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1 business continuity

capability of the organization to plan for and respond to incidents and business disruptions, in order to continue business operations at an acceptable predefined level

[BS 25999-1:2006, *Business continuity management – Code of practice*, and BS 25999-2:2007, *Business continuity management – Specification*]

2.2 business continuity management (BCM)

holistic management process that identifies potential threats to an organization and the impacts those threats, when realized, might cause, and which provides a framework for building organizational resilience with the capability for safeguarding the interests of its key stakeholders, reputation, brand and value-creating activities

[BS 25999-1:2006, *Business continuity management – Code of practice*, and BS 25999-2:2007, *Business continuity management – Specification*]

2.3 common recognized information picture (CRIP)

statement of shared situational awareness and understanding, which is briefed to crisis decision-makers and used as the accepted basis for auditable and defensible decisions

2.4 context

environment (in the broadest sense of the word) within which the organization seeks to achieve its objectives

[BS 31100:2008, *Risk management – Code of practice (modified)*]

2.5 crisis

inherently abnormal, unstable and complex situation that represents a threat to the strategic objectives, reputation or existence of an organization

2.6 crisis-aware organization

forward-thinking organization that has procedures and processes designed to identify emerging crises and

deal with them as early as possible, whilst continuously assessing its resilience and vulnerabilities

2.7 exercise

planned rehearsal of a possible incident designed to evaluate an organization's capability to manage that incident and to provide an opportunity to improve the organization's future responses and enhance the relevant competences of those involved

[HM Government. *Emergency response and recovery*. 3rd ed. 2010]

2.8 horizon scanning

systematic examination of potential threats, opportunities and future developments, which may have the potential to create new risks or change the character of risks already identified

2.9 incident

situation that might be, or could lead to, a business disruption, loss, emergency or crisis

2.10 invocation

act of declaring that an organization's response plans and/or capabilities (whether crisis management, incident management, business continuity management, emergency management or other, or a combination of any of these) are to be put into effect

2.11 issues management

anticipation and assessment of trends and potential changes in an organization's business environment, which entail forward planning to address opportunities and threats, and responding rapidly to issues that might threaten its reputation or relationships with stakeholders

2.12 situational awareness

process of perceiving, comprehending, interpreting and evaluating what is happening in a crisis, combined with the ability to identify and model foreseeable future developments

2.13 top management

person or group of people directing and controlling an organization at the highest level

3 Understanding crises

3.1 What is a crisis?

For the purposes of this PAS, a crisis is defined as: an inherently abnormal, unstable and complex situation that represents a threat to the strategic objectives, reputation or existence of an organization.

Clearly, this captures a number of very important elements of crises, including the abnormal, the extreme and the extraordinary. It serves to distinguish a crisis from an incident by scale, suggesting that crises are more difficult to manage, their consequences more profound and the required responses potentially extraordinary.

This is generally true, but it is possible to achieve a more refined understanding by introducing two dimensions. These are:

- a) the degree of "structure" involved;
- b) the degree of complexity involved.

3.2 The relationship between incidents and crises: structure and complexity

Incidents are said to have "structure" because they are produced by identifiable and assessable risks and present themselves in fairly predictable ways.

As with the majority of risks that concern business continuity management (BCM) planning, even the most challenging and serious incidents generally lend themselves to pre-prepared responses. In these cases, the role of strategic management is most likely to be one of ensuring that the BCM plan is working, that it is properly resourced and that it continues to support the organization's objectives, which may have changed since the onset of the incident.

Crises, on the other hand, are often produced by risks that had not been identified, or at least not identified with the scale and intensity they presented.

Crises may also be the product of an unforeseen combination of interdependent risks. They develop in unpredictable ways, and the response usually requires genuinely creative, as opposed to pre-prepared, solutions.

Indeed, it is argued that pre-prepared solutions (of the sort designed to deal with more predictable and structured incidents) are unlikely to work in complex

and ill-structured crises. They may, in fact, be counterproductive. As such, crisis management needs to be able to deal with issues that may not be manageable within BCM procedures, however well developed these may be.

The roles of strategic management are amplified during a crisis. They are likely to include direct intervention and decisive strategic leadership along lines that cannot be preconceived. They may even include strategic repositioning of the organization as a whole, and for that reason crisis management is the domain of top management.

Essentially, top managers champion, endorse and support BCM, but they tend to implement, lead and direct crisis management.

Recommendations regarding 3.1 and 3.2

1. The essential distinctions between BCM and crisis management, as described in this PAS, should be recognized.
2. Plans, protocols and procedures drawn up under the auspices of BCM and crisis management should reflect these distinctions and allow for responses of the right sort(s) to be invoked.
3. The development and maintenance of crisis management capability should be included in the organization's governance and strategy review processes.
4. Procedures developed should allow for crisis management and BCM responses to be operating at the same time in a coherent, integrated and complementary way.

3.3 The general characteristics of crises

Crises are associated with highly complex problems, the full implications and nature of which may be unclear at the time. Each possible solution may have severe consequences of one form or another.

Managers may have to choose the "least bad" solution and may have to resolve (or at least recognize and accept) fundamental strategic dilemmas. These might mean that every choice comes with a penalty of some sort and there is no ideal solution.

Crises may create situations that threaten the fundamental norms, self-image or values of an organization. In such cases, leadership is an important force in stabilizing the situation for the organization's staff, its customers and its reputation.

Crises place exceptional demands on managers and their support teams, at a time when they may already be under pressure of time and intense scrutiny. Managers should ensure that their planning takes into account the need to sustain a response at high levels of intensity. They should also anticipate the needs of staff who may be working at extraordinary levels of activity and, possibly, dealing with distressing issues.

It is worth noting that health and safety regulations and the duty of care are not affected by incidents or crises. They apply at all times.

Crises often force organizations to review, transform or defend their choices, policies, culture and strategies, possibly under public and media scrutiny. However, they can bring new opportunities and benefits to an organization if they are handled successfully.

Even if the organization is perceived to be at fault or blameworthy, the demonstration of virtue, integrity and compassion can offset, to some extent, the damage to its reputation and standing. A well-managed crisis can demonstrate the positive qualities of an organization and enhance its general reputation.

Denial, fear and/or complacency on the part of the top management will increase the organization's vulnerability, hamper its response and degrade its capacity to recover from a crisis. If it is a very serious crisis, the organization cannot be expected to emerge from it in the same shape, however successfully it is resolved.

False perceptions, rumours and misreporting should be expected and confronted, without detracting from the strategic direction, priorities and purpose of the response.

Recovery may present opportunities to regenerate the organization and bring forward long-term development plans. Conversely, it might mean ceasing to do certain types of business.

The implications of this are clear. Recovery:

- a) should start as early as possible;
- b) should have a strategic direction from the outset;
- c) actually creates strategic opportunities.

Crises do not always involve direct threats to life, property or assets. However, they almost always challenge an organization's reputation and brand, even if it is only through the need to demonstrate resilience and effective leadership.

Crises can become highly politicized and subject to intense public and media scrutiny. This extends and complicates the environment that those managing the crisis are trying to understand, influence and shape.

Successful crisis management sometimes involves stepping outside the normal "rules" of an organization or its business environment. Indeed, crises often invalidate taken-for-granted expectations on the part of stakeholders and the wider community.

An organization's performance in crisis management, and its apparent preparedness, may expose its top management to public scrutiny. The consequences, in personal, professional and organizational terms, could be significant.

Thus, crises can be so extraordinarily demanding that no assumptions should be made about the ability of staff (of any seniority, grade or experience) to manage them and to steer the organization out of them. Complacency, lack of preparation and wishful thinking almost certainly guarantee failure.

Recommendations regarding 3.3

5. The challenges of crisis management make the selection, training and development of the staff who will run and support the activity a vital consideration. The importance of this should be recognized, and the processes of selection, training and development should be managed carefully.
6. No assumptions should be made about the fitness of any individuals for crisis management roles, irrespective of their seniority in the organization. Part of the planning process may involve identifying individuals outside of the usual management chain who have skills that could aid the crisis management process, along with procedures for facilitating their inclusion when an event occurs.
7. Roles, responsibilities and performance indicators for those involved in developing, managing and implementing crisis management capability should be included in job descriptions, performance assessments and training plans.

3.4 Understanding the potential origins of crises

The potential origins of crises are diverse and impossible to categorize fully, but may include the following:

- a) Those externally generated by changes in the business, political or social environment within which the organization operates. An organization could be surprised and compromised by such changes.
- b) Those stemming from poorly managed incidents and business fluctuations, which are allowed to escalate to the point where they create a genuine crisis. This may include instances of poor or mismanaged communication with customers and stakeholders.
- c) Those originating from the failure (perceived or actual) to deliver products or services that meet the required standards of quality or safety.
- d) Those deriving from breaches (perceived or actual) of standards of probity, ethics or corporate responsibility. These might be associated with well-intentioned “whistle-blowing”, malice, misconduct or simple negligence. Whatever the organization’s actual culpability, the result can be

serious damage to its brand, reputation and image.

- e) Those incubated within the organization, perhaps through a combination of inadequate supervision, under-resourcing, lack of training or poor decision-making over a period of time. It is possible that a particular trigger event will escalate an incident to crisis proportions because it exposes a background of managerial and operational failures. Crisis incubation and latent failures are discussed in 3.7.
- f) Those following disruptions to supply chains, which threaten an organization’s ability to function and deliver its products.

It is possible that two or more of these causes can combine in producing a crisis.

3.5 “Sudden” and “smouldering” crises

It is also useful to think of crises in terms of the generalized distinction between those that present themselves more or less immediately and (as far as the obvious signs are concerned) dramatically, and those that present themselves as a gradual build-up of evidence over time. The different characteristics and

Information Box 1 – “Sudden” and “smouldering” crises

Sudden crises

These are characterized by their immediate onset. They tend to be unanticipated and escalate very quickly, often as result of a severe triggering event or incident that may be out of the organization’s control. The immediate cause may be addressed quickly, but the lingering consequences (including enquiries and legal action) may require continued strategic response for an extended period.

An important implication for top managers is that at least some elements of the crisis will be obvious to all, and so it may be relatively easy to invoke a response and mobilize (at least in the immediate term) the resources needed to manage the consequences.

