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# MOOC 1 – Unit 7 Management in Emergency

## Chapter 1

### Pre-Crisis Stage

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# Chapter 1

## Pre-Crisis Stage – Introduction

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- The pre-crisis stage is focused on identifying and reducing risks, according to the **anticipatory model** of crisis management.
- Prevention and vigilance are the top priorities according to the anticipatory model. The pre-crisis stage typically concerns preparedness issues such as planning and training, in order to assess the operational capacity and the resilience inside the agency and between agencies during a crisis.

# Chapter 1

## Pre-Crisis Stage – Introduction

During the pre-crisis stage it is important to develop **proactive strategies** for interacting with stakeholders and the public in meaningful ways. It is also essential to **focus on pre-event logistics and establish networks** to be used by governmental and private entities.

- In order to improve compliance, the emergency management has to assess what are the barriers that prevent the community from adopting self-sufficient behaviors during an emergency.
- In the pre-crisis stage, it is crucial to estimate the risk correctly. Underestimation and overestimation could divert and invalidate subsequent interventions.

Source: Falkheimer, J., & Heide, M. (2010). Crisis communicators in change: From plans to improvisations. *Handbook of crisis communication*, 511-526.



# 1.1 Coordination in Pre-Crisis Stage Knowledge

Pre-event coordination establishes the level of operational capacity and overall readiness during emergency response.

In the pre-crisis stage, coordination allows to organize the actions of:

- all the rescuers inside the agency/emergency team
- all the agencies involved

Coordination in the Pre-Crisis stage consists of:

1. assessing shortage of **resources** (including information)
2. sharing common **objects**
3. providing integrated **methods/protocols** following common guidelines
4. expressing **leadership**





## 1.3 Coordination in Pre-Crisis Stage Competence

### Inner coordination (inside the organization/team work)

The specific tasks to train the organization are focused on:

1) **resources:**

- Gathering and providing information and data: assessment and management of local and external resources.
- Resource deployment and usage priority schemes, guidelines, resource standardization, mutual aid, donor assistance, inventorying.

2) **common objects:**

- Sharing common goals, prioritizing goals, transforming goals into actions.

3) **shared methods:**

- **Developing standard operating procedures:** developing operation routine, task synchronization, task sequencing, training, exercise (table-top or drills), establishment of clear decision roles, guidelines, protocols.

4) **leadership:**

- Clearing individual authority, responsibility and accountability; ensuring that team members know and understand their role.

### External coordination (between organizations/agencies)

The specific tasks to train the organization are focused on:

1) **resources:**

- Assessing risks and mapping resources: risk assessment for fragile population.
- Gathering and providing information and data: mapping resources and risks.

2) **common objects:**

- Exact mapping from objectives to action-oriented checklist, task-sub task, goal decomposition for efficient implementation.

3) **shared methods:**

- **Decision structure development:** establishing of clear decision roles, compatible decision rules. Developing an organizational structure among relevant responder groups to create a scalable organization maintaining span of control, verifying if responders know and understand their role.

4) **leadership:**

- Developing an organizational structure among relevant responder groups to create a scalable organization maintaining span of control, and so forth.



## 2.1 Communication in Pre-Crisis Stage Knowledge

1. In the pre-crisis stage, communication is focused on locating and reducing risk. The pre-crisis stage is the time to design a **crisis communication formalised plan**, to reduce the likelihood of a crisis and mitigate its harm if it occurs. It prepares the community to the event and defines roles, time and modality to communicate:
  - whom to speak to,
  - what to say (or not to say),
  - how to say it best,
  - which channel to choose (you can use a mix of high-tech and low-tech tools to support your message).
2. **The Communication plan:**
  - allows the crisis management team to gain quick and effective control over chaos that typically ensues from a disaster or serious business disruption,
  - allows people to understand their role and what they must do as part of the team,
  - sets clear guidelines and create policies related to public communication,
  - a well thought-out and practiced plan for crisis communication can be a corporation's strongest tool.
3. **The Communication plan prevents:**
  - confusion, errors, frustration caused by multiple sources of information,
  - the misunderstanding caused by multiple searches of information,
  - having wrong people giving inappropriate information to the media,
  - the dissemination of inappropriate or incorrect information.





