

CITY OF COLD LAKE CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



Last revised: March 2025



CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Crisis communication requires quick action, working with limited facts in a fast-paced environment.

Goal: To keep audiences informed with timely and accurate information, using the right mediums at the right time.

Timely: In order to be a credible source of accurate information, the City of Cold Lake needs to be first to present communications on a crisis or incident. This takes form of a Holding Statement on the City's social media channels (Facebook/Instagram/X/LinkedIn) and the City's Emergency Information page: www.coldlake.com/emergency.

Accuracy: Information must be validated prior to sharing, and come from the Incident Commander (IC) or Director of Emergency Management (DEM) when possible.

Empathy: Express empathy and compassion in order to connect with the audience. If the City of Cold Lake is at fault, demonstrate remorse and share what we are doing to fix the issue. Showing emotion shows there are humans behind the screen.

Respect: Be aware of details that cannot be shared, such as names of those impacted, especially if Next of Kin need to be notified. Be mindful of releasing sensitive information that could require a FOIP, or details that the IC or DEM may not want to be public yet.

Credibility: Honesty helps to maintain trust with the audience. Be transparent with facts, and stick to commitments, such as timely updates of information.

Details: Share as many details as possible, when possible. Audiences may need to make informed decisions during a crisis, and without credible information and details, be left wondering what direction to take.

Consistency: Inconsistent messaging causes confusion. Use one crisis communication reporting structure and share messages across all platforms to ensure message consistency. Direct the audience to www.coldlake.com/emergency as the main source of information.

Important: Remember that community awareness limits misinformation. If the City of Cold Lake is not the first with facts, the audience may be left to come up with their own (potentially incorrect) information.



facebook.com/CityofColdLake



[@CityofColdLake](https://twitter.com/CityofColdLake)



instagram.com/CityofColdLake



[@CityofColdLake](https://in/CityofColdLake)



youtube.com/CityofColdLake



www.coldlake.com

ACTIONS TO TAKE DURING A CRISIS

Step 1: Release a Holding Statement

A sample, approved holding statement can be found as Appendix A.

- Update Holding Statement to website.
- Consider whether an Emergency Alert is required. Be in contact with DEM, as access to Alberta Emergency Alerts is available only by DEM.

Step 2: Activate Crisis Communications Plan

- Remove access to social media channels from non-communications staff, to ensure that the information being posted is coming from a credible source and through proper channels, following the outline above. As the situation develops, access can be restored as necessary, allowing for a larger span of control.
- Verify point of contact for IC or DEM.
- Start gathering and verifying information.
- Start preparing an Initial Statement.
- Start preparing key messages. (More on key messages in Step 3)

Step 3: Initial Statement & Key Messages

Release an Initial Statement, which has more details than the Holding Statement. It should include:

- Who is involved – Who are we writing about?
- What we're telling them – What happened?
- Where did it happen – Where is the location?
- Why the event occurred – Was there a specific cause?
- When the incident occurred – What time or day did it happen?
- How this incident came to be – How did it happen, if it can be shared?

A sample Initial Statement can be found in Appendix B.

NOTE: Initial Statement should be approved by IC or DEM before being released, to ensure accuracy.

Key messages:

As part of the Initial Statement, key messages should be created as concise, bite-sized pieces of information for the audience to absorb quickly.

Identify:

- What happened?
- What are we doing about it?

• What do we want the community to do?
Sample key messages can be found in Appendix C.

Other items to consider at this time, if necessary:

- Identify who needs to know about this:
 - Elected officials
 - Residents
 - Employees
 - Local community partners
 - Industry
 - Government
 - Neighbouring Communities
- Determine our position on the crisis
 - Are we responsible?
 - Are we leading or supporting?
 - Stay in your lane.
- Select Spokesperson
 - Brief them on what is happening
 - Prepare key messages
 - Review media training tips (Appendix D)
 - Practice

ACTIONS TO TAKE DURING A CRISIS

Step 4: Select Channels and Release Information

- Reach out to local media as necessary with our Initial Statement.
- Update website, posting the most recent information at the top. Updates should be timestamped with DAY, MONTH, TIME at the start.
- Update original messaging. Do not create a new post. Updates should be timestamped with DAY, MONTH, TIME at the start.
- If using spokesperson, be sure the messaging is clear, concise, compassionate, and consistent.

Step 5: Monitor Media

- Direct people to website if they do not have up-to-date information.
- Ensure audiences are being reached. Look at different groups on Facebook to see if posts are being shared and correct information is being accessed.
- Crisis communications is not one-and-done. Keep repeating (date and time stamped) information until you have new information to share.

Remember that people are the priority. Match the communications to the issue, and seek to neither under- or over-communicate. Be open about the crisis, and seek to inform the audience as you would want to be informed if on the other side.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Sample Holding Statement

This is a public information message from the City of Cold Lake on DAY, MONTH, at TIME. (We are responding to reports of XXX) (We are responding to an alarm at XXX) (We are restricting access to XXX). Verified details will be shared on our Facebook page and the City of Cold Lake website at www.coldlake.com/emergency as they become available.

Date:

Time:

Appendix B: Sample Initial Statement

Update #1

DAY, MONTH, TIME.

This is a message from the City of Cold Lake on DAY, MONTH, at TIME. (Due to a gas leak, City Hall, located at 5513 48 Avenue, has been evacuated.)

(Employees and visitors have been safely evacuated to the Energy Centre. Until further notice, all meetings and operations at City Hall are cancelled.)

(Cold Lake Fire-Rescue is at the scene. The community is asked to stay away from the area.) Updates will be shared on our website at www.coldlake.com/emergency

This message will be updated (at 2:00 pm) (as more information becomes available.)

Appendix C: Sample Key Messages

(What happened; what are we doing about it; what do we want the community to do?)

There was a collision between a logging vehicle and a propane truck. Cold Lake Fire-Rescue is responding. Stay away from the area and follow detour routes.

The incident happened near XXX. Police are rerouting traffic around the area. Keep informed with updates on our website at www.coldlake.com/emergency

APPENDIXES

Appendix D: Media Training Tips

1. Should you be the spokesperson? Is this in your lane? Are you the appropriate person to be interviewed?
2. Be prepared with at least three key messages and/or a briefing statement before the interview. Practice saying these statements out loud.
3. Be polite and respectful. Introduce yourself by stating your name, job title, and organization/company.
4. Breathe. Listen to the question being asked. Pause before answering. Think about what you are going to say. Respond to the question.
5. Speak clearly and confidently. Use language that is easy to understand and repeatable. Be mindful of your tone, body posture, and facial expressions. Avoid sunglasses if possible and keep your hands out of your pockets.
6. Bridging Statements. Use these statements to bring the interview back to your key messages:
 - a. The facts as I know them...
 - b. What I am here to speak about today is...
 - c. It would be more correct to say...
7. Own the interview. You are the subject matter expert on the content you are sharing.