Smouldering crises

These are also known as “creeping”, “slow-burn”, “long-wave” or “rising tide” crises. Whatever the preferred choice of name, their common feature is that impact on the organization and its stakeholders grows, sometimes undetected, over a period of time, whilst indicators of potential crisis are possibly missed, denied, ignored or misunderstood.

The key challenge for top managers is to recognize that their organization is threatened, and then to find support for the implementation of a proactive response before the challenge becomes a full-scale crisis.

Conclusion

It is generally accepted in the literature of crisis management that most crises are of the smouldering type. This makes a good case for developing a horizon-scanning facility, so that potential and emerging threats may be identified, assessed and mitigated as early as possible. This requires a culture of continuous communication about the possible outcome of events and changes in the business environment. Horizon scanning is discussed in Clause 4.

challenges of the two types are discussed in **Information Box 1**.

3.6 How organizations can become vulnerable to crises

Research into this issue has crystallized a number of ideas that will help top managers understand why and how an apparently effective organization can become vulnerable to a crisis, and potentially unable to manage it effectively.

The basic approach put forward in this PAS is to understand the organization as a system with social and technical dimensions that are complex and interdependent. Neither works in complete isolation from the other, and by studying the way they interact we can achieve a better understanding of the way the organization works.

When trying to understand why part of an organization failed, it pays to be wary of simplistic explanations – such as those which conveniently identify a culprit, a single process failure, a simple act of negligence or the like. Any failure within an organization is almost certain to involve a web of related factors, both social and technical. It requires the top manager to recognize the following:

- a) There are likely to be faults in the organization, its operations and its management that underlie the failure, and the failure itself is only a visible symptom of these faults.
- b) Finding and blaming a culprit, or perhaps changing the failed element of the business process, may be superficially satisfying. It provides a ready answer and does not expose the organization or its managers to deeper scrutiny. However, it may not address the root cause, which leaves the real problems still in place and the systemic vulnerability intact.
- c) A crisis may expose instances or legacies of bad decision-making and a general lack of preparedness to deal with the stresses and dislocation they tend to cause. Opportunities for learning may be lost if enquiries into the crisis focus on technical issues or individual errors.

3.7 How crises incubate within organizations

Crisis can be incubated within organizations by the steady accumulation of faults and bad practice. These may either cause a crisis or compromise the organization's ability to deal with one that is imposed

upon it. They are sometimes called "latent errors", because they lie dormant until a triggering event exposes them. Causes may include the following:

- a) Gradual and incremental slippages in quality or safety standards that go unchecked and become accepted as a normal way of working.
- b) Convenient, but unofficial and suboptimal, "workaround" strategies that become the normal routine. Overcomplicated processes, unrealistic schedules, chronic personnel shortages, undertrained staff and lax supervision all contribute to this.
- c) Flaws in supervision and process monitoring, which promote an expectation of "getting away with" undesirable behaviours or being able to survive minor failures without reporting them.
- d) Blame cultures that encourage cover-ups and the lack of a shared sense of mission and purpose, which generate a defensive (if not actually hostile) "them and us" attitude between staff and management.
- e) Poor training and development of staff and managers, or incremental loss of skills and knowledge.

False or complacent assumptions about an organization may mask the signals that would indicate a systemic vulnerability. Organizations tend to promote a set of core beliefs, values and behavioural norms. It can be difficult to expose issues that seem to challenge this worldview and its underlying assumptions about the organization and its capabilities. Analysis of an organization's vulnerabilities may expose staff to a level of scrutiny that might be considered intimidating and invasive, but it is essential.

It is possible that the main impulse after a crisis may be to protect reputations, fend off criticism and defend livelihoods. These tendencies corrupt the process of identifying and applying lessons and militate against true learning.

Managers should resist the temptation to ascribe a crisis to a single cause. Instead, it should be seen as a symptom of a systemic vulnerability in the organization.

3.8 Achieving higher levels of resilience

Much research has focused on how certain types of organizations are able to operate in very volatile conditions and environments but at the same time demonstrate a very low accident or failure rate. Such organizations are often described as having high reliability. This implies that they are effective in avoiding or mitigating crises.

The key features of such organizations can be summarized as follows:

- a) They tend to be highly alert to the possibility of failure, and display no complacency about their ability to avoid crises. When they do occur, failures are examined rigorously. Lessons are identified and applied immediately.
- b) The complexities of, and inherent risks within, their systems, their business and their environment are recognized and reflected in all strategies, planning and operations.
- c) Top managers keep themselves acutely aware of the practical realities of “frontline” operations.

Recommendations regarding 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8

- 8. Due note should be taken of the diverse potential origins of crises, including the tendency for organizations to incubate them by generating systemic vulnerabilities.
- 9. A systems perspective should be used to investigate the origins, development and impacts of potential or actual crises.
- 10. The temptation to ascribe a crisis to a single causative agent should be resisted. Rather, the crisis should be viewed as a symptom of a systemic weakness in the organization, and that should be made the object of the investigation.
- 11. Horizon scanning and internal systems-based analysis disciplines should be implemented.
- 12. Consideration should be given to the ways in which crisis vulnerabilities accumulate in a system.
- 13. Assumptions about the organization’s resilience should be challenged, and identified vulnerabilities that present unacceptable risks should be addressed. Dialogue throughout the organization should be encouraged, so that vulnerabilities that appear in different parts of it can be cross-analyzed and addressed.
- 14. Building resilience and mitigating vulnerability should be regarded as an aspect of normal business under strategic direction, not simply focus on the response to crisis.
- 15. Rigorous standards and objectivity should be set when it comes to identifying the lessons from a crisis or a near miss. Neither individual nor corporate reputation should stand in the way of the responsibility to achieve genuine learning and enhanced resilience. Consideration should be given to using appropriate external facilitators for these processes.

- d) A coherent sense of shared purpose pervades such organizations, and all parts of the organization share information freely and proactively in a conscious attempt to promote resilience.
- e) They show a deliberate and explicit commitment to being resilient. This is manifested in very high standards of training and an emphasis on flexible and creative problem-solving at all levels.
- f) They defer readily to expertise wherever it exists, irrespective of the formal hierarchy of management. Hierarchies of control can therefore be flattened or restored quickly. This gives organizations the ability to switch between normal and crisis modes seamlessly. Junior managers and operators are empowered (and expected) to act appropriately and independently when there is any threat of a crisis.

Anything that shifts an organization’s culture in the direction of these attributes should have a beneficial impact on its vulnerability to crises and its ability to respond and recover from them.

3.9 Possible barriers to success

Barriers to success in achieving higher levels of resilience might include the following:

- a) Rigid and inflexible core beliefs, values and assumptions. It can be difficult to challenge such norms if the organizational culture does not encourage or reward creative dissent or individual initiative.
- b) Misguided rationalizations or denial-driven beliefs regarding crises. These might include scepticism about the likelihood or significance of crises, uncertainty about individual responsibilities in respect of them and complacency about the ability to deal with them.
- c) Failure to identify and apply lessons from crises that have affected the organization or other organizations.
- d) An organizational culture wherein admitting mistakes, uncovering latent failures or critically analysing systems or management action is equated with disloyalty or disruptive behaviour.
- e) Distraction by finding and blaming scapegoats rather than making systemic improvements.
- f) Lack of training, resources or support. This might be due to low levels of commitment to crisis management on the part of top managers.
- g) Failure to give due regard to the human aspects of crisis management, especially the welfare of staff and others affected by it.

Information Box 2 – The case for a crisis management system

- a) Developing, exercising and being able to use a crisis management system can provide a shared sense of focus, a collective purpose and higher levels of confidence and morale. This could lead to an organization that is more resilient and better able to adapt to change generally.
- b) Well-prepared organizations that deal effectively with actual or potential crises may emerge from the experience stronger, internally and in terms of their brand, even after suffering significant short-term losses.
- c) Organizations that are seen to have failed to prepare for crises will suffer potentially massive reputational damage. They may even be seen as having betrayed their staff, customers and stakeholders.
- d) Organizations that are sensitively aware of their operating environment and their own potential systemic vulnerabilities are invariably better able to avoid or mitigate crises. This demonstrates preparedness and facilitates recovery. Critically, it will also reduce the losses and limit the damage suffered in a crisis, by increasing the speed and effectiveness with which it can be brought under control.
- e) Training staff in the skills of crisis management may improve significantly their performance of their normal duties.



A crisis management system should be part of the mainstream of organizational management and not just a set of arrangements for responding “on the day”. Furthermore, it will be apparent that this implies additional work for the organization and, possibly, some significant changes.

There may be some reluctance to invest in this capability, and possibly some institutional objection to the challenges and changes it implies. For this reason, it is worth analyzing briefly the benefits to the organization and its staff that would follow. These are summarized in **Information Box 2**.

During and after a crisis, it should be assumed that every aspect of an organization’s preparedness and response will be subject to intensive and unforgiving scrutiny. It should be able to prove that crisis management processes had been put in place, tested, supported by training and then used to support defensible decision-making.

