



# Policy 392, Ver. 2

## Crisis Management Communication Plan

Des Moines Pool Metropolitan Park District | May 19, 2020

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## OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

Transparency is an important function of a public agency, especially in emergency situations. No operation or facility is immune from emergencies and the Des Moines Pool Metropolitan Park District (DMPMPD) recognizes its responsibility for the safety of its employees and patrons during such a time. In addition, the District has identified the need to protect property and assets and to expedite the recovery of its functions and activities. An important element of this process is a Crisis Management Communication Plan to ensure the district is communicating in an effective manner to patrons and public,

The Crisis Management Communication Plan will be implemented in the case of an emergency when communication to the public and media is critical.

The plan shall rely on the District General Manager, Aquatics Manager and other management team staff to ensure that all information in emergency situations are investigated, disseminated and accurately communicated to its employees, patrons, public and the media.

### DMPMPD MANAGEMENT TEAM

The following individuals are members of the DMPMPD Management Team:

- District General Manager
- Aquatics Manager
- Aquatics Coordinator
- District Clerk
- Head Guard and Other Key Staff (if needed)

### ACTIVATION OF THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION PLAN

In the event that the Emergency Response Provisions (Section 5) of the Mount Rainier Pool, Operations Manual is activated, the following DMPMPD Management Team members will assume their responsibilities as outlined. In all areas involving the District General Manager (as listed below), the Aquatics Manager will assume responsibilities if the District General Manager is not available.

#### Board President

1. Spokesperson
2. Call a special board meeting (if needed)
3. In absence of District General Manager and Aquatics Manager, the Board President may need to take on their roles listed below, and/or delegate those roles to other board members or staff.
  - a. Note-any other succession of the board will follow Article 5, "Elected Officers" of the District's Bylaws.

#### Board Members

1. Refer all requests to District Spokesperson
2. In absence of DMPMPD Management Staff, Board President may delegate Crisis Management Communication Plan items to board members.

#### District General Manager (DGM)

1. Make immediate contacts (Board of Commissioners, Management Team and Key Staff)
2. Spokesperson
3. Receive all media calls
4. Gather pertinent information for distribution to media
5. Delegate key employees to assist with gathering of information and to be interviewed by media
6. Notify victim's family of emergency situation

7. Call DMPMPD Management Team together
8. Produce memo regarding Media Crisis Policies for all District staff
9. Assist with Media Communication and Media
10. Notify other Agencies (if applicable)
11. Contact Attorney
12. Contact Insurance Company

**Aquatics Manager**

1. Make immediate contact with District General Manager and other management team members (if applicable).
2. Notify front line staff of crisis
3. Complete or review Accident/Incident Report and any other pertinent paperwork
4. Assist with media calls and communication
5. Contact EAP or other counseling services for employees or public involved in the crisis
6. Coordinate the identification of witnesses and gather contact information

**Aquatics Coordinator**

1. Assist Aquatics Manager with responsibilities (if needed)
2. Assist with photography/video capture of incident area (if needed)
3. Contact other managers (if needed)
4. Assist in other areas (if needed)

**District Clerk**

1. Assist District General Manager with responsibilities (if needed)
2. Contact other managers (if needed)
3. Assist in other areas (if needed)



### CRISIS COMMUNICATION PHONE LIST Des Moines Pool Metropolitan Park District

**EMERGENCY**

	<u>Emergency</u>	<u>Non-Emergency</u>
Police	911	206.878.3801
Fire	911	253.839.6234

**DISTRICT FACILITIES**

Des Moines Pool M.P.D. District Offices	206.429.3852
Mount Rainier Pool	206.824.4722

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Shane Young (President)	REDACTED
Tricia Croom (Clerk of the Board)	REDACTED
Gene Achziger	REDACTED
Joe Dusenbury	REDACTED
Eric Kasnick	REDACTED

**DMPMPD MANAGEMENT TEAM**

Scott Deschenes (District General Manager)	REDACTED
Dominic Finazzo (Aquatics Manager)	REDACTED
Lauryne Bartlett (Aquatics Coordinator)	REDACTED
Linda Ray (District Clerk)	REDACTED

**LEGAL**

Brian Snure	REDACTED
WCIA Insurance (Tanya Crites)	REDACTED

**PRESS CONTACTS**

Waterland Blog (Scott Schaefer)	REDACTED
Kent Reporter	REDACTED
Federal Way Mirror	REDACTED
Seattle Times	REDACTED
Highline Times	REDACTED
King 5	REDACTED
Komo 4	REDACTED
Kiro TV 7	REDACTED
KCPQ 13	REDACTED
Komo 1000	REDACTED
Kiro 97.3	REDACTED

## CRISIS COMMUNICATION

In the unfortunate event of a crisis related to the Des Moines Pool Metropolitan Park District (DMPMPD), it is important to have one person available to receive updated information and to provide official information to the media. Otherwise, differing messages with inaccurate facts may be given to reporters resulting in catastrophic repercussions for the District. It may also prohibit important information from reaching the media.

