

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 5220 CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Introduction

Tragedy and crisis can strike at any time. Events such as a 1) violent crime, a traffic accident, a youth protection issue or a simple case of bad judgment; 2) natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes and floods; or 3) events caused by an action or inaction of a Rotarian or non-Rotarian may lead to a situation that will place a Rotary club officer or board member, an entire club, the District Governor or other Rotarians in a situation that requires their utmost and immediate attention.

When such an event occurs, it is important to have a plan in place that can be followed to ensure that the matter is handled with the utmost care, being sure that those involved in the incident are kept safe, that communication with those who need to know is completed quickly, accurately, and professionally, and that other action is taken swiftly and professionally when needed.

Additionally, in our internet-driven information age, written and video content can be transmitted in a matter of seconds, which makes it important that when a crisis erupts, our Rotary District responds with a clear message, presented honestly and in a timely manner.

What Constitutes a Crisis?

A “crisis” for the purposes of implementing the Rotary District 5220 Crisis Management Plan is an unanticipated, unusual event or occurrence arising out of, or closely related to, a Rotary Club project, event, or program that results in, or is likely to result in, physical or psychological harm, serious injury, or death to a participant, or that is or can be detrimental to the public image of Rotary. Examples include a death or injury stemming either from natural disasters impacting a Rotary project, event, or program (such as fire, flood or earthquake) or human caused (such as accidental or intentional mass casualty event). A “crisis” can include suspected illegal activities where the victim or suspected perpetrator is a Rotarian, a Rotary club, or the District; or other event that involves a Rotarian, a Rotary club, or the District that impacts persons or property in a substantial, negative manner.

These events may, but not necessarily, involve youth involved in Rotary functions and activities, such as RYLA students, Interactors, Rotary Youth Exchange students and participants. Such youth programs have carefully designed youth protection. District 5220’s Youth Protection and Abuse and Harassment Prevention Policy takes precedence over this plan and is to be followed prior to implementing this plan, although every effort should be made to provide simultaneous notification of the “crisis” to the District Governor.

Purpose of this Policy

In the event of a “crisis” it is imperative to operate pursuant to established guidelines to ensure the communication of accurate, timely, and consistent information to Rotarians and the public, and to provide for the immediate care and protection of all individuals involved in the situation, as well as their families.

It is always the policy of District 5220 to deliver the highest level of transparency and cooperation consistent with applicable law and government policy.

Policy and Parameters

1. *The District Governor currently in office is the only officer of Rotary International in the District. As such, he or she is the main contact between the District and RI and between the District and the Club, event or activity manager of the Rotary activity involved when a crisis occurs.*
2. The District Governor holds final responsibility for Crisis Management in District 5220. In the absence of the District Governor, or in the case of his or her inability to act, then, the following individuals, in the order listed, shall hold final responsibility:
 - a. The Vice Governor
 - b. The Immediate Past District Governor
 - c. The District Governor-Elect
3. The District Governor shall annually appoint a Crisis Management Team as part of the District Leadership Team to provide support and guidance as needed.
4. Only the District Governor or his/her designate as set forth in item 2 above, has the authority to activate the Crisis Management Team, or involve individual members of the team, when required.
5. An individual Rotary club president or designee will represent an individual club if the incident requires, as requested by the District Governor.

Crisis Management Team

To provide support and guidance as needed, a Crisis Management Team (CMT) will be established annually as part of the District Leadership Team,

The “core” Crisis Management Team shall be composed of:

1. The District Governor as Chair
2. The Vice-Governor
3. The Immediate Past District Governor
4. The District Governor-Elect
5. District Governor- Nominee

Depending on the nature of the “crisis”, the CMT may include any or all of the following as determined by the District Governor.

6. District Youth Protection Officer
7. An attorney at law who is familiar with local law and can give immediate advice as to confidentiality, potential legal action and liability
8. The District Public Image Chair
9. The District Communications Chair
10. An Incident Spokesperson (“Spokesperson”) who serves as liaison to the media, who may or may not be the District Communications or Public Image Chair
11. The Treasurer of the District

In addition, others may be asked to serve on the Crisis Management Team for a specific incident as required and determined by the District Governor:

12. The Assistant Governor of the Area of the incident, if the incident reported happens in a distant community where local Rotary District Leadership presence is important
13. The chair of the committee responsible for the activity where the incident originated, if applicable
14. Individuals or companies at the request of the District Governor

Crisis Management Team Education

1. All members of the Crisis Management Team should be familiar with the most recent edition of Rotary International’s Media Crisis Handbook, 515-EN-(507) and the Rotary Youth Protection Guide 775-EN-(2) and District 5220’s Youth Protection and Abuse and Harassment Prevention Policy.
2. All members of the Media Contact Team should undergo media relations training available through Rotary International.

If a Crisis Develops

1. The Rotary club president or other Rotarian who becomes aware of a crisis situation shall first determine if appropriate authorities have been called into action, such as law enforcement, medical emergency, or fire responders. Next, immediately contact and consult with the District Governor. If the District Governor is not available, contact the next person on the Crisis Management Team list in the order listed. All youth program staff shall follow the detailed reporting procedures of the District’s Youth Protection and Abuse and Harassment Prevention Policy before contacting the District Governor, although every effort should be made to simultaneously notify the District Governor as well.
2. The District Governor or designee determines the need to consult the Crisis Management Team, and decides if the team or certain members of the team should be activated. The District Governor has sole discretion and authority to determine which members of the team, if any, should be activated.
3. The District Governor will notify members of the Crisis Management Team that he/she has chosen to activate in response to the crisis.
4. The District Governor will confirm that law enforcement has been contacted, if applicable and not already involved.

