

How to Build a Crisis Resources Webpage

A Guide for Chambers of Commerce



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Introduction

crisis [krah-y-sis] noun: an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending.

Often used in conjunction with a negative event, by definition, the term crisis doesn't typically refer to an actual occurrence. It is a condition, a stage in a sequence of events when a decisive response or change is necessary.

During a crisis situation, timely communication and reacting in the present are essential for chambers. Determining the how or why of an occurrence typically isn't the top priority. There's time for that later. Forward thinking is critical for making important decisions that will influence the course of events.

The purpose of this guide is to help you create a crisis resources webpage for your members.

Ideally, prebuilding a crisis resources page and having it ready to customize is a smart way to prepare a useful response to a crisis situation.

The next best thing is to quickly craft a crisis resources webpage for your members.

Most website content management systems (CMS) allow you to quickly build a new webpage or update an existing webpage with flexible design options.

Whether planning for or in the midst of a crisis response, building or maintaining a resources webpage should not require the involvement of multiple departments or outside vendors.

Focus on User Experience

When building a crisis resources webpage:

- Use a clean and simple design focused on essential facts.
- Make it easy for readers to find information.
- Use short sentences and paragraphs that speak directly to the reader.
- Group information by topic and consider using headings and subheadings.
- Be sure that it doesn't come across as self-promoting.

Set the tone:

Whether targeting chamber members or your community, and regardless of the amount of or type of content, the tone should be helpful, sincere, and compassionate.

The webpage can be as simple or complex as necessary.

In determining appropriate elements, **consider addressing various points of information such as:**

- Who's impacted?
- Who's in charge?
- Is the situation under control?
- What are you doing for the people who are hurt?
- What can we expect/What else can go wrong?
- Why did this happen/Why wasn't this prevented?
- Are there bad things you aren't telling us?

Sections to Include

Must haves:

- A brief description of situation, cause (if available), likely impact, and what is being done to handle the matter.
- Basic Instructions for everyone affected by the situation, clearly articulating what people should or should not do.
- If the situation warrants it, consider posting a disclaimer.

Updates:

Reserve an area within the crisis resources web page for regular updates.

An RSS feed (e.g., blog updates) or a micro-blogging channel (e.g., your chamber's Facebook feed) keeps people updated on a regular basis and allows them to track responsiveness over time.

Links:

Depending on the situation, links to key resources serve a valuable role during a crisis.

- Your social media channels
- A newsletter or RSS subscription option
- Survey
- Downloadable forms
- Membership application
- Social share button
- Your member directory
- Sharable social images
- Volunteer, sponsorship, and fundraising opportunities
- Jobs board
- Contact information for a point person (to streamline requests and ensure consistency)

Sections to Include *(continued)*

Resources:

- Key, relevant local, state, federal government offices
- Local, state, regional, national resources
- Local, state, regional, national information
- Non-profits applicable to the situation
- Relevant third-party links

News:

- Links to press releases
- Media statements (video or text)

Myths vs. Facts:

A myth vs. facts section is a valuable resource to debunk rumors and misperceptions.

FAQs:

The Frequently Asked Questions section should be easy to navigate and scan, and finding the answer to a single question should be painless.

- A popular format is to provide the full question list first, then follow with individual questions and their answers.
- Include links to related content.
- Revise and update regularly. Listing the date when the information was updated helps readers determine its timeliness.
- The crisis situation will end, but people may continue to search for information. Commit to a long-term update strategy or unpublish the page. No information is better than inaccurate information.

Conclusion

Key Takeaway:

Whatever information you decide to include on your chamber's crisis resources webpage, the most important aspects are that it be:

- Relevant
- Accurate
- Informative
- Timely

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