### What is a Crisis?

A crisis is a situation or event that causes (or has the potential to cause) keen public or media concern and a need to provide prompt, accurate information. The potential crisis lists are endless but see below for a list of potential incidents. If you know of a situation or event that could be of concern to the public or media, please contact the head of the Management Team immediately. The District has appointed District General Manager to decide whether the crisis management communication plan needs to be implemented or whether the situation needs to be monitored and handled carefully. If the head of the DMPMPD Management Team is not available, a potential or immediate crisis should be reported to any management team member.

- Drowning or other serious aquatic related emergency
- Missing Person
- Allegations of abuse
- Criminal act that has occurred on District Property
- Natural disaster
- Medical quarantine
- Airline accident

Please see Mount Rainier Pool Operations Plan for full list of Emergency Action Plans (EAPs).

### Before a Crisis Occurs:

1. Designate a media spokesperson. This person will receive all media calls and coordinate all official information that is to be given to the media. The designated person should be the District General Manager, Board President or someone designated either by the District General Manager or Board President in their absence .
2. Inform all key staff and anyone who takes outside telephone calls that the District General Manager is to take media calls during a crisis. Put that information in writing near the telephones.
3. Inform all staff of the District that the District General Manager must be kept informed of important news and needs to be updated frequently in any emergency. All key staff must lend a helping hand to gather and investigate information during a crisis.
4. The management team, commissioners and staff should know how to reach the District General Manager by phone.
5. All key staff members will act as a crisis team that will assist with communications and develop specific strategies when a crisis occurs. The team will help gather accurate information.
6. Understand the role of our attorneys in our communications efforts. Attorney should be consulted when possible on any crisis that involves potential liability issues such as drownings, missing persons, abuse allegations, criminal acts, etc.
7. Compile a list of media contacts.
8. Determine where a news conference could be held, if ever necessary.
9. Practice implementing the plan.

**CRISIS COMMUNICATION FACT SHEET**  
**Des Moines Pool Metropolitan Park District**

What Happened?

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Who Is Involved?

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When Did It Occur?

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How Did It Occur?

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Why Did It Occur?

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Action Taken?

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***Emergency telephone numbers are listed on page 5 of this plan. Do not give these numbers out to the public or the media.***



**CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS – DISTRICT SPOKESPERSON**

**Keep the following information nearby in case of a crisis at the Des Moines Pool Metropolitan Park District or Mt. Rainier Pool. If there is accurate, up-to-date information available, that must be provided to the public in an emergency, the attached procedures will be followed, and the attached information will be important.**

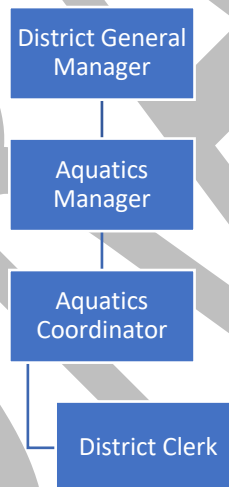
The District General Manager or designee will be the official spokesperson of the Des Moines Pool Metropolitan Park District. Contact the District General Manager immediately in a communications-emergency situation. If the District General Manager cannot be reached, the Aquatics Manager will take responsibility.

The District General Manager or designee will receive all media calls and coordinate all official information that is to be given to the media. The spokesperson will designate other individuals to be interviewed as appropriate and will assist the news media in getting access to the key individuals and accurate information.

The District General Manager must be kept informed of important news and must be updated frequently in any emergency. All staff members are delegated to assist in gathering and investigating information for its validity as it becomes available. If the news media cannot get accurate, prompt information through the District General Manager, they will quickly find their own sources to meet their deadlines.

**CRISIS COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES FOR STAFF**

1. Stay calm and in control. Notify the District General Manager that a crisis exists and give all information about the crisis to a management team staff member immediately (that is known at the time).
2. The District General Manager will quickly assemble the DMPMPD Management Team through the 'Phone Tree' (as shown below). Obtain and compile accurate information quickly.