5. In situations requiring law enforcement or other emergency service involvement, the Crisis Management Team will cooperate with public authorities in all respects and follow the direction of responsible public officials.
6. The District Governor will contact Rotary International and the current Rotary International Director for District 5220.
7. The District Governor will designate an Incident Spokesperson, if there is not one already so designated. This should be someone who is on top of the issue, communicates well, and is comfortable interacting with the media.
8. The District Governor will direct the Spokesperson to prepare a statement that accurately states the facts, expresses Rotary's position, and conveys the appropriate tone (sympathy, apology, commitment, etc.) and develop key messages to help the Spokesperson convey Rotary's position consistently and accurately. The Spokesperson will develop a set of "talking points" to be used as reference by the Media Resource Team to keep messages simple and focused. The Spokesperson will update the statement and talking points as needed.
9. The District Governor will ask club presidents and assistant governors to communicate appropriate and approved information to affected clubs, and instruct all Rotary club members to refer press inquiries to the Spokesperson.
10. The District Governor may communicate with Assistant Governors, District Leadership Team members, clubs and/or individual Rotarians if needed.
11. The District Governor will notify Rotary International and the Rotary International Director of significant changes in the crisis situation and media involvement.
12. The District Governor will seek further assistance from RI regarding media inquiries as needed.

If the Media Contacts You First

If a Rotary club president, event or activity chair, or some other Rotarian is contacted by the media, please keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. Our goal is to have an organized media response through the Spokesperson. Follow the protocols set out above. Do not issue a statement or make any comment to the media other than referring them to the Spokesperson. Ignoring media can contribute to unnecessary speculation, but it is the responsibility of the Spokesperson to communicate the facts and positions of Rotary to the media.
 - a. For purposes of District 5220's Crisis Management Plan, "media" includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - i. Traditional print media such as newspapers
 - ii. Broadcast media such as television and streaming
 - iii. Social media platforms
 - iv. Online sources such as bloggers. This may include an untrained citizen journalist who captures an event through photographs, videotapes, or recordings capable of putting online visual, audio and text from the site of a "crisis".
2. The District Governor and the Spokesperson will designate a Media Resource Team who will assist the Spokesperson in interaction with media. This will enable the

Spokesperson to divide the workload among several team members in such areas as identified in Section 1.a., above. Each team member may have one area designated to follow and report to the Spokesperson, such as local news, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc., allowing the District Governor and the Spokesperson to maintain control of messages propagating on social media. The contact information for the Spokesperson will be provided to anyone reasonably anticipated to be contacted by the media. That information should be accompanied by instructions to refer all inquiries to the Spokesperson in a cooperative and transparent manner that avoids a response limited to “no comment”. The Spokesperson may refer an inquiry to a member of the Media Resource Team.

3. Any Rotarian contacted by the media shall refer the inquiring media representative to the District Governor or the Spokesperson, without comment. *Immediately contact the District Governor or designate, even if in doubt of the urgency or importance of the matter. Let those responsible make the decisions as to urgency and importance.*
4. If you need time to confirm or determine the District Governor or Spokesperson’s contact information, tell the reporter you or a Rotary representative will call back promptly.
5. Before use, the statement prepared by the Spokesperson should be reviewed by Rotary International Public Image and Press Relations staff.
6. The District Governor and/or Spokesperson will be completely honest and truthful, will not say anything he/she is unsure of and will not cover up or make excuses.
7. The District Governor and Spokesperson will represent Rotary. When they speak, they ARE Rotary. No personal observations or speculations will be issued.
8. Monitor the media’s local coverage of the issue for accuracy and tone. If Rotary is misrepresented, let the Spokesperson know. He/she will convey the concern to the District Governor for action, if needed.
9. Remember that nothing said to the media is “off the record.”

A Final Word

Remember: Clubs, District committees and individuals are NOT to handle any crisis alone! Don’t do it! Ask for help. District 5220 and Rotary International have trained responders who can relieve you of the worry of facing the media when your attention is needed dealing with the actual crisis. The District Governor shall decide the most appropriate course of action. Contact your District Governor as soon as you think a possible crisis is developing or has developed.

After the Fact

Once the crisis has ended, the District Governor and the Crisis Management Team should assess handling of the crisis and recommend changes in procedure to improve future crisis management.

With the start of each new club year on July 1st, the District Administrative Secretary will add to the list below, the appropriate names and contact information as directed by the District Governor.

Core Crisis Management Team Members		Cell Phone Number
District Governor		
Vice Governor		
Immediate Past District Governor		
District Governor-Elect		
District Governor-Nominee		
Ad Hoc Committee Members	<i>Shall be members in good standing of clubs in District 5220</i>	
Youth Protection Officer		
Legal Advisor		
Financial Advisor		
Public Image Chair		
Communications Chair		
Incident Spokesperson		
Rotary International Resources for Crisis Management Team		
RI Director		
Club & District Support		
Assistant Club & District Support		
Chief Public Image Officer		
Risk Manager		
Youth Programs Manager		
Rotary Insurance Broker		
Insurance and Risk Management Website		