Recommendations regarding 3.9

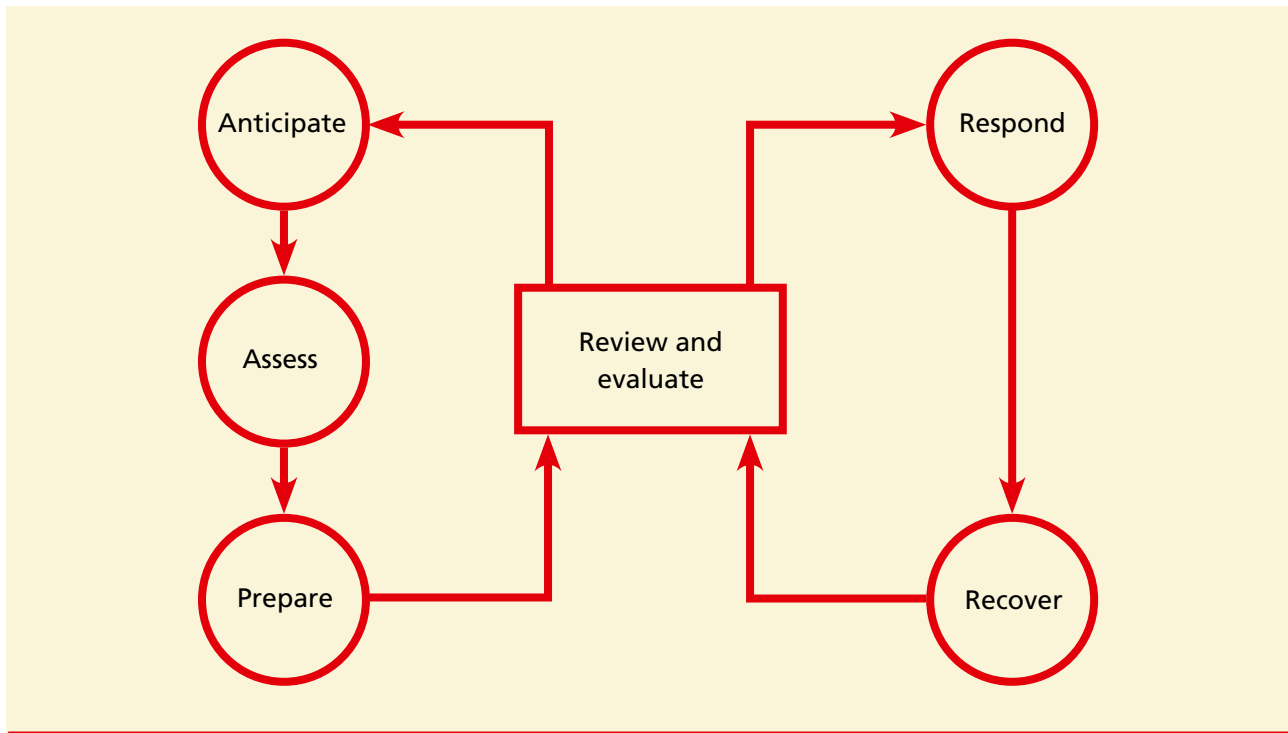
16. The general characteristics of organizations with high levels of resilience should be noted with a view to promoting these characteristics within the manager’s own organization.
17. The common barriers to success in achieving higher resilience should be recognized and worked through to reduce their influence. A particular focus is recommended on the human aspects of all crisis management activities.

4 Developing a crisis management capability

4.1 A framework

Figure 1 provides a framework for understanding the elements of a crisis management capability in their wider context.

Figure 1 – A framework for crisis management



The opportunity to review and evaluate a crisis management capability does not depend on the organization having had an actual crisis to learn from. For example, it could follow other management reviews, periodic checks, near misses, exercises and the vicarious experience drawn from crises affecting other organizations. Thus, the left side of the model reflects an iterative process.

Response tends to be a relatively short-term activity, and recovery may be prolonged. However, they too allow feedback through the review and evaluation stage of the model. It therefore provides a strategic and integrated framework for developing a crisis management capability and employing it in response and recovery.

4.2 Capability

Before discussing the practicalities of developing and managing a crisis management capability, it will help top managers if they reflect on what capability means in this context. **Information Box 3** summarizes the four basic requirements of capability.

Furthermore, a capability should be able to realize and deliver all the elements of the framework of crisis management described in Figure 1. Thus, it is clear that crisis management requires more than just a plan and a response, however thoughtfully they are constructed.

Creating this capability requires strategic commitment, resources and the creation of structures and processes. These requirements are discussed in 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5.

Information Box 3 – The requirements of a crisis management capability

- a) **An intellectual requirement**, which includes the ability to analyze situations, set strategy, determine options, make decisions and evaluate their impact. It also includes the shared concepts that underpin the discipline of crisis management.
- b) **An organizational requirement**, which includes the structures and processes needed to translate decisions into action and review their impact.
- c) **A cultural requirement**, which reflects the willingness of staff to share and support the top managers' intentions and policies.
- d) **A logistic requirement**, which is the ability to support solutions by applying the right resources in the right place, at the right time.

4.3 Setting the organization's policy and direction

The top management of an organization should establish, define and document their policy for crisis management. This implies a statement of intent that clearly and concisely outlines their objectives, describes in broad terms how they intend to realize them and articulates their commitment and determination. This will serve as the basis and business case for the further activities related to the planning and implementation of crisis management procedures, within the framework of crisis management shown in Figure 1.

The policy statement should include a definition of scope. This should identify who is to be responsible for its different elements and its overall coordination. It should also establish priorities, timelines and standards for the delivery of key elements of the organization's crisis management capability, as well as budget and other resource limitations as appropriate.

A fundamental point is that the vision and scope of the organization's intentions should be appropriate to its size, business activities and overall strategic objectives, and consistent with the legal or regulatory environment within which it may operate.

Mechanisms of review should be included, to ensure that the policy continues to be supported and remains consistent with the overall strategic objectives of the organization, and that progress is monitored and evaluated against the agreed deliverables. This should be done in accordance with accepted good practice in programme and project management, and with any pre-existing organizational procedures or process that would expedite it and serve to underline its character as a mainstream organizational activity.

4.4 Identifying roles and responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities required to implement all crisis management capabilities should be identified, documented and communicated. Consideration should be given to people, skills, experience and competence.

The organization should consider the resources needed for each element of the capability and the associated requirements for training. It should also appoint a person or persons with appropriate authority to be accountable for the development and implementation of crisis management capability, and its ongoing maintenance and management, across the whole organization.

Recommendations regarding 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4

- 18. A policy should be created, with the highest possible level of vigorous endorsement, that directs and empowers the appropriate people to lead the development of a crisis management capability.
- 19. The policy should establish direction, priorities, outcomes and reporting arrangements according to programme and project management guidelines.
- 20. The policy should build in review and evaluation mechanisms to monitor and confirm progress in capability development. The implications of all crisis management activities and plans for staff and their welfare should be evaluated and regularly reviewed.
- 21. The policy should also establish roles and responsibilities, including that of the senior responsible owner, and the whole organization should be informed accordingly.

4.5 Creating structures and processes

To be consistent with the concepts of crisis management discussed in Clause 3, the organization should create mechanisms for horizon scanning and the examination of its own structures and processes for potential systemic vulnerabilities. This PAS does not recommend a methodology for either activity, because of the following:

- a) No two organizations operate or are configured in the same way. Horizon scanning and vulnerability analysis mechanisms need to be attuned to their own business environment, organizational culture and existing systems.
- b) The organization will probably already have appropriate mechanisms, as part of its routine business activities and issues management processes, for the gathering and exploitation of market intelligence, which help to ensure the quality and effectiveness of its operations. Adapting these to support crisis awareness should be a matter of emphasis and a shift in perspective, informed by the concepts and ideas already discussed.
- c) The organization may already have well-developed processes for risk assessment and business impact analysis, which can be adapted and refined for crisis management purposes.

4.6 Information management

The processes should be formalized, reflected in the distribution of responsibilities and procedurally aligned with the organization's crisis management policy. This should ensure they are carried out, their findings are reported and appropriate action is taken.

The key asset in crisis management is information. Its effective management is crucial. If horizon scanning and internal vulnerability analysis do their work, it should be possible to detect the early and weak signals of impending or potential crises that might otherwise be missed, or lost in the general background "noise" of normal business fluctuations.

But whether or not the signals are captured in time to avoid a crisis, at some point the information should be processed into a form that reflects an interpretation of its meaning for the organization, so that it can be used as a coherent basis for decision-making. This is called creating situational awareness.



4.7 Situational awareness

The concept of situational awareness was derived from studies made into the behaviour of people whose effectiveness depends on their ability to observe their environment, orientate themselves to rapid changes in it, make quick decisions (especially regarding threats and opportunities) and act, in a continuous and high-tempo cycle where the margins of competitive advantage can be very narrow.

By implication, situational awareness means more than knowing what is going on; it also means being able to model the implications of what is (and is not) going on and to project current events to establish what might happen. In an organizational context, this implies the need to gather input from all departments, so that each can add its particular nuanced input to a balanced overall assessment.

This level of detail is given to make the point that creating situational awareness is a deliberate, active and disciplined process that requires practice. Information needs to be actively sought, and channels need to be monitored.

Tools can be applied to help people do this more effectively. Two simple and complementary tools are presented in **Information Box 4**, from the many that are in general use.

There is merit in consciously adopting and advocating specific tools, rather than leaving the creation of situational awareness to chance and idiosyncrasy. They give people working under extremes of pressure an underpinning framework, which militates against their being overwhelmed by information or the magnitude of the task. They also help create consistency and unity of approach in a team.

Decision-makers may also draw confidence from knowing that a consistent discipline has been applied in the interpretation of the information they should use to support and inform their decisions.

Information Box 4 – Techniques for creating situational awareness

1. The persistent questioning cycle

What has changed?	Distinguish between what is known, unclear and presumed about the changes that have taken place.
What is happening?	Identify variations in the character of events, their extent and their tempo or severity.
What is changing?	It can be helpful to look at the inverse of events and consider what might be expected but has not (yet) been observed.
So what?	This is the critical question. A diversity of perspectives and viewpoints will add value.
What might happen?	Look forward and visualize potential scenarios, using axes of time (short, medium and long term) and severity (best case to worst case).

2. Factorizing

This is a secondary tool, which lends a refined level of structure to the presentation of situational awareness. It requires the manager to decompose the problem according to a series of headings that capture the different dimensions of the crisis, so that its diverse implications can be analyzed and compared. The PESTELO tool (and various permutations of the basic idea) may be familiar. They are usually associated with strategic planning. However, they lend themselves to creating situational awareness very well, and decision-makers should appreciate a statement of it that is disaggregated in this way because it reflects familiar styles of analysis and deduction.

- P** Political factors
- E** Economic or financial factors
- S** Social factors
- T** Technical factors and issues
- E** Environmental factors
- E** Ethical factors
- L** Legal or regulatory factors
- O** Organizational factors

The mnemonic PESTELO helps resolve issues into a set of factors for consideration by decision-makers. However, practitioners should also seek to achieve an understanding of the overall picture in terms of its scale, duration, impact and interdependencies:

Scale	How significant and widespread is it or might it become?
Duration	How long it is likely to continue?
Impact	How bad is it, and how bad could it become?
Interdependencies	These need to be identified in terms of what is happening, what may happen and what the consequences of a given decision might be.

It follows that situational awareness is a construct that needs some input from all the key departments in an organization, to achieve a fully developed and nuanced understanding of the overall picture. At all stages there should be clear distinctions between what is definitely known, what is unclear or ambiguous, what is presumed and what is being reported by others.