3. The District General Manager will disseminate all related facts on the crisis as known.
4. The Aquatics Manager and Aquatics Coordinator (if needed) will inform key staff of the activation of the Crisis Management Communication Plan has been activated. Message to Staff will be as follows:
  - a. Brief objective description of situation.
  - b. Inform staff that they may receive phone calls from media or concerned patrons.
  - c. Instruct that if contacted to simply state that we do not have any details regarding the situation and that the District General Manager is the spokesperson and can be reached 253.245.3810.



- d. Write down any media contacts on 'Media Log' when called
5. Once information has been gathered, the DMPMPD Management Team would then determine the investigation and research roles of employees present. DMPMPD Management Team will direct all statements to 'Crisis Management Communication Plan.'
6. The District General Manager the Board President or in their absence a designee will provide all "official statements." Any employee who has spoken with the media must notify the District General Manager immediately and let the crisis team know what was said and to whom. The DMPMPD Management Team needs to be aware of the information being requested and/or disseminated.
7. The District General Manager shall notify and brief Legal Counsel and ask for immediate legal suggestions. The District General Manager will also notify the insurance company immediately. The insurance company may suggest the District utilize their Pre-Defense program in managing the situation.
8. The District General Manager shall be immediately available to the media and provide the media with information as soon as it is verified.
9. Let the media know what information we can and cannot provide. ("We cannot release the names of the accident victims yet, but as soon as we have notified the victims' family, we will let you know.")
10. No victim information of any kind can be released until family is notified and may not be mentioned at all, depending upon the victim's age.
11. Never speak "off the record". Treat everything you say as if it were going to be on the television and radio news, it just might be.
12. Liability or guilt must never be admitted under any circumstances.
13. Never say, "No comment." Instead, let the media know that the District General Manager will provide the information as soon as it is available.

Because official statements can come from either the District General Manager, the Board President or their designee, it is imperative that they be in close communication throughout the crisis. Each must let the other know what official statements have been made to the media and each must be kept informed of new or changing information.



**WHEN DEALING WITH THE NEWS MEDIA**

In a Crisis Situation, all information will be released from the District's Management Team. Employees that are knowledgeable of the event or who are witnesses to the event may be approached by reporters. Employees should automatically direct reporters to the District General Manager as the official spokesperson for the District.

1. As members of the Des Moines Pool Metropolitan Park District team of employees, you will be responsible for following the media policies of the District. (See Employee Handbook Section 8.13).
2. If you find yourself in an emergency situation, please take all immediate action. Once the situation is under control, notify your immediate supervisor and/or the Management team.
3. All contact with outside media sources such as reporters, producers and directors, print or television, must be referred to the District General Manager. If you can't remember that, refer them to your Department Head.
4. All media contact must be cleared through your District General Manager, who will in turn contact you if a reporter has been given your name as a media source.
5. Please do not talk to media without prior approval.
6. The procedure allows the District to protect the privacy of our staff and participants.
7. Do not speak about the incident with friends, relatives or anyone outside of work until cleared to. Stories can be exaggerated based on who is telling it, and inaccurate information can get into the wrong hands.

**ON TALKING TO THE MEDIA**

After you have received approval from the District General, you may speak with the media.

It is acceptable not to know the answer to a question. If so, just openly admit "I don't know." Direct the reporter at that time to the District General Manager as the Spokesperson. Do not say "No Comment" as the Reporters may interpret the "no comment" to imply guilt and reluctance to speak with the media.

When Speaking To The Media

- Stay Positive – Admit Crisis but never guilt or cause
- Only release verified information as directed by the Executive Director
- Reinforce rescue efforts, positive safety record, etc.
- Balance public statements with known facts
- Never say "No Comment"

Basic Media Response Outline

- Acknowledge incident
- Highlight rescue efforts
- Emphasize investigation efforts
- Provide facts as available and approved
- Always be honest
- Answer all phone calls from media in order they are received

Remember Following Responses

- "I know, and I can tell you...."
- "I know, and I can't tell you ....., and here's why...."
- "I don't know, but I'll find out"
- "Let me get back to you"

Remember that if you make a statement, you can be quoted. Reporters like short phrases that are easy to quote especially colorful phrases that make good headlines. Use caution as you speak. Don't let a friendly reporter disarm you. If you don't

want to read it in the paper, don't say it! If you don't have authority to speak to the press on behalf of the District your comments should be restricted to directing reporters to the General Manager.

When you are authorized to speak with reporters under this Policy or authorized by the General Manager, be sure to ask when the reporter's deadline is and respect it. Remember that journalists are under pressure due to time constraints and unfortunately, accuracy sometimes suffers as a result. When you respond to a reporter's questions and inquiries on time, they will appreciate your efforts. If you must respond to a question posed by a reporter later, get the appropriate information and respond before the deadline. The finished article will be more accurate.

