

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAYBOOK

Excerpt — Framework, Triage, and Response Templates

Version 1.0 — Reviewed Quarterly

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Cluster D — PR, Media, Stakeholder Engagement & Crisis Communications

1. Purpose & Scope

This Crisis Communications Playbook establishes the standardized framework for identifying, triaging, and responding to communications-sensitive events that may affect the [Client]'s reputation, stakeholders, or operations. It is designed as an operational reference document held by the crisis response team, with controlled access and quarterly review.

This excerpt presents three core components: the severity triage matrix, the holding statement library, and the activation & escalation protocol. The full playbook additionally includes scenario-specific Q&A libraries, dark site content templates, simulation exercise records, and post-incident review templates.

Guiding Principles

- **Speed with discipline.** First public communication within 60 minutes of confirmed incident classification — never at the expense of accuracy.
- **One voice.** All public communication flows through pre-designated, trained spokespersons. No improvisation.
- **Stakeholder hierarchy.** Internal stakeholders, regulators, and affected parties are informed before media, where operationally possible.
- **Bilingual by default.** All external communications are released in Arabic and English simultaneously.
- **Document as you go.** Every decision, communication, and escalation is logged in the live incident log for post-incident review.

2. Severity Triage Matrix

Every communications-sensitive event is classified within 30 minutes of detection using the four-level matrix below. Classification drives the activation tier, response cadence, and approval requirements.

Level	Definition	Indicators	Activation
LEVEL 1 CRITICAL	Immediate, severe threat to life, safety, public confidence, or business continuity.	Fatality or serious injury; major operational shutdown; regulatory action; national-press lead story potential.	Full crisis team CEO + Legal + Comms + Subject Lead within 60 min
LEVEL 2 HIGH	Significant reputational risk requiring active management; coverage likely.	Project incident with no casualties; senior personnel issue; trade-press scrutiny; sustained social media activity.	Senior comms team Comms + Legal + Account Director within 2 hours
LEVEL 3 ELEVATED	Localized issue or single-channel concern with potential to escalate.	Single negative article; localized stakeholder complaint; isolated social-media flare-up.	Comms response team Account Director + PR Lead, same day

Level	Definition	Indicators	Activation
LEVEL 4 MONITOR	Background topic to be tracked; no immediate action required.	Industry-wide commentary; competitor incident with possible spillover; emerging issue trend.	Standard monitoring PR Lead, weekly review

3. Activation & Escalation Protocol

Upon detection of a potential incident, the following 90-minute protocol governs the first-response window:

Time	Stage	Action	Owner
0 min	Detection	Incident identified via monitoring, internal report, or external alert.	PR Lead / Monitoring Officer
0–15 min	Verification	Internal verification of facts; confirmation from operations / safety / legal teams.	PR Lead + Subject Lead
15–30 min	Classification	Severity level assigned (1–4); triage matrix applied; activation tier confirmed.	Account Director
30–60 min	Mobilization	Crisis team convened (war-room or virtual); incident log opened; stakeholder map activated; holding statement adapted from library.	Account Director + Crisis Advisor
60 min	First communication	Approved holding statement issued internally + (if required) externally in Arabic and English.	Spokesperson + PR Lead
60–90 min	Stakeholder cascade	Tier 1 stakeholders briefed (regulators, partners, key media); employee cascade activated.	Account Director + Internal Comms

4. Holding Statement Library

The library contains pre-approved holding statements for the most plausible scenarios. Statements are designed to be issued with minimal customization — square-bracketed fields are completed at the moment of activation and approved within the 60-minute window.

Template A — Operational Incident (Project Site)

[Holding Group Name] confirms that an incident occurred at [project / site name] on [date] at approximately [time]. The safety and welfare of our people, partners, and the communities in which we operate is our highest priority. Emergency response procedures were activated immediately, and the relevant authorities have been notified. We are working closely with [authority / partner] to establish full facts. Further information will be shared once verified. We thank our colleagues, partners, and the public for their patience and understanding.

Template B — Personnel-Related Issue

[Holding Group Name] is aware of [recent reports / matters relating to] [topic]. We take all such matters seriously and conduct our internal review processes in line with the highest professional and governance standards. As this matter is currently subject to review, it would not be appropriate to comment further at this stage. The Group remains fully focused on its operations and on its commitments to clients, partners, and stakeholders.

Template C — Regulatory / Public Scrutiny

[Holding Group Name] confirms that it is engaged with [authority / regulator] in relation to [topic / matter]. The Group is fully committed to compliance with all applicable laws and regulations and to maintaining the highest standards of governance across its operations. We are cooperating fully and will provide any further information that is appropriate to share at the relevant time.

Template D — Sustained Social-Media Activity

Thank you for raising this. We are aware of [topic] and are looking into it carefully. The wellbeing of those involved and the integrity of our operations are our priority. We will share an update once we have full information. For media enquiries, please contact [press contact]. For specific concerns, please reach us directly at [stakeholder contact channel].

Each template is also maintained in approved Arabic translation, reviewed quarterly by a native bilingual editor and a senior crisis advisor.

5. Key Message Architecture

All crisis communications are anchored in a four-message architecture, applied consistently across statements, Q&A, social, and stakeholder briefings:

Message Type	Purpose	Construction Principle
Acknowledge	Confirm awareness; show empathy.	State what is known. Express concern for those affected. Avoid speculation.
Action	Demonstrate response.	State concrete steps already taken. Use active voice. Avoid future-tense promises that cannot be evidenced.
Accountability	Reinforce values & governance.	Reference standards, regulators, and review processes. Avoid defensive framing.
Assurance	Restore confidence.	Reaffirm operational continuity, commitments, and stakeholder support. Forward-looking but credible.

6. Post-Incident Review

Within 5 working days of incident closure, the response team conducts a structured review covering:

- Timeline reconstruction from the incident log
- Decision-quality review at each escalation point
- Coverage and sentiment analysis (pre, during, post)
- Stakeholder feedback synthesis
- Lessons learned + recommended playbook updates
- Closure report submitted to leadership and archived

Playbook revisions arising from post-incident reviews are incorporated at the next quarterly cycle and republished under version control.

This document is an excerpt from a sample Crisis Communications Playbook prepared by [Agency Name] to demonstrate Cluster D capability under the [Client] Framework Agreement RFP. The full playbook contains additional sections (scenario-specific Q&A libraries, dark site content templates, spokesperson briefing packs, simulation exercise schedules, and stakeholder mapping) which are available on request and adapted per engagement. All client names, project specifics, and quantitative data have been redacted.