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TO: Executive Addressed

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RE: Six Essential Lessons for Crisis Managers

Successful crisis planning is comprehensive and systematic. The critical steps are visibility and vulnerability analyses, key issue identification, scenario development, communications coaching and training, and installation/testing. Long-term, follow-up activities and strategies are also essential to effective response. But there's more.

Twenty-five years of experience have taught six powerful lessons for crisis managers:

1. Early, competent leadership: Decision making and prompt action by senior executives, often the chief executive. (Have a plan for senior management involvement.)
2. A prioritized approach: Prompt and honorable management of the actual problem; immediate communication with those most directly affected; address victims' needs. (There are always victims.)
3. Reputation preservation and recovery strategies: Prompt action; fundamentally sound decisions; communicate useful information to those who actually need it, not necessarily the media. (Be unassailable. Go beyond community expectations.)
4. Successful plans: Install carefully; systematically update and test through periodic exercise or simulation. (Untested, badly designed, or ignored plans won't work.)
5. Pre-authorization (the primary objective of all crisis preparation): Organization able to act immediately and successfully, on its own, with little help from the outside. (Good crisis planning will identify and eliminate, or at least reduce, substantial threats to the organization.)
6. Conclusive first response: Openness, responsiveness, truthfulness, and empathy with prompt disclosure. (Reduce media influence and make victims and their families more comfortable.)

For a very substantial body of knowledge related to crisis management issues, please explore our web site at www.e911.com. And watch for our next addition to the site, "[Becoming a Verbal Visionary: How to Have a Happy, Successful, and Professional Life.](#)" Just go to "See For Yourself" for this inspiring audiotape presentation or go to "Monographs" to read the full text as reprinted from the July 15, 1997 issue of *Vital Speeches of the Day*.

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