## 2.3 Communication in Pre-Crisis Stage Competence

### Inner communication

- Match channels and contents: use “hot” channels (meetings, press conference...) for “hot” contents (relevant information...) and “cold” channel (documents, protocols...) for “cold” contents (procedures...).
- Be prepared: test messages, keep protocols up to date to provide timely information during the crisis and to ensure your members’ endorsement.
- You also need to communicate up the chain of command so corporate executives can be kept informed about the progress of events.

### External communication

- Emphasize that there is a process in place.
- Foster alliance: reach out to stakeholders/agencies, the community, the media, and the public.
- You need to communicate laterally to others within the agency, including other communications teams and other communication functional teams.
- Providing templates with guidelines for crisis communication along with training and practice can help ensure crisis communications that meet everyone’s needs without unnecessarily escalating the problem.

Source: Reynolds, B., Galdo, J. H., Sokler, L., & Freimuth, V. S. (2002). Crisis and emergency risk communication. Snedaker, S. (2013). *Business continuity and disaster recovery planning for IT professionals*. Newnes.



## 3.1 Problem Solving in Pre-Crisis Stage Knowledge

Pre-crisis problem solving is a set of activities designed in order to systematically analyze critical situations and generate **solutions** to prevent damages and to mitigate the impact of the crisis.

In the pre-crisis stage, problem solving is essential to **verify the quality of information**. It is impossible to react effectively to a crisis if the intervention is based on faulty or inadequate information. To make good decisions, the problem solving process must be accurate and reliable. Failing to verify information could lead to poor decisions and serious consequences.

To ensure the quality of information you should:

- **Use trusted sources** as primary sources of information, but talk to secondary sources as well. They can help to build a broader picture.
- **Collate and cross-check** against baseline data and against reports received from other sources. Carefully review conflicting opinions and reconcile any discrepancies.
- Use the Internet, books, libraries and people as sources of information. Find out if others have tried to solve this problem or a related problems. **Build on lessons learned**.
- **Consider** cultural, language, and ethnical **differences** that require different intervention approaches.
- **Validate your information**: is it true? Is it accurate? Differentiate facts from rumors.

Source: <https://emilms.fema.gov/IS-0241b/curriculum/1.html>





## 3.3 Problem solving in Pre-Crisis Stage Competence

The specific tasks you need to perform when problem solving in the pre-crisis stage are focused on:

- ensuring that information sources are reliable and authentic,
- planning integrated interventions with stakeholders and multiagency approaches,
- ensuring that communication takes place through official and trusted channels (spokesperson, responsive systems),
- finding out if others have already tried to solve this problem or a related problem and build on lessons learned,
- carefully reviewing conflicting opinions and reconciling any discrepancies,
- considering stakeholders' needs and values and those of your organization,
- considering and evaluating all ethical perspectives that apply,
- using information systems.



## 4.1 Decision Making in Pre-Crisis Stage Knowledge

Pre-crisis decision making can be defined as the process of choosing an action to achieve a goal in an uncertain environment. This stage typically concerns **preparedness** and **prevention** in order to achieve a more accurate **risk assessment**.

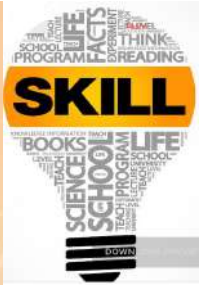
In order to respond to an emergency, you are supposed to obtain a good **understanding** of the current **situation** in terms of severity of the disaster, number of people captured or injured, and urgent needs in the damaged area. As a decision maker, you will **generate, evaluate, and compare potential options** in order to develop a **well-defined course of action** for decision making, **collaborating** with all the other actors involved. Decision making is a bottom-up process.

As a facilitator, you can help the team grow situational awareness, which occurs when the team feels they have enough information to make a decision. You need to assess the team's needs, provide effective communication and **gather proper information**; these processes will provide to the crisis team the knowledge required to create situational awareness.