1. If a reporter telephones you at home or work and catches you by surprise, you will probably need time to get your thoughts together before the interview. It is okay to tell the reporter that you will telephone him right back with accurate answers. Find out what he/she needs to know and what his deadline is. Before you call the reporter back, decide what you want to say and get the information you need.
2. Every reporter will want to know these fundamental questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? And How?
3. You will also want the reporter and audience to understand the message you want to convey: The Des Moines Pool Metropolitan Park District is a caring organization dedicated to serving the people of this community. Think about your message as you answer the interviewer's questions. Weave that message into your answers. Give examples that express the District's concern. **For example:**

**Who?** "Several residents who live near the pool have expressed concern about the use of pesticides by the District. We understand their concern and we are making every effort to address this issue. We have spoken with the residents at length and have invited them to address the board at our next meeting."

**What?** "Because we realize that some of our citizens are concerned about the safety of pesticides, we have temporarily halted their application while we conduct a thorough study of this issue. Members of our staff have been researching literature about pesticides. We also had an international expert on this subject meet with our staff and discuss research findings on Roundup. He was most helpful in providing answers to our questions about the safety of these products. I would be happy to get his name for you. What is your deadline?"

4. Nothing is "off-the-record." Make sure you don't say anything that you don't want to read in print.
5. If the reporter asks you a question you are not prepared to answer, tell him/her you do not have that information. It is okay not to know. You are not required to answer every question.



**MEDIA LOG**

Please list all contacts from the media in the order to which they are received. Record all conversations, getting the contact person's name, phone number, fax number and the agency in which they represent.

**REMEMBER THAT THE DISTRICT GENERAL MANAGER IS THE SPOKESPERSON FOR THE DISTRICT.**

<u>AGENCY CALLED</u>	<u>CONTACT SPOKE TO</u>	<u>PHONE NUMBER</u>	<u>EMAIL</u>	<u>CONVERSATION</u>

**POST INCIDENT**

Subsequent to any incident that requires the implementation of the Des Moines Pool Metropolitan Park District Crisis Management Communication Plan, the following will occur:

- The DMPMPD Management Team will meet within 24 hours of the conclusion of the incident to review the effectiveness of the operation of the team.
- Representatives of outside agencies that were involved in the incident will be included in the review process; e.g. Fire Department, Police Department, City of Des Moines, utility companies, and District's attorney.

**MEDIA RELATIONS PLAN**

The Des Moines Pool Metropolitan Park District has already established a good working relationship with the media. However, we should all strive to enhance these communications even further, especially during a time of crisis.

The following are some basic ideas to help provide guidelines in dealing with the media. Special attention is given to suggestions on how to deal with crisis or emergency situations.

**The Crisis Management Team Must Know the Message to Convey**

It is important for the Des Moines Pool Metropolitan Park District spokespersons to be well informed about the event and issues that will be the focus of news stories and/or community attention. The crisis committee will try to provide this information on a timely basis.

While it may not always be possible to know in advance of a reporter's call, there are certain messages that are always appropriate for this organization:

1. The District is a caring organization, dedicated to making the best possible decisions to serve the people of this community.
2. We are concerned about the taxpayers, park users and environment. Whatever policy decisions we make and whatever crisis we face, those concerns are paramount.
3. We will provide the media with any pertinent information they request. If we don't know the information, we will attempt to get it.

**The Crisis Committee Must Know Their Audience**

The kind of information you provide to the media depends on the audience that publication will be reaching. For example, the details you provide to the press would be of local human interest. It is important to change your editorial viewpoints when dealing with certain topics such as: guns in the parks, pesticides, safety, governance and other issues.

The audience for local publications is varied. It includes people of all ages and incomes, taxpayers, government employees, conservationists, developers and corporations. It includes all residents who live in the District boundaries. These residents include large families and people who live alone. Each group could be affected differently by what you say. How will this impact your message? What information would you like to offer to reassure each group?

What other information is your audience receiving? Are newspapers, magazines and special-interest groups printing articles that have an impact on park district policies? How will you address those issues?

**The Crisis Committee Must Know the Reporter**

Just as each newspaper and television station has its own focus and style, so does each reporter. Some are general assignment reporters who cover anything they are assigned. Others are feature reporters; developing in-depth stories about people, programs and parks. Specialty reporters may cover the park district for a business, governmental or arts viewpoint.

Become familiar with the journalist who covers the District. Read their articles. Do they report the information we provide, or do they do extensive research and write stories from their own perspective? Offer to clarify information for them so they report it accurately and suggest good sources for their research.

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