

Ebola Crisis Communication Plan

Introduction

On September 30, 2014, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) diagnosed the first case of Ebola in the United States, with the person having traveled to Dallas, Texas from West Africa. The patient did not have symptoms upon leaving West Africa, but developed symptoms approximately five days after arriving in the United States.

While the CDC maintains that a full-blown US outbreak is unlikely, organizations must consider strategies to prepare and safeguard their employees. The following checklist s provided to help organizations identify key communications best practices should a need arise.

Preparing Communications Strategies Now

- **Create an internal communication plan** – a process for reaching employees through combinations of emails, intranet postings, flyers/posters, leader talking points, FAQs or a website situation room. The plan should identify simple, key messages, a reliable process and the vehicles for providing continual updates and collecting feedback from employees.
- **Create an external communication plan** – a process for reaching external stakeholders, customers, media, shareholders, suppliers, local community, health care providers, analysts, retirees, union representatives, etc.

What to Say to Employees

- **State the facts:** Connect employees to timely, accurate information from CDC, WHO and your State and County Health Departments. Provide clear instructions about what to do if employees suspect they have been exposed to Ebola.
- **Demystify the fear:** Communicate facts from authoritative resources on how Ebola is spread and how to avoid infection. Describe the effectiveness of hospital safety measures (e.g., negative pressure environments, personal protective equipment, etc.)
- **Outline safety steps the organization is taking on behalf of its employees:** Clearly articulate and communicate preventive actions the organization is taking to avert or contain transmission of Ebola at work (focus on technology and techniques for employee safety, hygiene, biohazard disposal).
- **Promote safety steps that employees can take at work:** Use posters, memos, emails, intranet postings, supervisor talking points, FAQs, etc. to promote preventive actions employees can take (hygiene and avoidance) – see WHO and CDC recommendations.
- **Describe the impact on the organization:** Describe the potential impact of a outbreak on your operations, services, travel, supply chain, business, revenues, etc., so employees can plan accordingly.
- **Summarize company policies/positions:** Describe health plan coverage (preventive and treatment), attendance, paid time off, payroll continuation, travel, and group meetings.

We're here to empower results:

Contact your Aon account representative or consultant for support in developing your crisis response and in organizing, preparing and implementing your crisis communication plan. Aon crisis communication consultants are prepared to help you develop and implement your plan.