
Crisis Communication for Executives: Spokesperson and Stakeholder Response Course

25 – 29 January 2027
Cape town





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Programme Summary

Crisis communication for executives is a five-day training course for senior leaders at strategic level, culminating in a crisis communication playbook for their organisation. In an incident, the first public words often shape trust more than the response itself, yet spokespeople are frequently chosen on the day and statements are drafted under pressure. The approach prepares the people, messages and channels in advance, then rehearses them through realistic media and stakeholder simulations. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme in crisis communication for executives.

The Business Case

Silence, speculation or a poorly judged statement can turn a contained incident into a reputational crisis that outlasts the event. Organisations that speak early, accurately and with empathy keep the confidence of employees, communities, regulators and customers. Leaders who own the message and its timing reduce rumour, protect licences to operate and shorten the path to recovery.

- Reputational Damage and Media Sentiment: Reduce when holding statements and spokespeople are ready within the first hour.
- Stakeholder and Regulator Confidence: Strengthens through consistent, timely briefings that match the facts.
- Employee Trust and Operational Focus: Improves when staff hear from leaders before they read it elsewhere.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Situational Crisis Communication Theory Coombs: Matches response strategies to crisis type and reputational threat in Sessions 1 and 4.
- Message Mapping Covello: Structures short key messages with supporting facts for high-concern audiences in Session 2.
- Emergency Risk Communication Principles: Guide the first-hour response, empathy and calls to action in Sessions 2 and 3.
- ISO 22329:2021 Guidelines for the Use of Social Media in Emergencies: Frames online monitoring, public information and rumour control in Session 3.



Intended Participants

- Executives who may be called on to speak publicly for the organisation in an incident.
- Leaders responsible for corporate affairs, media relations and stakeholder engagement.
- Heads of HSE and operations who brief regulators, communities and employees after incidents.
- Senior officials who serve as designated spokespeople for public bodies.

The programme serves energy and industry, aviation and transport, healthcare and government.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to evaluate a crisis by type and reputational threat to select a response strategy.
2. Participants will be able to construct holding statements and message maps for high-concern audiences.
3. Participants will be able to perform as a spokesperson in media interviews and press conferences under pressure.
4. Participants will be able to design social media monitoring and rumour response arrangements.
5. Participants will be able to prioritise communication with employees, communities, regulators and partners during an incident.
6. Participants will be able to justify an apology, accountability and reputation recovery approach after the crisis.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Crisis Communication Foundations

What determines whether communication contains or inflames a crisis?

- Situational Crisis Communication Theory Crisis Types
- Reputational Threat Assessment and Response Strategies
- Crisis Communication Roles, Approvals and Legal Review
- Case Lessons From Industrial and Aviation Incidents
- Crisis Communication Readiness Audit

Day 2: The First Hour and Message Design

What should the organisation say before all the facts are known?

- Holding Statement Templates and Approval Routes
- Message Mapping for High-Concern Audiences
- Risk Communication: Empathy, Accuracy and Calls to Action
- Pre-Approved Fact Sheets and Dark Sites
- First-Hour Communication Timeline



Day 3: Media, Social Media and Rumour Management

How are journalists and online audiences handled as the story moves?

- Media Interview Techniques and Bridging
- Press Conference Planning and Delivery
- ISO 22329:2021 Social Media Monitoring and Public Information
- Rumour and Misinformation Response
- Spokesperson Selection and On-Camera Practice

Day 4: Stakeholders, Apology and Recovery

How are different audiences kept informed and trust rebuilt?

- Stakeholder Mapping for Incidents
- Employee and Family Communication
- Regulator and Partner Briefings
- Apology, Accountability and Rebuild Strategies
- Post-Crisis Reputation Recovery and Review

Day 5: Applying Crisis Communication for Executives

How are the tools combined into a playbook and tested under pressure?

- Applying the Readiness Audit to a Participant Organisation
- Drafting Message Maps for a Priority Scenario
- Live Press Conference Simulation With Peer Feedback
- Testing the Stakeholder Briefing Sequence
- Crisis Communication Playbook Presentation

Methodology

The programme relies on simulation, with participants acting as spokespeople in recorded interviews, press conferences and fast-moving online scenarios drawn from energy, transport and healthcare cases. Each exercise is reviewed against the message map and response strategy, so participants practise both what to say and how to say it.

- Suggested activity: Delivering a holding statement within fifteen minutes of a simulated plant fire.
- Suggested activity: Handling a hostile broadcast interview after a patient safety incident.
- Suggested activity: Countering a false rumour spreading online during a flight disruption.



Capstone Output

Each participant completes a crisis communication playbook for their organisation. It contains scenario-based response strategies, holding statement templates, message maps, a spokesperson roster, social media monitoring arrangements, a stakeholder briefing sequence and a recovery checklist, ready for executive sign-off.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is crisis communication for executives suitable for leaders who are not communications specialists?

Yes. It is designed for executives, senior officials and functional heads who may have to speak for the organisation. It assumes leadership experience but no prior media training.

Which models underpin crisis communication for executives in this programme?

It draws on Situational Crisis Communication Theory, message mapping, emergency risk communication principles and ISO 22329:2021 guidance on social media in emergencies.

How is the crisis communication playbook used at work?

It becomes your organisation's ready reference for incidents, with templates, message maps, roles and briefing sequences that can be activated immediately and rehearsed in regular exercises.

How does crisis communication differ from a crisis leadership programme?

It concentrates on messages, channels and spokespeople, while crisis leadership programmes focus on command structures and executive decision-making.