

# **Tennis New Brunswick Crisis Management/Communications Plan Safe Sport**

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**Introduction:**

Every organization is vulnerable to a crisis and must be prepared to respond appropriately, especially in the age of the 24-hour news cycle. A crisis—whether it is operational, such as a major incident at a tournament, or issues oriented, such as allegations about a staff member or coach not only puts our reputation at risk it also jeopardizes relationships we have worked for years to develop.

To be properly prepared to deal effectively with unexpected events, and to preserve the integrity, reputation and trust that Tennis New Brunswick has worked hard to earn, we have developed this crisis communications plan. This plan has been developed to prepare us to respond effectively to a variety of incidents should a crisis situation develop.

The response to any crisis should involve two simultaneous courses of action: remediation and communications. The objective of this plan is to ensure a consistent response to a crisis and ensure the organization is prepared to effectively respond.

In a crisis, our ability to communicate with key audiences, including the news media, sponsors and employees, will play a critical role in defining the public's perceptions. Special attention must be given when communicating throughout a crisis, being clear about our messages and responding to information demands of key stakeholders from the moment a crisis begins is imperative.

The goal is to ensure that a crisis, at every level in our organization, is handled in a manner that reflects our values and mitigates negative public perception of our organization.

### **Crisis: Definition & Examples**

At Tennis New Brunswick, we define a “crisis” as any event, or series of events that can:

- Negatively affect our reputation as an organization or our events
- Negatively impact the reputation of our sport as a safe/clean sport
- Harm or put at risk employees, players, coaches or support staff
- Significantly disrupt our business operations
- Dramatically decrease stakeholder or partner value

### **Effective Crisis Response = Management + Communications**

In crisis situations, perception can quickly become reality. Effective crisis management is made up not only of the actions we take, but also of quick and effective communications to key audiences, including:

- Employees & families of employees
- Players, coaches and parents
- General public
- News media
- Sponsors, donors and strategic partners
- Other sports associations
- Government officials

### **Crisis Communication Policy Statement**

Effective crisis management is based on taking responsibility and control, regardless of what is known about blame or fault. When information is scarce and full details are not yet known, we rely on our core values as the basis for communications.

Accurate information from New Brunswick serves our best interests better than inaccurate information from a secondary source. If we do not fill that information gap, the media, employees and other key stakeholders will turn to other sources. By controlling communications and being forthcoming from the moment a crisis begins, Tennis New Brunswick may influence coverage and actually help bring a close to some of the more difficult stages of the crisis.

### **Tennis New Brunswick Crisis Media Policy**

External communications is of the utmost importance, in general, and especially during a crisis. It is critical to provide efficient, effective, timely and high quality communications to the news media, shareholders, customers and the public at large.

All internal and external communication at Tennis New Brunswick should be guided by the following principles:

- One Voice. Any statement issued by a Tennis New Brunswick employee, regardless of job title, could potentially be construed as an official statement of the organization’s position.
- It is imperative to bring all messages into line with the company position and to direct contact from particular target groups (communications/senior management)
- Information given must be based on facts and must not include unrealistic promises that could raise false expectations.
- No speculation. Tennis New Brunswick does not comment on rumors, nor should communicators speculate on the outcomes of pending issues before the authorities or involved third parties have made decisions.

- Never speak for others unless a strategic partner requests/requires assistance like a PTA or TPA. Do not comment on any industry or partner issues and always encourage that others speak for themselves.
- Open and proactive. Tennis New Brunswick strives to be a transparent organization and to be perceived as such, and must therefore provide relevant information openly and proactively.

### **Mission and Values**

Tennis New Brunswick's purpose in partnership with Tennis Canada and our Provincial Tennis Associations across the country is to improve the lives of New Brunswickers and Canadians through tennis and we value teamwork, passion, integrity, innovation, excellence and accountability. We are dedicated to responsible operations, and committed to employee and player growth and safety, nothing will test public confidence in our organization more than our ability to act in accordance with these values during a crisis.

### **Overview of Crisis Management: Crisis Assessment & Crisis Response**

Identified crisis team members will handle crisis situations at Tennis New Brunswick. This team is comprised of the staff, communications experts (internal and external) and outside communications counsel. Depending on the level of crisis, the Board may also be involved at the highest level. Other individuals will be looped in accordingly. The crisis team will develop and lead the crisis communications response.

### **Determining the Level of Crisis**

The following guidelines are designed to help decide how to manage communications and respond to a crisis. It is important to understand that a seemingly insignificant or regional issue could turn into a crisis, so the company must be prepared to respond to a range of issues.

#### Level 1:

1. Terrorist act at domestic tournaments involving Tennis New Brunswick
2. Fraud within Tennis New Brunswick
3. Safeguarding incident with criminal charges involving Tennis New Brunswick employee
4. Criminal lawsuit from HP player/coach/parent against Tennis New Brunswick/employee
5. Serious safety incident at domestic tournaments – (E.g. player attack, fire, stand collapse, weather)

#### Level 2:

1. Illegal betting incident by a player, supported by Tennis New Brunswick
2. Performance enhancing doping accusation on a New Brunswick player, supported by Tennis New Brunswick
3. Serious privacy or cyber/data breach of Tennis New Brunswick information
4. Safeguarding incident with criminal charges involving non Tennis New Brunswick certified coach
5. Serious discrimination lawsuit against Tennis New Brunswick/employee
6. Non-criminal lawsuit from player/coach/parent against Tennis New Brunswick/employee
7. Serious harassment or abuse incident within Tennis New Brunswick.

