

Media Relations

Not if, but

When a Crisis Occursdon't try to handle it alone!

Crises will come in many forms. Common to any crisis are the elements of surprise and the unexpected. The Kansas West Conference Crisis Management Plan allows the leadership of The United Methodist Church in the conference to:

- Provide compassion, concern and care for the victims of the crisis and for those affected by the crisis
- Provide means for meeting the needs of the media covering the crisis
- Provide and enhance the positive image of the Kansas West Conference and of The United Methodist Church

Key to the Kansas West Conference response to a crisis is the activation of the permanent Crisis Management/ Communications Team. It is **expected** that whenever any type of crisis occurs (or is anticipated), **the permanent team will be notified** for informational purposes and possible response. You may activate the crisis management team by contacting your district superintendent. Be certain you actually talk to a person. Do not depend on messages left on answering machines or voice mail in the event of a crisis.

If a crisis occurs in your church, contact your district superintendent, who will then activate the conference crisis plan.

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Types of Crises

General types of crises for which response may be needed include:

- Natural disaster (flood, tornado, blizzard)
- Criminal or legal action (recognized crimes or accusations of crimes)
- Violent acts, demonstrations, death or violent injuries (Action by or to a clergy or lay person; incident on church property; incident involving United Methodists—may be church or non-church related; community crisis)
- Personnel crisis (clergy or other staff misconduct; suits against the conference, a conference institution or agency; death, illness or injury to a pastor or pastoral family member)
- Positive crisis (event or ministry draws unanticipated response—more people than expected attend, donations exceed what can easily be handled)
- “Perceived” crisis (anticipation of something happening which may or may not be based upon factual information or probability)

For more information about the Kansas West crisis management plan or for assistance in developing a plan for your local church, contact:

Lisa Elliott Diehl
800-745-2350 or 316-684-0266
Ldiehl@kswestumc.org

“Not If but When ...”

Communicating with the media is a learned art in the best of times, but when a crisis happens to your church, it's important that you are prepared to handle questions that may be uncomfortable.

“Not If, But When: A Crisis Management Manual,” published by United Methodist Communications, is an invaluable guide for dealing with crisis situations and the media in your church.

More than anything, this book serves as a reminder that we must be proactive in dealing with crises despite our strongest urge to avoid any hint of bad news. The best organizations are those that prepare for bad times when times are good. Far from being a waste of valuable resources, preparing for a crisis of any magnitude is time well spent.

“Not If, But When: A Crisis Management Manual” is available through the Marketing and Communications office. Copies are \$10 each plus postage. Contact Lisa Elliott Diehl at 316-684-0266 or 800-745-2350 to order a copy for your church.