Source: Janis, I. L., & Mann, L. (1977). Emergency decision making: a theoretical analysis of responses to disaster warnings. *Journal of human stress*, 3(2), 35-48.

Zhang, D., Zhou, L., & Nunamaker Jr, J. F. (2002). A knowledge management framework for the support of decision making in humanitarian assistance/disaster relief. *Knowledge and Information Systems*, 4(3), 370-385.

Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (Eds.). (2011). *The handbook of crisis communication* (Vol. 22). John Wiley & Sons.



## 4.2 Decision Making in Pre-Crisis Stage Skills

As a psychological emergency facilitator in the pre-crisis stage, your decision making skills are:

- Defining a **needs assessment**: gather information about risk, resources, cultural issues.
- Defining **targets** of interventions.
- **Verifying** reports e checking **missing information**.
- Collecting relevant information (surveying available information and acquiring the missing).
- Evaluating not only risks and damages, but also **resources**. Based on the available resources, generating and evaluating the feasible options.
- Choosing criteria that will be used as **impact factor** indicators for interventions.
- Keeping in mind that decision making is a **participative process**: the more inclusive you are, the broader your plan will be.
- **Training your staff** through exercises and drills.

Source: Adair, J. E. (2007). Decision making & problem solving strategies(Vol. 9). Kogan Page Publishers.



4.2 – Recommendations to empower group decision making



## 4.3 Decision Making in Pre-Crisis Stage Competence

The specific tasks you need to perform in the **individual** decision making process focus on:

- Analysing the situation and defining problems and resources
- Determining what is relevant in making the decision and identifying the decision criteria
- Generating possible alternatives, combining rational analysis with intuition, and being aware of biases
- Relying on your experience and ability to quickly recognise the situation dynamics and use them for generating effective options
- Not assuming that your specific decision style is appropriate for every work

The specific tasks you need to perform in the **group** decision making process focus on:

- Clarifying member roles and establishing ground rules
- Creating subgroups and working groups, and asking each one to evaluate the situation and feasible options
- Clarifying goals and task deadlines in order to facilitate greater interoperability among stakeholders
- Asking members to take turns playing “the devil’s advocate.”
- Facilitating a brainstorming session, accepting criticism and supporting diversity
- Inviting outside experts to challenge the group’s decision.



## 5.1 Leadership in Pre-Crisis Stage Knowledge

In the pre-crisis stage, leaders are expected to be vision-oriented, to predict the possible risks and to prevent the damages; they have to be aware of the public needs in order to guide the population to safety during the critical event (Christensen et al. 2013; Demiroz and Kapucu 2012, 92.).

Leadership is described as a process of social interaction, whereby a leader impacts a purposeful effect on an individual or a group of people, geared to model their behavior and conception, with the aim of achieving a specific result or goals (Bass, 2008; Northouse, 2010, 3; Day & Antonakis 2012, 5; Silvestri 2013, 19; Hackman 2013, 11).

As a pre-crisis manager you can pursue two important goals:

1. to instil a sense of unity and teamwork among staff members
2. to train personnel to cope with stress.

As a pre-crisis manager you can lead four management processes:

1. Designing, assessing and evaluating a pre-crisis plan
2. Allocating resources
3. Being involved in training
4. Taking part in exercises





## 5.3 Leadership in Pre-Crisis Stage Competences

### Internal actions

1. **Organizing and selecting:** your first responsibility as leaders in pre-crisis management is to ensure an appropriate analysis of internal needs.
2. **Planning:** Planning is the key tool to prevent risks and mitigate damage. To be effective, a plan has to be disseminated, known, shared, and practiced.
3. **Training, Education and Exercises:** fostering resilience, you could train staff to cope with stress. The first step should be to examine your current coping mechanisms.
4. **Cultivating vigilance and protecting preparedness:** in order to motivate preparedness efforts, you must cultivate the “it could happen here” mentality for yourself and whom follow you.

