ICM INSTITUTE FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT

BEFORE YOU HIT SEND

Five-Minute Crisis Message Check

Before releasing a statement, employee message, social post or spokesperson response, check off each item only when the draft meets it. Mark N/A where appropriate. Assign one reviewer to flag changes and confirm required approvals.

Message / audience: _____ Reviewer: _____
Date / time / version: _____ Next update: _____

1. EMPATHY — Recognize the impact

☐ The opening acknowledges the people affected and the harm or concern they face.

☐ The language is human and respectful; it avoids minimizing harm or centering our inconvenience.

2. FACTS — Say only what we can verify

☐ Every factual claim has a verified source; numbers, dates and scope are current.

☐ We distinguish confirmed facts from unknowns and avoid speculation or blanket assurances.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY — Own our part

☐ We acknowledge our role based on known facts; we avoid blame, excuses and defensive comparisons.

☐ If apologizing, we name the harm clearly and avoid qualifiers such as “if anyone was offended.”

4. ACTION — Make the response useful

☐ We explain what we are doing now and what affected people should do or where to get help.

☐ Each promise has an accountable owner and a realistic timeline; we can deliver what we commit to.

5. FOLLOW-THROUGH — Keep stakeholders informed

☐ We identify where and when the next update will appear, even if the investigation is continuing.

☐ The message aligns with current internal and partner communications; required approvers have reviewed this version.

FINAL SCAN: CATCH THE SECOND CRISIS

Read as an affected person. Flag: dismissive language • passive blame (“mistakes were made”) • unsupported promises • unnecessary jargon • private or sensitive details • conflicting messages. Ask: What would the most critical headline quote?

RELEASE DECISION: ☐ Ready ☐ Revise ☐ Escalate for review
Fix / owner: _____

If facts are still developing, issue a brief verified holding statement through your approval process. Do not wait for every answer to acknowledge harm and explain the next step.

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