4.8 The common recognized information picture

Once an agreed level of situational awareness has been achieved in the team and articulated, it can form part of a common recognized information picture (CRIP). A CRIP is a report that presents an agreed and formal statement of situational awareness. However, it goes further because it is presented as a common pan-organizational basis of understanding upon which crisis management decisions that affect the whole organization can be based.

There are powerful reasons for using a CRIP system in



crisis management as a decision-support tool. These are summarized in **Information Box 5**.

It should be noted that the creation of situational awareness, and the use of the CRIP system, are capabilities which underpin the crisis management plan and its associated structures. For that reason, they have been included in this section of the PAS.

Information Box 5 – Advantages of the CRIP as a decision-support tool

- a) The situational awareness upon which it is based is derived from cross-organizational analysis. It should reflect consensus to the greatest extent that is practicable, and so help to ensure that all departments' perspectives are represented and balanced. This reduces the risk of biased or skewed decision-making.
- b) Decisions can then be based on the best level of consensus that can be achieved on the situation, its dynamics and its implications, which has been through a rigorous process of assessment, verification and grading.
- c) By having an agreed statement of understanding (and of the limitations of available knowledge), it reduces the tendency for members of decision-making teams to place conflicting interpretations on information at the point of decision. The aim is not to close down debate, but to increase the speed and confidence with which decisions can be made.
- d) Decision-makers become more confident, because they know that the information they are basing decisions on has been through a process of rigorous, multi-department analysis, assurance and verification.
- e) Decisions become more easily defensible, since they can be related to an agreed statement of situational awareness, based on a shared process of rigorous, multi-department analysis, assurance and verification.
- f) Managers who choose not to follow a line of decision-making that is supported by evidence in the CRIP will have to defend their choices very carefully. It is conceivable that they may be right to do so, but the CRIP discipline requires that a careful and considered case be made for disregarding the information that is given. This is a valuable check.
- g) The CRIP can be easily updated as circumstances change, and forms a running basis for briefings, reporting, handover/takeovers, press releases and post-action analysis.
- h) It also forms a rolling record of the analysis and decisions of the crisis management team. This is extremely important. If some form of official enquiry or legal activity takes place after the crisis, contemporaneous records may be demanded and will be examined very carefully.

Modified from: Cabinet Office Emergency Planning College. *Decision tools for risk and crisis management*. Unpublished.

CRIPs and situation reports can be distinguished in the following way:

- a) Situation reports are produced by separate departments and business units and delivered to the information management cell. They reflect a department's or a business unit's description of events and its view of the situation and its impacts from their perspectives.
- b) CRIPs represent their collation and distillation into a pan-organizational statement of situational awareness, explicitly designed to support strategic crisis decision-makers.

This implies that a multi-departmental information management staff should be created and trained in the disciplines of situational awareness. Its main output is the CRIP.

The leader of that team should be a senior manager who has the confidence of all those who are managing the crisis and can brief and advise effectively at the strategic level of the organization. Departments and business units should also be trained in the production of situation reports for input to the information management cell.

Producing the CRIP should not be overly time-consuming, providing:

- a) the team is trained and rehearsed and their information-gathering and reporting systems are established and tested;
- b) they are supported by standard operating procedures that follow the invoking of crisis management procedures.

Any penalty of time is likely to be compensated for by the advantages listed, especially given the damage that can be self-inflicted by reacting too quickly to unverified or inadequately assessed information. In the early stages of a crisis there may be a paucity of reliable information, rather than an excess of it, so managers should not expect the first CRIP produced in a crisis to be very rich in confirmed information.

It is important to understand that the nature, size and level of detail in the CRIP will be the product of several factors, which include:

- a) the time available for its production;
- b) the amount of information that is actually available;
- c) the information manager's assessment of what level and type of information the decision-makers need or have asked for.

4.9 Supporting the decision-makers

The production of a CRIP should, of itself, never slow down the decision-making process. The size, extent and detail of the report should vary according to the demands of the situation.

In the early stages of the response, information may be in short supply but decision-makers will still need to know as quickly as possible what is available, what can be verified and what is being reported or rumoured. Thus, early CRIPs may be very brief.

Later in a crisis, when an operating rhythm has developed and the pressure of time is less acute, the CRIP may expand in content and purpose as more information becomes available, more detailed analysis can be produced and research can be carried out. It should also be remembered that the needs of the decision-makers change, and a number of variable factors may influence their appetite for detail at any given time.

So, the CRIP needs to be regarded as a flexible tool, and for this reason no template is offered. Once this is understood, the advantages of the CRIP as a dynamic, flexible decision-support tool become very powerful.

The CRIP is not an end in itself; it should always be remembered that its purpose is to support decision-makers and facilitate their choices. If there is disproportionate emphasis on creating and refining it, there is a risk that it could slow down the tempo of the response.

The CRIP's production and dissemination should be driven by the needs of those managing the crisis, and not the other way round. The CRIP should be the best expression of situational awareness that is available and feasible at the time it is needed; it should be a statement of what is known and how that knowledge has been interpreted by the different departments that contribute to it.

4.10 Dealing with dilemmas

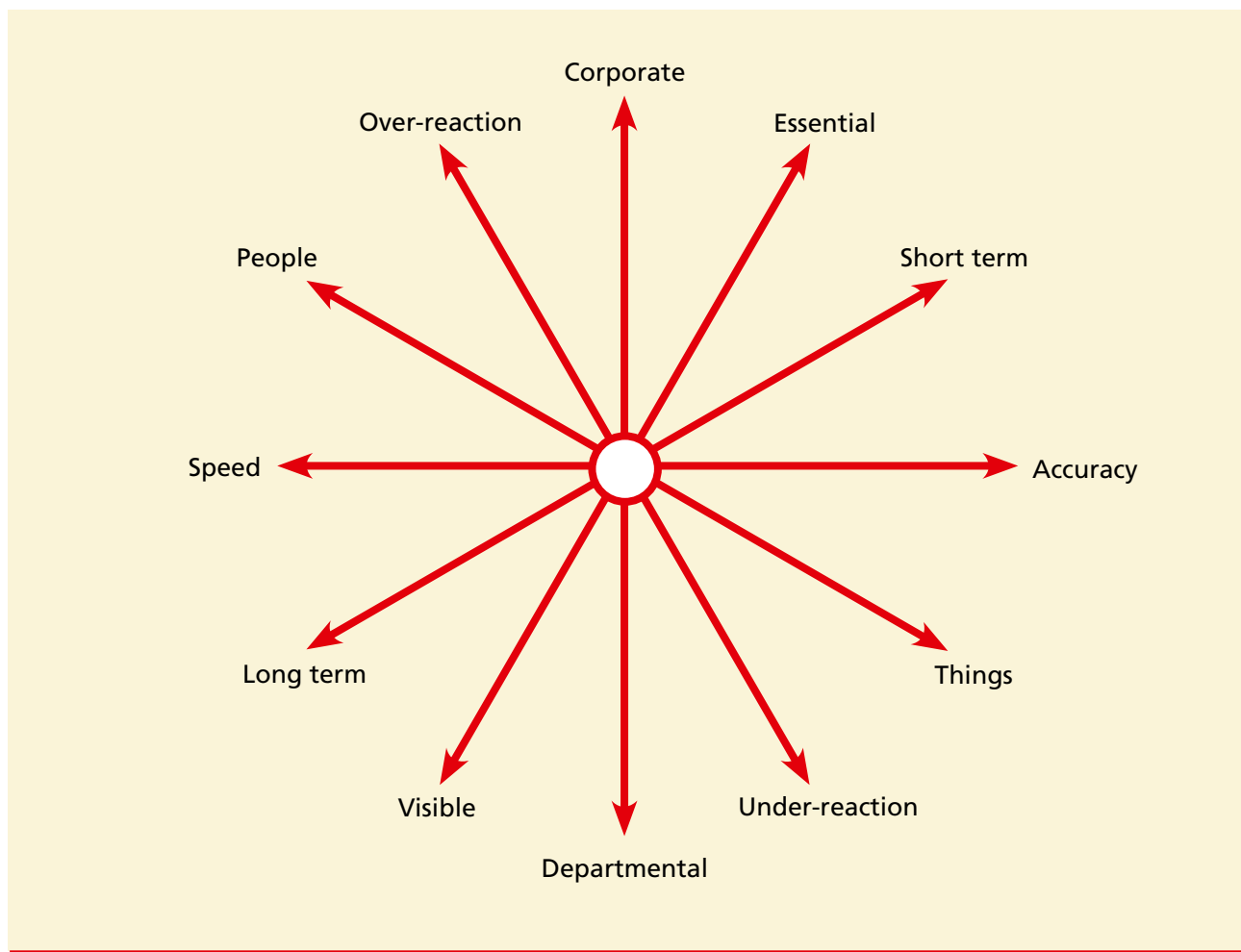
Another support that the information management cell can provide, and which should be included in the CRIP, is the framing and deconstruction of strategic dilemmas.

Rational decision-making models tend to focus on the creation of options and alternatives that are assessed and compared, in pursuit of the best solution. However, it has already been suggested that most crisis management decisions are not based on clear-cut

options and may need to be made in situations that do not yield a clearly identifiable solution. Instead, they are usually based on trade-offs and “least bad” options, reflecting the sort of dilemmas often associated with strategic choices in complex systems.

Some possible generic types of strategic dilemmas are identified in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2 – Strategic dilemmas in decision-making



Modified from: Cabinet Office Emergency Planning College. *Decision tools for risk and crisis management*. Unpublished.

For example, there may be fundamental things that those managing the crisis know should be done (things that are essential but may be less visible to the media or stakeholders), which will be in tension with the need to do things to demonstrate overall control, authority or build confidence (which are possibly less essential but more highly visible). Similarly, courses of action

with long-term benefit may be in tension with public or staff expectations of a short term result that demonstrates quick resolve.

The dilemma between speed and accuracy will be familiar to many managers. They may feel enormous pressure to produce definitive statements, especially

about losses and damage, very soon after the onset of a crisis, when the information may not be available or verifiable.

This pressure may be exacerbated by the news media making speculative estimates and reports, possibly with more concern for immediate newsworthiness than complete accuracy. Essentially, the media are likely to speculate, whereas the organization's crisis managers should be as accurate and correct as possible.