### External actions

1. **Planning:** As a psychological emergency facilitator, you could analyze the needs that emerged in previous rescues. A crisis plan should be designed in partnership with other stakeholders.
2. **Networking:** make contact with stakeholders involved in disaster response, partner together and coordinate activities, with the aim of organizing the disaster response
3. **Training, Education and Exercises:** You and your staff could participate to the pre-crisis training of rescuers inside and outside your agency, and of the population.



## 6.1 Team building in Pre-Crisis Stage Knowledge

As a crisis manager or as a consultant, you have to prepare your emergency work group to face the critical event. The complexity of the event, in each of its phases, requires team work approaches and multiagency interventions. Therefore, individual rescuers have to be able to work as a team.

Team building is the process of reinforcing the sense of participation, affiliation, belonging to the organization. To become a team, members have to go through different (hopefully all) stages of the team building process. As a psychologist, you could help your group facilitating:

1. **sense of cohesion:** getting to know each other and building trust
2. **interaction:** sharing values, thoughts, emotions, goals and tools as a sum of individuals without a real sense of belonging and group identity. The result of the interaction is still the sum of single members.
3. **integration:** the team acquires its own identity, effectiveness and force. Members feel the added value of the integration: the results of the team work are different and exponentially greater than the sum of the individual members' contributions.





## 6.3 Team building in Pre-Crisis Stage Competence

### Team builder as member of the group

- Assess your staff, to protect them by the risk of occupational hazards.
- Give them a role and a function according to their competences and expectations.
- Participate in formal and informal meetings of the group, so that members get to know you and trust you.
- Create an environment that acknowledges the impact of high stress so it is accepted as an occupational hazard and it is not seen as a sign of weakness or lack of professionalism.
- Arrange awareness sessions for your unit/team to be conducted by the Staff Counsellor or by other available resources in your location.

### Team builder as consultant of the group

- Give your contribution to assess the staff, to protect them by risk occupational hazards.
- Give your contribution to give them a role and a function that match their competences and expectations.
- Train staff in identifying the cause and the warning signs of stress reactions and show what are individual and group protective factors.
- Collaborate to include training and support of the team work in the emergency plan.



## 7.1 Team caring in Pre-Crisis Stage Knowledge

The World Health Organization (2005) describes resilience as “the capacity to cope with adversity and to avoid breakdown when confronted with stressors”. Resilient people are able to keep functioning throughout a crisis, so they not only experience less distress personally, but they can also continue to help those that have trouble coping.

It is useful to understand the preparation and mitigation strategies that can be used before, during, and after a crisis to maximize resilience among staff members.

In time of crisis a resilient staff is an effective staff.

In pre-crisis stage you can train personnel in coping with stress; this way, the team members learn and practice the necessary skills in advance.

Rescuers are exposed to vicarious trauma: they may be personally exposed to dangerous or emotional demanding work. Other emergency personnel may work in physically and emotional safe conditions, but feel ongoing concern for their colleagues' safety.

Source: [https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/evidence/MH\\_Promotion\\_Book.pdf](https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/MH_Promotion_Book.pdf)





## 7. 3 Team caring in Pre-Crisis Stage Competence

- Training staff members on the need to practice self-care as an ethical imperative, and foster a climate that supports effective coping.
- Have a model of good coping practices for staff and train personnel to use it.
- Establish clear lines of authority and responsibility to minimize stress by eliminating confusion about who reports to whom.
- Provide ongoing training to ensure that staff are thoroughly familiar with safety procedures and policies.
- Identify common purpose.
- Provide realistic training.
- Have a pre-established plan for how employees will check on their families if disaster strikes during work hours.
- Provide family support.

Source: (CMHS, 1994)



## Conclusion

### Pre-Crisis Stage

- The pre-crisis stage is crucial for reducing risks and mitigating the impact of a crisis.
- Participative prevention plan is the main tool to assess targets' needs, including fragile targets and minorities.
- Multiagency approach needs a coordinated networking from the very beginning of the pre-crisis stage.
- Dissemination through population needs a coordinated and effective communication plan.
- The contribution of psychological competences is crucial in any role of the pre-crisis stage: as rescuers (members of the team), as trainers, as crisis managers and facilitators, and as consultants.

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