# Draft Joint Communications Service Major Incident Crisis Communications Plan

# Definition of Major Incident

# A major incident is an incident that is not considered a national incident but is major enough to require a multi-agency response.

# Examples of Major Incidents

* Large-scale incidents that require the combined resources of the RCIPS, CIFS,HSA and potentially other agencies, for example;
  + A major fire at the Cayman Islands landfill;
  + The rescue and transportation of a large number of casualties;
  + A mass arrival of immigrants onshore;
  + A plane crash;
  + Emergencies requiring evacuations of more than a few homes;
  + The impact or potential to impact a critical mass of the public, whatever that is decided to be. An example might be a single neighbourhood;
  + A boat-sinking with mass casualties;
  + An incident involving hostages and firearms;
  + Any bombing or terrorist incident.

**Operating Procedures for Comprehensive Communications Response to Major Incidents**

When a major incident has been declared by the agency leading the incident response, the JCS core team will be notified as per the HMCI Major Incident Plan. This includes GIS, RCIPS, HMCI and DoT. In consultation with the Major Incident Response Command Team, core team members will take the lead on proactively communicating essential information to the press and general public. A step-by-step outline for this communications response follows:

1. At the point at which declaration of a major incident is being considered, the lead agency should activate the JCS phone tree, which is attached. If the first person is not is not available proceed to the second and so on, until a person in the JCS Core Team is reached.
2. The caller should state clearly that a major incident has been declared, describe the type of incident, and provide the locations of incident command and the NEOC.
3. Once contact has been made with the core team, the team member contacted will assume responsibility for reaching out to the remaining members of the core team.
4. To ensure redundancy the group will operate on a WhatsApp group in addition to communicating by email and phone as needed.
5. Any JCS team members already on the scene of a critical incident should keep other core team members informed at one hour intervals as a matter of practice.
6. The JCS major incident core communications group will include up to four representatives from GIS, RCIPS, HMCI, DOT. Other members may be called in as needed, depending on the nature of the emergency. These may potentially include representatives from the HSA, Port Authority, Airport, DOE, DEH and Governor’s Office.
7. JCS will be responsible for consulting with HMCI, the lead responding agency and other responding agencies on the kinds of communications needed. Its objective should be to ensure that the media and public are kept updated and informed to a reasonable degree, and in a timely manner, about: the nature of the emergency, the potential impact on public safety, and what can reasonably be expected throughout the management of the emergency.
8. Modes of public communications should include: person-to-person contacts, media relations contacts, community relations contacts, message distribution via any and all online platforms available. Administrative support for the communications function should also be foreseen.
9. The JCS core team is responsible for delivering communications products to a high standard of accuracy, timeliness and presentation.
10. The JCS core team will be expected to work in shifts until the crisis is stood down by the lead agency.

**Recommended Crisis Communications Practices during Major Incident Response**

* Be visible early. An initial press briefing should be conducted as soon as possible after the major incident is declared, describing the nature of the emergency and incident response, and **including any emergency numbers the general public may contact, as well as the websites or other platforms that will be regularly providing information**;
* This initial briefing should be followed by a press briefing every half hour for the first two hours and every hour on the hour after that, until the crisis is stood down, even if there is nothing new to tell;
* An emergency announcement outside of these timeframes should also be done to provide even the most basic information should a major development occur;
* Social media and general online news monitoring should be done continuously by members of the core team. The purpose of this is to track accuracy in reporting and also to issue quick corrections or refutations of baseless rumour or outright falsehoods on social media that could cause panic;
* As a courtesy before press briefings, VIP communications should, if possible, be conducted, to update the Governor, Cabinet, and MLAs. MLAs in affected districts especially should be informed before information is shared with the press throughout the overall incident response. Again, the establishment of a Crisis Incident WhatsApp Group is advised.
* The core team should look for opportunities to provide journalists with positive news stories, such as rescues by first responders or human interest stories;
* At the same time the core team should be in constant contact with journalists throughout the incident to find out early about any problems or public complaints, so these can be relayed quickly to the Major Incident Command Team and possibly addressed before worsening into a negative news story.