This tension should be built in to corporate communication strategies, plans and expectations. It is not resolvable; it is a complexity that should be

acknowledged and a reality that should be managed.

Framing dilemmas for the crisis manager will not make the decisions any easier or the dilemmas any simpler. However, it does help to assess options and map the consequences of choices being considered.

Given the potential for information to be incomplete, unclear, ambiguous or conflicting, it is vital that all those concerned with information management and decision-making bring critical focus to the assumptions they will be forced to rely on. This discipline is explained in **Information Box 6**.

Information Box 6 – Addressing assumptions

All risk assessments, plans and decisions involve assumptions, and so they are an inevitable part of preparing for and responding to crises. The risk is that assumptions may be flawed, misunderstood, not made clear, not tested or not shared by a team.

Therefore, the following steps are recommended in respect of assumptions used at any stage of the model of crisis management.

- a) **Find them:** Writers, assessors and users of documents should identify all assumptions and bring them to the surface where they can be seen and evaluated. Even where assumptions appear to be long-established and "safe" as a consequence, this assumption (about the robustness of seemingly well-established assumptions) should not be treated as an article of faith. Assumptions about value also need to be "surfaced", as they might not be shared or even acceptable.
- b) **Make them explicit:** Where assumptions have to be made, they should be stated in explicit terms; where assumptions are hidden, or implicit, they are most dangerous.
- c) **Categorize them:** It is important to reflect in a systematic fashion on the nature of the assumptions surfaced.
- d) **How critical is the assumption?** To use an engineering analogy, some assumptions are more "load-bearing" than others, and getting these wrong would lead to the failure of a strategy, plan or other activities. It is important to establish which assumptions are central to a plan or other activity, the failure of which would have the greatest impact. Others will be relatively less significant and so do not merit exhaustive analysis.
- e) **What do the assumptions relate to?** It is important to be clear whether the assumptions relate to the "problem" (be that a risk or another stimulus requiring an organized response) or to the "solution" (the set of actions required to address the problem as it is understood).
- f) **Test them wherever possible:** Some assumptions can be rigorously tested, and where this is the case they should be. Other assumptions are much harder to test, but all available evidence that may assist in testing their appropriateness and reliability should be sought. The key point is that the potential consequences of assumptions proving to be flawed should be confronted and analyzed as rigorously as possible. The results of this may be uncomfortable, but they will have to be faced.
- g) **Record and share them:** In the interests of audit and transparency, whatever is found out about assumptions should be shared with the users and all those with an interest in the plan or activity. It should be borne in mind that hidden equals dangerous and that exposed assumptions can be subjected to ongoing scrutiny as context and knowledge change.

Modified from: Cabinet Office Emergency Planning College. *Decision tools for risk and crisis management*. Unpublished.



4.11 Conclusions

The above (4.1 to 4.10) serves as a brief introduction to some of the tools and techniques that can help in building situational awareness and articulating it in a CRIP. The essential point is that formal techniques are very useful, in the interests of quality, consistency and coherence.

Also, staff should be trained in their use and allowed to become familiar with them in simulations and scenario-based exercises, preferably carried out in the workplace or in the facility that will be used in a crisis. Debriefs and analyses after exercises and real events should also address the fitness for purpose of these tools, and amend them as necessary.

Implementation of these measures may appear to be a daunting task. However, it should be remembered that effective structures and processes for crisis management almost certainly cannot be created "on the day". They require development, investment and testing if there is to be any confidence in their ability to work when needed.

The benefits are self-evident; they include a system that imposes a reasonable degree of pattern and process on chaotic situations. This will benefit the response, expedite it and impose a sense of discipline and clear purpose on those attempting to manage it. This is an aspirational target, given the capacity of crises to challenge the best organizations. However, it will also serve to free the creative potential of the crisis

Recommendations regarding 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11

22. An information management team who will support decision-makers in a crisis should be created and trained.
23. The disciplines of creating shared and pan-organizational situational awareness and articulating it in a CRIP should be adopted for the briefing and guidance of decision-makers and as an operational record.
24. A set of tools to create and develop situational awareness should be adopted and used consistently, so that there is commonality of process.
25. Once the information management staff are familiar with these procedures, their performance should be evaluated and the utility of these techniques confirmed in realistic and challenging exercises (see Clause 7).
26. Arrangements should be made and tested to activate the information management staff as quickly as possible, working according to a standard operating procedure.

management team and allow them to concentrate on decisions and solutions, confident that the desired processes are working.

5 Planning and preparing for crisis response and recovery

5.1 General

If the recommendations made in Clauses 3 and 4 have been implemented, the organization should have the capability to:

- a) scan the horizon for emerging risks;
- b) assess its operations to identify vulnerabilities that may be incubating within it, or which would compromise its crisis response;
- c) invoke information management processes that result in expressions of situational awareness;
- d) create and use a CRIP to inform and support decision-makers.

In terms of the framework of crisis management, the organization will be able to anticipate and assess risks and therefore take action to prevent those that can be prevented. It will also have prepared itself to manage information and decision-making in a crisis.

However, preparedness, response and recovery (with the implied function of learning from crises and near misses) require further capabilities. This clause will focus on the processes and actions that will guide managers from the invoking of crisis management procedures to the start of the post-crisis analysis and learning phase.

5.2 The crisis management plan

The first question in this regard concerns the size, scope and level of detail that should be expected in a crisis management plan.

In incident management plans, drawn up under BCM procedures, a fair degree of detail might be expected. This is because incidents are, as has been discussed (see 3.2), essentially foreseeable events, caused by known risks that generate a broadly predictable set of consequences. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect a fairly structured response, and this presupposes a relatively generous level of detail in the plan.

Crisis, however, with all the nuances already identified and discussed (see Clause 3), do not lend themselves to such highly structured responses. This suggests that crisis management plans do not benefit from detailed lists of actions or activities.

In fact, crisis management needs flexible capabilities, rather than pre-prepared response procedures. This

suggests that crisis management plans should be relatively brief.

5.3 Key elements of the plan

An important function of the plan is to define and specify the conditions for invoking the organization's strategic crisis management procedures. Its success should be determined according to whether it works, by getting the right people and teams together (quickly enough) to lead and support the response, in the ways defined in the plan.

There is no template for a crisis management plan, but the plan should:

- a) identify, inform and empower those with the authority to invoke the plan;
- b) provide all the contact details, passwords, access permits and the like that people will need to get into position and start working, possibly in the form of abbreviated aides-memoires;
- c) stipulate what people should do on arrival to get systems and processes working, and how all staff and other departments should support and facilitate this;
- d) describe the activities of the information management cell, and all those departments that feed situation reports into it, and specify the duty to create a CRIP for the first meeting of the crisis management team;
- e) integrate the crisis management response, when required, with:
 - BCM activities;
 - the organization's own staff and key stakeholders, and external agencies and stakeholders, including the emergency services;
- f) require the crisis management team to set an operational rhythm for the response, making decisions, identifying actions, specifying reporting deadlines and setting the next formal meeting or review point.

The plan could usefully provide a general strategic aim and a set of initial objectives for the response, to give managers an initial orientation to the problem and to focus the first bursts of activity on a common goal. This might include an agenda for the first meeting of the crisis management team, item one of which would be to discuss the implications of the CRIP.

The key point is that a crisis management plan exists to facilitate a response, by quickly and effectively mobilizing the right people and providing them with the means to do their job. It is not a guide as to what to do next in a given situation. In fact, there are good reasons to regard the plan as a common basis for change, especially given the inherent nature of crises (see Clause 3).

5.4 Logistical factors

An important function of the plan is to identify the logistical requirements of the organization’s crisis management capability. This includes ensuring that coordination arrangements are adequately resourced and properly staffed.

Proper staffing should allow for the maintenance of the response over an extended period of time and to ensure that people are rotated and rested, with their exposure to undue or damaging stress monitored and appropriate action taken when it occurs.

5.5 The activities of the crisis management team

Given the dynamic, complex and contingent nature of crises, it is difficult to predict exactly what actions will be required of those who will manage them. However, it is safe to assume that certain generic actions will be required, and possible examples are given below.

However, it should also be remembered that crisis management is not a linear activity. The activities may be concurrent, their relative importance will change with events and they all imply that continuous, rigorous review takes place.

Thus, what follows is not a checklist, and it does not attempt to be definitive or exhaustive. It is a generalized and indicative guide to the type of actions the crisis management team can expect to carry out and should prepare for.

- a) Acquisition and confirmation of situational awareness, with the team confirming their (individual and shared) understanding of the situation and its dynamics, and continuously reviewing it. The CRIP is an important tool in this regard.
- b) Use of the situational awareness to model, assess and continuously review potential and actual impacts resulting from the crisis, with appropriate actions taken to manage it.
- c) Definition (and continuous review) of the strategic



aim of the response (for the organization as a whole) and the supporting objectives or deliverables (for departments and teams), as well as of priorities in issues management, deadlines for action and resource allocation issues.

- d) Making decisions and confirming the implementation and results of actions, which may include strategic choices to:
 - defend reputation;
 - reinforce brand values;
 - protect or restore the integrity of the organization and its business;
 - safeguard employee welfare;
 - restore or protect morale.
- e) Setting an operating rhythm for the response, so that meetings, briefings, CRIP dissemination, press releases, conferences and the like can be arranged coherently. The crisis management team may not sit in continuous session, and it could rely on a variety of supporting systems to implement actions, report on their impact and deliver information updates. In particular, significant changes in the CRIP will need to be signalled clearly and quickly.
- f) Deciding on the agendas for meetings and managing them to ensure brevity and urgency. Actions, decided within or without meetings, need to be clearly expressed and formally recorded. They should also be allocated to an individual who is given a realistic deadline for action, with clear directions as to line of reporting.
- g) Confirmation, monitoring and review of “lines to take” in internal and external communications, to ensure that consistent and appropriate messages are released.
- h) Identification and review of the team’s own information requirements, tasking the information management staff accordingly.
- i) Reviewing and monitoring the work of the crisis management organization as a whole, to ensure that priorities are understood clearly and that its performance, and the flow of information, is and remains optimal.
- j) Carrying out a continuously reviewed stakeholder

analysis, to ensure that the right people receive the right messages and information, and that their views, advice and assistance are actively solicited. In this context, stakeholders are defined widely and may include customers, suppliers and regulators.

