Internal Is Also External
Aligning Crisis Communications for Employees, Stakeholders and Media Across a Multi-hospital Health System

Heather Cunningham, Director, Internal Communications, Northwestern Medicine
Chris King, Director, Media Relations, Northwestern Medicine
Agenda

- **Review**: Two crisis situations that occurred in Northwestern Medicine hospitals
- **Group Discussion**: Would your organization be ready today to manage these types of crisis situations?
- **Sharing**: How Northwestern Medicine coordinated internal, physician, consumer and media relations communications
- **Learnings**: Takeaways that apply to both local and system employee and physician audiences
Learning Objectives

- **Learning Objective 1**: Apply techniques for sharing a single crisis communications message across internal/external audiences and multi-hospital geographic regions

- **Learning Objective 2**: The value of developing one internal/external communications staffing model and important roles/responsibilities for each team

- **Learning Objective 3**: Identify the types of follow-up communications important to share after key crisis events
About Northwestern Medicine

- 200+ Locations including 10 Hospitals
- More than 33,000 clinical and administrative staff
- 4,200 Medical Staff
- NMH No. 1 in Chicago & IL U.S. News & World Report
- NMH No. 10 Nationally U.S. News & World Report
- 12 Specialties Ranked in NIH Top 10
- 7th Largest Employer in Chicago
Issue vs. Crisis
When an Issue Becomes a Crisis...

May 13, 2017 – Armed patient takes nurse hostage

- Hospital patient from county jail grabs gun from county sheriff guarding him
- Sheriff runs from room, and prisoner with gun begins roaming hospital trying to exit
- Prisoner begins interaction with staff
- Code Silver called
- Hostage stand-off begins
What if This Crisis Happened at Your Organization?

Small group discussion

- What audiences would need to be alerted? If you are part of a system, which messages would be local and which would be system-wide?
- What communications channels would you use?
- What would be your biggest communications challenges?
- How would current internal communications and media relations teams in place divide responsibilities and work together?
- Are you ready to manage an event like this today?
Crisis Event Underway

Delnor Hospital hostage standoff ends with inmate shot to death

By Luke Wilkus and Sam Charles | May 14, 2017, 1:54am CDT

Gunman Holds Geneva Hospital Staff Hostage
The Aftermath

Code Silver Has Been Cleared at Delnor

The Code Silver has been cleared at Northwestern Medicine Delnor Hospital as the situation is no longer active. The employees who were involved in the situation are safe. However, the Emergency Department is currently inaccessible and on bypass.

From Dean M. Harrison
President and Chief Executive Officer, Northwestern Memorial HealthCare

Delnor Incident

Colleagues,

Northwestern Medicine
May 13, 2017

We are thankful for local law enforcement’s assistance today. The employees who were involved in the situation at Delnor Hospital are now safe. Members of our Human Resources and Employee Assistance Program are on-site and providing support to employees.

At this time, the hospital is returning to normal operations.

1,268 Likes 26 Comments 92 Shares
# Learnings From a System Perspective

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<th>Local</th>
<th>System</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local employees and physicians need frequent updates during the crisis period and aftermath</td>
<td>If a local event is expected to garner widespread news coverage, all system employees and physicians should know about it first</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal communications should be prepared for anniversary dates of the event</td>
<td>System employees will want to know how they can help staff in other locations</td>
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<td>Expect media relations sentiment scores to decrease, based on event coverage</td>
<td>The event will spark planning and education at other locations, which will require communications support</td>
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When an Issue Becomes a Crisis…

July 12, 2017 – Hospital flooding leads to evacuation

• What started as a summer rain quickly turned into a national weather event
• Five to eight inches of rain fell in areas of Lake County, leading to flooding, road closures and residents being asked to move to higher ground
• Within hours, weather officials called the flooding “an extremely dangerous and life-threatening situation”
• Wind and rain knocked out the Lake Forest Hospital main generator
What if This Crisis Happened at Your Organization?

Small group discussion

- What audiences would need to be alerted? If you are part of a system, which messages would be local and which would be system-wide?
- What communications channels would you use?
- What would be your biggest communications challenges?
- How would current internal communications and media relations teams in place divide responsibilities and work together?
- Are you ready to manage an event like this today?
Northwestern Medicine
July 13, 2017

Visit our website to learn more. If you have questions about appointments or services available, please call your medical provider’s office.

Crisis Event Underway

Northwestern Medicine

Flooding Impacts NM Lake Forest Hospital Campus
Overnight flooding on the Northwestern Medicine Lake Forest Hospital campus resulted in power losses and standing water in parts of the hospital and medical office buildings, as well as other buildings on campus. The hospital is operating...
The Aftermath

LFH Approved For Tuesday Reopening

I am pleased to report that Northwestern Medicine Lake Forest Hospital will reopen at 5 am Tuesday, July 18. All staff should report for their shifts as scheduled.
## Learnings From a System Perspective

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<td>Prepare for how you will communicate if traditional channels are unavailable</td>
<td>Use this as an opportunity to celebrate collaboration and teamwork</td>
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<td>Make sure you have a seat at the executive leadership table</td>
<td>Utilize system team members to support local staff when events are extended and around-the-clock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Get ample photography and video you can use to spotlight local staff for ongoing internal communications</td>
<td>System employees will benefit from a recap communication at annual Town Hall meetings or other events</td>
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Three Key Takeaways

1. Advocate for timely and transparent communication to employees, physicians and the media

2. Don’t hesitate to over-communicate, and don’t assume everyone knows what is going on

3. Coordinate efforts with supporting teams and leadership
   - Internal/Physician/Consumer Communications
   - Media Relations
   - Social Media
   - Security
   - Legal
   - Executive Leadership
Questions?

Please be sure to complete the session evaluation on the mobile app!
Heather Cunningham
Northwestern Medicine

- 25+ years of healthcare communications experience with both national and Chicago-area healthcare organizations
- Unique expertise leading healthcare organizations through change, including 10 hospital integrations over her career
- Leads 15-person team with sub-groups devoted to internal, physician and consumer audiences

Director, Internal Communications
Chris King
Northwestern Medicine

- 20+ years of media relations experience
- Gained experience in agency and corporate settings
- Handles all system issues and crisis communications
- Leads 8-person media relations team; provides oversight for all Northwestern Medicine communications efforts

Director, Media Relations