**Recommended Crisis Communications Practices Before a Major Incident Response**

* Ongoing public education on existing risks in the environment and efforts to proactively address these, such as the bell warning system at Jackson Point.
* Stakeholder engagement planning. As an example, stakeholders in the Sol incident included the evacuees, friends and family of these persons, individual participating agencies such as DPSC, Fire, Police, 911, HMCI, neighbourhood MLAs, the Government as a whole, Sol, etc. In each case there are specific channels that offer the best means to reach stakeholders and specific information that each group needs to know. An online channel in particular must be included out of consideration for stakeholders, such as family members, who are off-island.
* There should be pre-established guidelines and templates on how to offer organised communications during different situations that may occur, such as evacuation.
* These templates would also help to speed up the approvals process, as would pre-approved communications lines developed in advance for each approved scenario and distributed to all persons who may need them.

**Note**

Agencies seconding staff to the JCS core team during major incidents should be responsible for overtime/comp time etc, only where such is within their budget.

**Recommendations**

**Continuous crisis communications training is necessary for the core group**. It is vital to keep JCS members up to date and able to respond to the range of incidents that can occur. In addition to generalised training on best practices, a workshop with tabletop exercises must also be held where JCS members identify the communication channels available and articulate and agree on the procedures and division of labor during an actual incident.

A productive scenario might involve a two-day training session with a crisis communications expert. The outcome would be the crisis communications plans and pre-approved templates for specific risks discussed above. Of this time a half day might be spent seeking feedback from heads of agencies that might potentially manage the response to major incidents.

**Sample Shift Rota**

Lead IO Backup Videographer Crisis Admin

7-3 CMG DB SJ DLW AM

3-11 JH BM MW KC MW

11-7 CIO EJ LW MC

**Most Likely IO Client Leads—**

**Jamie**-- Has all of the uniformed services but Customs. RCIPS and HMCI have in-house communicators. Tel 916-3892

**Catherine**—Health disaster (in-house communicators), environmental health disaster (in-house communicators) Tel 926-6110

**CIO**-- Port/Airport/Transport Tel 926-2018

**Roles**

**IO Client Lead**—on site at incident command, liaising with stakeholders there including media by phone or any who may show up.

**Media Centre IO**— at incident media centre (if one is designated), liaising with media, keeping media up to date, arranging live broadcasts. As a rule on site personnel should carry their laptops.

**Backup IO**—at office, liaising with media by phone, liaising with stakeholders not on site, writing, editing, posting and cross-posting press releases.

**Videographer(s)**—on scene, shooting, crisis work and crowd control and crowd control as needed.

**Crisis admin**—at office, publishing emails to non-media mailing list, social media monitoring, VIP liaison, activating shifts, providing admin support to media/information centre, keeping a log as incident develops, helping to ensure that required tasks are executed.

**JCS Phone Numbers**

**Name Agency Phone Number Email**

Suzette Ebanks GIS 926-2018 [suzette.ebanks@gov.ky](mailto:suzette.ebanks@gov.ky)

Jacqueline Carpenter RCIPS 936-2990 [jacqueline.carpenter@rcips.ky](mailto:jacqueline.carpenter@rcips.ky)

Jamie Hicks GIS 916-3892 [jamie.hicks@gov.ky](mailto:jamie.hicks@gov.ky)

Edlyn Ruiz GIS 916-5278 [edlyn.ruiz@gov.ky](mailto:edlyn.ruiz@gov.ky)

Martin Wilkinson GIS 916-7048 [martin.wilkinson@gov.ky](mailto:martin.wilkinson@gov.ky)

Simon Boxall HMCI 926-2027 [simon.boxall@gov.ky](mailto:simon.boxall@gov.ky)

Ruth Myles DOT 526-1256 [rmyles@caymanislands.ky](mailto:rmyles@caymanislands.ky)

Jodi-Ann Powery RCIPS 916-3277 [jodi-ann.powery@rcips.ky](mailto:jodi-ann.powery@rcips.ky)

Mikhail Campbell RCIPS 916-3265 [mikhail.campbell@rcips.ky](mailto:mikhail.campbell@rcips.ky)