- k) Reviewing the impact and management of the crisis on business as normal, on people within the organization and on those affected by it.
- l) Monitoring and reviewing continuously the objectives and effectiveness of any teams managing incidents at other levels of the response, with particular focus on making sure that their activities are in harmony with the strategic crisis response. Establishing control in a crisis requires the crisis management team to issue clear guidance for support teams and other parts of the response structure.
- m) Resolving conflicts of interest between teams, such as issues concerning the allocation of scarce resources.
- n) Ensuring that strategic planning for recovery starts as early as possible, and that recovery considerations are reflected in the management of the response.

5.6 Leadership

An important function of a leader in a crisis is to stabilize the situation as much as possible.

It may not be possible to impose order on apparent chaos very quickly, but the leader should demonstrate calmness, authority and determination. This will defuse tensions, provide a focus for activity, inspire confidence in the team and reassure stakeholders that something is being done.

At this level, leadership is a very personal force. At another level, however, leadership in a crisis needs consensus-building and is a collective product, where the definitive skills have more to do with teamwork, flexibility, communication and brokering solutions.

At both levels, leaders need to be comfortable within the uncertainties that crises present and capable of driving an organization coherently through very confused situations.

The key point is that the ability to lead effectively in a crisis should not be assumed, or taken for granted, as a result of an individual's appointment or status. Managers reviewing their training and development needs in this respect may find it useful to consider crisis leadership skills according to the typology used in **Information Box 7**.

Information Box 7

– Key skills in crisis leadership

Task-oriented skills

- a) Identifying key issues and priorities.
- b) Accepting the new reality quickly.
- c) Strategic thinking.
- d) Creating options.
- e) Decision-making.
- f) Delegation.
- g) Meeting-management skills.

Interpersonal skills

- a) Emotional intelligence (including self-awareness; knowing and managing emotions and those of others; self-motivation; relationship handling).
- b) Communication skills – verbal and non-verbal.
- c) Negotiating/influencing.
- d) Ability to vary leadership style to circumstance.

Personal attributes

- a) Confidence.
- b) Presence.
- c) Credibility.
- d) Pragmatism.
- e) Cognitive skills.
- f) Effective stress handling.
- g) Moral courage/ethics.

Stakeholder awareness

- a) Engaging with internal and external stakeholders.
- b) Engaging with media.
- c) Engaging with management teams.
- d) Meeting the needs of a wide range and diversity of stakeholders.

After Figure 1 (modified) from: Devitt KR, Borodzic EP. Interwoven leadership: the missing link in multi-agency major incident response. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 2008 Dec;16(4):208–16.

5.8 Dealing with people

Consideration should be given to maintaining the crisis response over an extended period of time. This would have a variety of implications for people, the organization and its normal business that would need to be managed sensitively.

It may also be the case that the crisis creates situations or experiences that people find distressing. Due provision should be made for this.

The organization that survives a crisis through robust and effective crisis management could still suffer severe damage if it was seen to have neglected its legal and moral duty of care to those of its staff or customers who were affected by it.

Subclause 3.3 notes that crises can place exceptional demands on those involved, and suggests that managers take into account the human dimensions of working at sustained levels of extraordinary stress. Subclause 3.9 highlights the danger of failing to consider the human dimension of crisis management as a potential barrier to success, and 5.4 suggests that employee exposure to stress is monitored and acted upon. Thus, it can be seen that issues around the welfare of people run through nearly all aspects of crisis management, and Recommendation 17 addresses this.

Ideally, those managing a crisis should consider the human aspects and implications of every decision they make. It is also suggested that they should record their deliberations and their estimates of the potential human impact of their decisions, to demonstrate consistent and thorough awareness of their responsibilities towards people.

5.9 Transition to recovery

Plans and protocols should recognize the importance of a definitive transition and handover marking the progress from the response phase to the recovery phase of crisis management.

It is recommended that a recovery coordinating and planning group is convened as early as possible during the response phase, to begin the strategic development of a recovery plan. The logic of this is clear: recovery planning could be directly affected by decisions made as part of the response, and longer-term recovery objectives and issues may inform response managers who are making decisions on immediate issues.



The recovery team should be led by a strategic manager and resourced adequately. Its leader should be part of the crisis management team.

The recovery effort may be long term, and it should be assumed that it will continue to consume resources long after the response phase is over. Apart from the physical rebuilding or replacement of infrastructure that might be necessary, the organization could be required to support investigations or enquiries by the police or regulatory authorities.

It should also be mindful of sensitivities attached to the natural processes of healing and grieving, including memorial activities.

Finally, it should be noted that recovery presents an opportunity to regenerate, restructure or realign an organization. The essence of recovery is not necessarily a return to previous normality. It may mean moving forward towards a model of business and organizational structures that represent a new normality.

Recommendations regarding Clause 5

27. Crisis management plans developed should invoke a flexible response capability, not focus on specific risks.
28. Plans should reflect the principles identified in Clause 5.
29. The framework of crisis management identified in Figure 1 should be applied.
30. The key skills in crisis leadership identified in Information Box 7 should be the framework for developing the staff who will deliver the capability.
31. Recovery from a crisis should be seen to imply an opportunity for regeneration.

6 Communicating in a crisis

6.1 General

Effective communications are essential for any organization to succeed, and in a crisis they are critically important. For this reason, a well-developed crisis communications strategy should make provision for internal communications, as well as the more obvious external requirements of dealing with stakeholders and media.

The primary concerns of this clause are internal communications strategies and information flows. These may get overlooked under the pressure of events, but they are fundamental to effective crisis management.

Reputations can be lost and organizations can fail because external relationships, popular perceptions and media portrayals are not given due attention.

Two key elements may be considered here as follows:

- a) External relationships need to be carefully monitored, with particular attention paid to emerging popular perceptions and the ways in which the crisis and the organization are being portrayed by the media and on digital social networks.
- b) The needs of working with the media can be so consuming of time and energy that important internal communications may be neglected. The media can be an asset and a source of additional capacity for communicating key messages; they should not be regarded merely as a threat.

6.2 Communications strategy

6.2.1 Introduction

An effective communications strategy should be underpinned by an understanding of issues management, risk communication and stakeholder engagement.

6.2.2 Issues management

By monitoring for the symptoms of change, it is possible to spot emerging opportunities or threats that demand a reaction from the organization.

Issues management is about planning ahead and assessing the risk that might arise from any particular course of action an organization might take. As such, it is closely related to the disciplines of horizon scanning and internal vulnerability analysis discussed in Clause 4.



Furthermore, due to the prevalence of digital social networking media, issues should be dealt with as quickly as possible, so that concerned staff and other stakeholders can be kept informed by the organization itself. This has three key implications for those managing a crisis:

- a) Digital social media have accelerated exponentially the speed with which information is disseminated. Managers should therefore expect knowledge of a crisis to be in the public domain very quickly.
- b) They should also be aware that their own staff may be using these means to publicize information, regardless of company policy to the contrary.
- c) The prevalence of digital social media presents an opportunity as well as a risk, and is a means of wide-area communication that may be used to good effect.

6.2.3 Risk communication

The way in which an organization deals with the exchange of information and opinion among concerned staff and stakeholders is very important. It may involve messages about the nature of a crisis that should be understandable by all concerned. This helps create the conditions for staff and stakeholders to take part in an effective, competent dialogue and/or response.

Information Box 9 gives further details of these core communication needs.

Information Box 9 – Core communication needs

Colleagues, staff and other stakeholders may want different things from an organization at different times. However, there are a number of core communication needs that can be addressed, and these are summarized below, under the headings of information and assurance.

Information

- a) About the nature of the event and its actual or potential consequences.
- b) About the reliability of the assessment, including facts that are uncertain or disputed, or where decisions/actions are based on assumptions or opinions.
- c) About who is responsible for managing the risk and/or the crisis event.
- d) About the choices or options open to them to control or mitigate the consequences.

Assurance

- a) That advice and decisions are based on robust information and analysis, and that action is being taken to reduce uncertainty.
- b) That the organization is well prepared and that the necessary procedures are in place to deal with potential threats and manage the crisis.
- c) That those responsible for managing a crisis are exercising leadership and acting competently, in the interests of staff and the wider stakeholder community.

In the event of a crisis materializing, those responsible for its management should consider whether the communications strategy needs revising or adapting with regard to:

1. the organizational environment at the time;
2. potential interest and reaction by staff and key stakeholders;
3. the type and scale of the event;
4. possible use of digital and social networking sites;
5. likely media awareness of the event;
6. public and media reaction to the event.

6.2.4 Stakeholder engagement

All organizations will have a number of different stakeholders and stakeholder groups, such as staff, suppliers and customers. They should be kept informed of potential or actual crisis events.

A good crisis communications strategy should identify and prioritize which stakeholders will get what information, when and how. A stakeholder engagement plan should contain guidance about the level of information that is to be transmitted and to whom.

It is important to remember that communications may be adapted in style and tone for different audiences, but the core messages they are conveying should be consistent.

A strategy for deciding how to engage with stakeholders is given in **Information Box 10** (see over).



Information Box 10 – Levels of stakeholder engagement in crisis communications strategy

In the preparation of a crisis communications strategy it is important to have a good understanding of what level of stakeholder engagement is appropriate. The following broad categories can be useful when considering these issues.

Inform

Notify all key stakeholders, including staff. This will help dispel myths and rumours and present a positive message about the organization's ability to deal with a crisis. Where possible, this should be done before there is any media intervention and should aim to keep stakeholders up to date throughout the crisis.

Monitor

Scan constantly for new stakeholders as the crisis develops, monitor reactions from already identified stakeholders and adapt the communications strategy as needed.

Consult

Be ready to consult with staff and key stakeholders to disseminate key messages and gain feedback for decision-makers on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

Involve

Where possible, involve staff and key stakeholders in discussion and debate to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered in the decision-making process.

Collaborate

Where necessary, collaborate with key stakeholders to aid decision-making and develop alternative solutions.

Managers should also be aware of the tendency of crises to create new stakeholders as interest groups of various types begin to assume a position on the crisis and the organization's response to it. The possibility of this happening may, in some cases, be predictable and assessable, and be revealed in horizon scanning and issues management. In other cases it may come as a surprise. Communication plans and processes should be flexible enough to accommodate these new stakeholders and meet their needs.

6.3 Formal and informal communications structures

Formal communication structures usually operate through organizational hierarchies and follow lines of management. In such structures, information should ideally flow in all directions: upwards, downwards and laterally.

In the event of a crisis it is extremely important that all directions of flow are open and that information moves along them quickly. Failure to make this happen can

result in an escalation of the crisis and its potential consequences.

In hierarchies that may have a high level of rigidity, information flow tends to be slower than in flatter structures and is more likely to be distorted because of the number of interfaces through which it must pass. Bottlenecks and message filtering can occur when information passes these interfaces.

Thus, communications can be problematic during crises if information flows are not effective. If they are effective, information can be passed in a controlled manner, but there should always be a sensitive awareness of the potential impact of interpretation and distortion. There may be a simple reluctance to pass on bad news and a well-meant but unfortunate desire to avoid overloading decision-makers with information. Both highlight the importance of openness and trust.

Informal communication structures are usually present in organizations among colleagues, friends, associates and peer groups. In some respects these can be

problematic, such as in spreading myths and rumours. However, they can also be very useful if imaginatively used. They can speed up the exchange of information and understanding by bypassing formal structures and utilizing lateral lines of communication that have fewer links in the chain.

Managers should be aware of people's sensitivities, especially in stressful situations, and of the potential and actual impact of their communications on people.

When dealing with internal communications, whether formal or informal, the issue of trust should also be confronted. Trust in the sender of the message is one of the most important factors that will influence whether or not it succeeds in its aim. The credibility of the sender is crucial, as are perceptions of his or her competence and reliability. Thus, building and maintaining trust is pivotal in crisis communication, and it should be a salient feature of a crisis communication strategy.

6.4 Planning to communicate

It would be problematic to design a generic communications plan, because crises tend to be unique and complex. However, there are generally accepted guidelines for ensuring the best possible communications environment. These are as follows:

- a) The working environment for the crisis management team should be considered. Distractions of any kind can cause lapses in concentration and detract from the decision-making process.
- b) IT and communications systems are a very important requirement in crisis management and should be resilient. An organization's BCM arrangements would normally cater for this eventuality, but the redundant capacity should be big enough to support a return to business (as normal) and crisis management simultaneously.
- c) Criteria for checking the accuracy of information should be devised, and important analytical skills should be well developed. This relates to earlier discussions of situational awareness, wider impacts analysis, the challenging of assumptions and the framing of dilemmas.
- d) Communications channels should have as few links in the chain as possible, and solutions for spotting and overcoming potential bottlenecks should be developed.
- e) Staff should be kept informed at all stages of the crisis, and routinely updated even when there may be nothing new to report. This is a powerful corrective to feelings of fear, dislocation and anxiety.

- f) The crisis management plan should be in keeping with existing corporate communications plans and procedures.

6.5 Communications methods

There are many methods and media for communicating in a crisis. Whatever means is chosen, the onus is on the sender of the information to ensure that all those for whom it is intended can access it at the right time and understand it.

Organizations may consider tailoring specific messages to particular stakeholders, and may also wish to select different means of transmission for different types of audience and message. The organization's culture and normal practices will be a powerful influence on this analysis, but managers should always be willing to break normal protocols in the interests of good communication.

Methods of achieving internal communication include:

- a) meetings – face-to-face, by teleconferencing or videoconferencing;
- b) team, departmental or whole-staff briefings;
- c) the organization's intranet and email systems;
- d) SMS messages;
- e) existing or bespoke newsletters, circulated electronically and/or as hard copy;
- f) press releases copied to some or all staff;
- g) links to staff for access to electronically released information.

Methods of achieving external communications include:

- a) use of the news media by interviews, press releases and press conferences;
- b) prepared statements/guidelines for staff approached by the media;
- c) key point summaries for particular stakeholders and interest groups;
- d) the internet, including the organization's web presence and that of partners.

In addition, social networking media may be useful in certain circumstances, both internally and externally. It is probable that a highly publicized crisis will be reflected on social networking sites, possibly by the organization's own staff. Therefore, it would be unwise to ignore these media or underestimate their significance.

6.6 Barriers to effective communication

There are barriers that can prevent an organization from communicating effectively during a crisis. These include:

- a) the language used in the construction of the messages;
- b) the actions of individuals in filtering the messages;
- c) misinterpretation of the message due to lack of clarity or ambiguity;
- d) the physical aspects of the crisis damaging the means of communication.

To overcome such barriers, organizations may consider a number of different solutions. These include:

- a) using direct, simple language that is tailored to the needs of a particular audience and their expectations;
- b) being aware of the possibility that messages may be misinterpreted and using feedback to ensure accuracy and understanding;
- c) communicating face to face when possible, so that the individual may impose his or her personality on the process and gauge the reception of the message personally.

There should be a clear set of "lines to take", giving guidance to anyone communicating with external stakeholders. These should not be completely prescriptive but should be definitive enough to ensure that messages are consistent in tone, style and broad intention.



Recommendations regarding Clause 6

- 32. A communications strategy should be developed that is flexible and can be adapted to the demands of a crisis.
- 33. The core communication needs of staff and key stakeholders should be considered.
- 34. Stakeholder engagement should be prioritized, and new stakeholders emerging should be scanned for.
- 35. Both formal and informal channels of communication should be used to good effect.
- 36. Trust should be built up with those that may be affected, directly or indirectly, by crisis events.
- 37. A crisis communications plan should be developed.
- 38. Alternative communications systems should be accessed. They should be accessible to all users and have sufficient capacity.
- 39. The potential for information bottlenecks, filtering and wrong interpretation of messages should be considered.
- 40. Information flows developed should be simple, fast and operate in real time.
- 41. Staff should be kept fully informed at all stages of the crisis.
- 42. Information provided should be factually accurate, honest, balanced and fair, with any ambiguities and uncertainties acknowledged.
- 43. Methods, means and styles of communication appropriate for each stakeholder should be used.
- 44. Plain, unambiguous language should be used in all messages.
- 45. The "lines to take" concept should be used to ensure consistency in messages going outside the organization.

7 Evaluating crisis management capability

7.1 General

For a crisis management system to be considered fit for purpose it should be periodically evaluated. It should also be supported by a process of continuous review and development.

This implies the need for a programme of training and exercising, and a system for identifying and incorporating improvements as and when the opportunity to do so presents itself. This system also needs to be able to respond to the direct experience of exercises and actual crises, and the indirect experiences provided by near misses, crises affecting other organizations and evolving good practice.

The main purpose of an exercise is to test procedures, rehearse staff in roles for which they have already been trained and confirm that arrangements actually work. However, they can also create opportunities for “no fault” learning, team-building and (most importantly) building confidence in an organization’s crisis management capability.

7.2 Training

The roles staff are expected to carry out in crisis management should, whenever possible, be broadly comparable to (or a natural extension of) those they carry out normally. For example, staff with data-processing expertise might be suitable as log keepers and information handlers. Planners should also consider how best to use staff on the basis of transferable skills. Both will serve to reduce the training burden, although it cannot be removed entirely.

Once the crisis management roles have been identified and specified, a training needs analysis should be carried out to confirm what crisis-specific training is required, for all staff involved in implementing the plan. The results should be included in job specifications and performance agreements.

Exercises should not expose staff to challenges they have not been given the opportunity to prepare for. For this reason, all those with a role in the plan should be briefed and trained where necessary, before taking part in an exercise.

7.3 Exercise design considerations

There are many factors to consider when planning an exercise, including the following:

- a) Establishing a clear aim and purpose, so that the results can be measured against a clear statement of intent and outcome.
- b) Deciding whether to examine elements of the plan in isolation or the whole plan. Examining parts in isolation (such as the invoking procedure) can be effective and relatively easy to deliver. Only a whole-plan exercise will fully confirm the practicality of the arrangements, but they can be expensive and complex investments.
- c) The need for realism. This implies a scenario and exercise narrative that is relevant and realistic, but also challenging, imaginative and exploratory. The aims should be to assess team dynamics and individual competence. This would normally include working at high levels of intensity, a reasonable element of constructive stress and pressure, and a need to resolve complex dilemmas and to make difficult decisions. This should also explore the plan for gaps, faults and unrealistic assumptions.
- d) Deciding which type of exercise is to be run. The basic types of exercise are described, with a summary of their advantages and disadvantages, in **Information Box 11** (see over). Choice may be a product of financial constraint, or based on a desire to run a managed programme of different exercises.
- e) Deciding how the exercise is to be created, delivered and managed. Outsourcing an exercise may be economic, practical and benefit from the specialist expertise of consultants. It may also offer elements of neutrality and objectivity that only an external agent can bring. However, those directly responsible for developing the organization’s crisis management capability will have the most nuanced understanding of its potential limitations and the operating realities. This balance of advantages and disadvantages will require careful management.
- f) The exercise is an opportunity for organizational self-analysis. This will demand a high level of reflexivity and an honest appraisal of performance. It may be that staff and units, if not the organization as a whole, are found wanting. If so, this should be exposed and managed constructively and not covered up to protect reputations or avoid uncomfortable realities.



g) The exercise plan should include a rigorous debriefing and analysis that leads to a statement of the lessons that have been identified. An action plan should then be raised and agreed to translate these into action. Once improvements and corrections have been made, and have been proven in subsequent evaluations, it will be possible to call them lessons learned.

The organization's policy on testing and exercising should be articulated, approved by senior management and then visibly supported. Furthermore, the presentation and handling of the whole process is important.

Exercises are sometimes seen as threatening, because they may expose an individual or a department to criticism. They may be resented as an intrusion and as a distraction from day-to-day business. They may also be regarded as unnecessary, through complacency or a failure to appreciate the need for them.

Good exercise design and management, and vigorous support from top managers, will mitigate these tendencies. However, there is also a case for preparing staff systematically for the experience, by explaining the purpose and value of the process and including them in the overall process.

Information Box 11 – Types of exercises

The nomenclature of exercises varies, and there is no single accepted set of definitions of their types. For the purposes of this PAS, and in the interests of consistency with other BSI publications, the list below follows the line of PD 25666, *Business continuity management – Guidance on exercising and testing for continuity and contingency programmes*.

1. Drill

Coordinated, supervised activities usually employed to test a single specific operation, procedure or function in a single agency.

Drills are typically used to evaluate important but relatively simple processes.

2. Seminar exercise

An exercise in which the participants are divided into groups to discuss specific issues (relating to application of the plan to a particular scenario or set of scenarios).

Seminar exercises are also known as discussion exercises, and may be used to good effect as a check on the assumptions and intentions of a more highly developed exercise.

3. Table-top exercise

A facilitated exercise in which participants are given specific roles to perform, either as individuals or as a group.

This may involve a scenario that develops and becomes more complex as the players are given more information, simulating the evolution of a crisis.

4. Simulation

An exercise in which a group of players, usually representing a control centre or management team, react to a simulated incident notionally happening elsewhere.

Some agencies would call this a control centre exercise or command post exercise. It has the advantage of exercising staff in the actual environment in which they would be working during a real crisis.

5. Live play

Exercise activity that is as close as safely practicable to the expected response to a real incident.

This usually means that staff and assets are actually moved and deployed on the ground and in “real time”.

Advantages and disadvantages

The exercises tend to reflect, in number order, increasing realism, challenge and rigour. However, the same order also tends to reflect increasing levels of cost, organization, length of preparation and disruption to normal business.

These are discussed in detail in PD 25666.

7.4 The “crisis-aware” organization

7.4.1 General

The issue of organizational resilience is discussed in 4.7 to 4.10. Organizations that are “crisis aware” (that is to say, actively committed to building resilience) continuously evaluate their crisis management capability as a matter of routine.

The characteristics of a crisis-aware organization are broadly similar to those of organizations that demonstrate high reliability, as discussed in Clause 4. There are a number of ways in which this awareness can be built: active learning, learning by example, culture analysis and context analysis.

7.4.2 Active learning

This has already been alluded to in the distinction made between lessons identified and lessons learned (see 7.3g). Active learning occurs when an organization identifies lessons from any crisis (whether or not it affects it directly) and uses them to drive change.

7.4.3 Learning by example

The key point here is the ability to spot lessons that can be inferred from other organizations’ crises and used to improve resilience in one’s own. There may be many obvious differences between two organizations and their crisis experiences, but also some underlying similarities that may not be immediately self-evident.

Learning by example implies the intelligent use of case studies and a questioning, sceptical attitude to the resilience of one’s own organization looking for transferable lessons.

7.4.4 Culture analysis

Many organizations never make a detailed analysis of their own culture, despite the huge volume of literature on the importance of the subject. A full discussion of the impact of organizational culture is beyond the scope of this PAS, but it is a very important factor.

Aspects of organizational culture that may have a significant and detrimental bearing on its crisis management capability include:

- a) accepted norms, beliefs and paradigms that are so much a part of the fabric of the organization that they often go unchallenged;
- b) the existence of subcultures that may be ambivalent about or hostile to the organization’s success;
- c) assumptions about leadership styles, fitness for office and behavioural standards that owe more to preferred habits than to conscious policy (the

“internal reality” of the organization as opposed to its public face);

- d) a blame culture that inhibits the exposure and analysis of errors and accidents, and condemns those who bring them to light;
- e) disconnection between management paradigms (how they think the business runs) and “frontline” reality (how it really works).

7.4.5 Context analysis

Where culture analysis looks inward, context analysis requires the manager to look outward at the organization’s environment, to develop awareness of the “depth of field” of a risk. It may also usefully illustrate strategic interdependencies, particularly with reference to supply chains and customers.

A near miss should be analyzed with the same rigour as an actual crisis. Consideration should be given to how it came about and how it was avoided, or why it did not impact the organization. Particular care should be given to identifying what indications of its origins or development were spotted or missed, and why, and to adapting the organization’s anticipation and assessment capabilities accordingly.

Recommendations regarding Clause 7

- 46. All the elements of an organization’s crisis management capability should be evaluated to confirm their fitness for use.
- 47. Staff should be trained to carry out their crisis management roles before taking part in an exercise.
- 48. Staff should be selected for crisis management roles on the basis of cognate and transferable skills.
- 49. Crisis management roles should be written into job descriptions and performance assessment systems.
- 50. The advantages and disadvantages of the various types of exercise should be considered before deciding on an evaluation strategy.
- 51. Debriefing and analyzing performance and outcomes from an exercise should be rigorous and prompt.
- 52. The tools that have been identified should be used to help develop crisis awareness in the organization.
- 53. Near misses should be examined and learned from with the same rigour that would be applied to a real crisis.

Annex A (normative) – Summary of recommendations

1. The essential distinctions between BCM and crisis management, as described in this PAS, should be recognized.
2. Plans, protocols and procedures drawn up under the auspices of BCM and crisis management should reflect these distinctions and allow for responses of the right sort(s) to be invoked.
3. The development and maintenance of crisis management capability should be included in the organization's governance and strategy review processes.
4. Procedures developed should allow for crisis management and BCM responses to be operating at the same time in a coherent, integrated and complementary way.
5. The challenges of crisis management make the selection, training and development of the staff who will run and support the activity a vital consideration. The importance of this should be recognized, and the processes of selection, training and development should be managed carefully.
6. No assumptions should be made about the fitness of any individuals for crisis management roles, irrespective of their seniority in the organization. Part of the planning process may involve identifying individuals outside of the usual management chain who have skills that could aid the crisis management process, along with procedures for facilitating their inclusion when an event occurs.
7. Roles, responsibilities and performance indicators for those involved in developing, managing and implementing crisis management capability should be included in job descriptions, performance assessments and training plans.
8. Due note should be taken of the diverse potential origins of crises, including the tendency for organizations to incubate them by generating systemic vulnerabilities.
9. A systems perspective should be used to investigate the origins, development and impacts of potential or actual crises.
10. The temptation to ascribe a crisis to a single causative agent should be resisted. Rather, the crisis should be viewed as a symptom of a systemic weakness in the organization, and that should be made the object of the investigation.
11. Horizon scanning and internal systems-based analysis disciplines should be implemented.
12. Consideration should be given to the ways in which crisis vulnerabilities accumulate in a system.
13. Assumptions about the organization's resilience should be challenged, and identified vulnerabilities that present unacceptable risks should be addressed. Dialogue throughout the organization should be encouraged, so that vulnerabilities that appear in different parts of it can be cross-analyzed and addressed.
14. Building resilience and mitigating vulnerability should be regarded as an aspect of normal business under strategic direction, not simply focus on the response to crisis.
15. Rigorous standards and objectivity should be set when it comes to identifying the lessons from a crisis or a near miss. Neither individual nor corporate reputation should stand in the way of the responsibility to achieve genuine learning and enhanced resilience. Consideration should be given to using appropriate external facilitators for these processes.
16. The general characteristics of organizations with high levels of resilience should be noted with a view to promoting these characteristics within the manager's own organization.
17. The common barriers to success in achieving higher resilience should be recognized and worked through to reduce their influence. A particular focus is recommended on the human aspects of all crisis management activities.
18. A policy should be created, with the highest possible level of vigorous endorsement, that directs and empowers the appropriate people to lead the development of a crisis management capability.
19. The policy should establish direction, priorities, outcomes and reporting arrangements according to programme and project management guidelines.
20. The policy should build in review and evaluation mechanisms to monitor and confirm progress in capability development. The implications of all crisis management activities and plans for staff and their welfare should be evaluated and regularly reviewed.
21. The policy should also establish roles and responsibilities, including that of the senior responsible owner, and the whole organization should be informed accordingly.
22. An information management team who will support decision-makers in a crisis should be created and trained.
23. The disciplines of creating shared and pan-organizational situational awareness and

articulating it in a CRIP should be adopted for the briefing and guidance of decision-makers and as an operational record.

24. A set of tools to create and develop situational awareness should be adopted and used consistently, so that there is commonality of process.
25. Once the information management staff are familiar with these procedures, their performance should be evaluated and the utility of these techniques confirmed in realistic and challenging exercises (see Clause 7).
26. Arrangements should be made and tested to activate the information management staff as quickly as possible, working according to a standard operating procedure.
27. Crisis management plans developed should invoke a flexible response capability, not focus on specific risks.
28. Plans should reflect the principles identified in Clause 5.
29. The framework of crisis management identified in Figure 1 should be applied.
30. The key skills in crisis leadership identified in Information Box 7 should be the framework for developing the staff who will deliver the capability.
31. Recovery from a crisis should be seen to imply an opportunity for regeneration.
32. A communications strategy should be developed

that is flexible and can be adapted to the demands of a crisis.

33. The core communication needs of staff and key stakeholders should be considered.
34. Stakeholder engagement should be prioritized, and new stakeholders emerging should be scanned for.
35. Both formal and informal channels of communication should be used to good effect.
36. Trust should be built up with those that may be affected, directly or indirectly, by crisis events.
37. A crisis communications plan should be developed.
38. Alternative communications systems should be accessed. They should be accessible to all users and have sufficient capacity.
39. The potential for information bottlenecks, filtering and wrong interpretation of messages should be considered.
40. Information flows developed should be simple, fast and operate in real time.
41. Staff should be kept fully informed at all stages of the crisis.
42. Information provided should be factually accurate, honest, balanced and fair, with any ambiguities and uncertainties acknowledged.
43. Methods, means and styles of communication appropriate for each stakeholder should be used.
44. Plain, unambiguous language should be used in all messages.
45. The "lines to take" concept should be used to ensure consistency in messages going outside the organization.
46. All the elements of an organization's crisis management capability should be evaluated to confirm their fitness for use.
47. Staff should be trained to carry out their crisis management roles before taking part in an exercise.
48. Staff should be selected for crisis management roles on the basis of cognate and transferable skills.
49. Crisis management roles should be written into job descriptions and performance assessment systems.
50. The advantages and disadvantages of the various types of exercise should be considered before deciding on an evaluation strategy.
51. Debriefing and analyzing performance and outcomes from an exercise should be rigorous and prompt.
52. The tools that have been identified should be used to help develop crisis awareness in the organization.
53. Near misses should be examined and learned from with the same rigour that would be applied to a real crisis.





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Suggested journals for further reading

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<http://www.wiley.com/bw/journal.asp?ref=0966-0879&site=1>

Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.
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Organization and Environment (Industrial Crisis Quarterly).
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Risk Management: An International Journal.
<http://www.palgrave-journals.com/rm/index.html>

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