### Level 3:

1. Serious safety or employee workplace incident
2. Major incident with sponsor which requires contract termination
3. Serious negative news story regarding Tennis New Brunswick in the media/online
4. Major incident from above list relating to member club/association

The crisis team's overall responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that facts are gathered as quickly as possible and information is carefully verified so that appropriate decisions can be made
- Making decisions responsibly and as quickly as necessary
- Ensure that all appropriate internal and external resources are mobilized and dedicated to crisis communications
- Establishing and maintaining the free and swift flow of accurate information—internally and externally
- Working together to determine strategy and actions
- Maintaining and reaffirming Tennis New Brunswick's values
- Allocating all appropriate resources to ensure effective response to the situation at hand
- Documenting all response activities
- Engaging outside legal/government relations counsel as required

### **Roles & responsibilities of departments in a crisis:**

#### Corporate Communications

- Advise the team on timing, frequency and content of announcements, statements, or responses to be made about the crisis to all relevant audiences
- Develop and obtain team approval for media plan in response to crisis situation
- Prepare press statements, messages and other background information for approval by Team
- Serve as news media spokesperson and/or identify and train appropriate spokespersons
- Monitor and report back on news media stories and other external developments that reflect what actions Tennis New Brunswick has taken and/or may affect future decisions of the Team
- Manage and organize reporting of and response to news media inquiries. Make sufficient resources available for rapid and ongoing response
- Coordinate with outside parties or agencies that may also be making statements to the news media about the situation
- Provide resource assistance and expertise to regional facilities that may be impacted by the crisis

#### Government Relations (external)

- Provide recommendations and implement decisions on government affairs issues and provide expertise in addressing the crisis
- Assess the need to make proactive contact with key government leaders
- Identify potential third party advocates and brief them on the situation

#### Legal (external)

- Continually review all developments, decisions and actions and provide counsel on communications issues to minimize possible liabilities
- Monitor and provide advice to ensure compliance with all relevant laws and regulations
- Monitor the possibility of lawsuits and other legal actions which might be brought against the company by any of the parties involved
- Review and provide general guidance on all statements provided to the news media
- Ensure consistency of legal decisions and positions of the organizations

#### Human Resources

- Advise the crisis team on all human resources implications of the crisis
- Direct assistance to any employees impacted by the crisis
- Work with the communications team to maintain communication with all employees through the crisis
- Monitor and correct internal rumors
- Remind employees of disclosure and news media relations policies

#### Corporate Partnerships/Marketing

- Make sure communications efforts are aligned between partnerships and PR
- Determine impact on partners, advertising and other marketing efforts
  - o Need to pull scheduled ads, promotions, social content etc.
- Provide regular updates to sales/account teams, partners, suppliers etc.
  - o Communicate feedback from stakeholders to the crisis team

#### Finance

- Be prepared to analyze and project the financial implications of the incident, resulting damages and initiatives considered and taken to manage the problem across the organization

#### Board/Executive

- Based on information being received provide counsel and directions.
- Engaged stakeholders and partners to affirm direction organization is taking.

#### Safe Sport

- For any incident related to safeguarding, assume a leadership role in the response and provide counsel.

#### **Issuing Messages/Media Statements during a crisis**

*Note: Content to be developed for each individual issue/situation that arises.*

#### Communications objectives in a Crisis:

- Focus on the basic facts
- State Tennis New Brunswick's primary concern (i.e. protecting the people involved, athlete safety, employee safety etc.) early in the process
- Focus on Tennis New Brunswick's brand values and mission
- Describe actions Tennis New Brunswick is taking

### **Communications Materials required during a crisis**

- Holding Statements
- News release(s)
- Individual reporter briefings
- Copy for website and social channels
- Creative assets or visuals as required
- Partner/Stakeholder copy

### **Media Training**

To ensure our organization is prepared in advance of a crisis situation, all senior spokespeople will receive media training and coaching on an annual basis. In the event of a crisis, refresher and practice interviews will be scheduled prior to participating in media interviews.

To bridge to Tennis New Brunswick messages, use words and phrases such as:

- "Our primary concern..."
- "The most important thing right now..."
- "Let me reassure you..."
- "In the meantime..."
- "I can't speculate..."
- "What we do know, however..."

### **Potential Media Questions during a crisis**

This section includes an extensive list of questions that Tennis New Brunswick can expect members of the news media to ask. Answers to these questions should be constantly updated.

- What Happened?
- When and where did the event take place?
- Is the event under control/over?
- If the event will require ongoing remediation, what are the plans and the time frame expected for resolution/correction of the problem?
- What caused the event? Don't speculate.
- What is the management team doing about the crisis? Are they involved in the decision-making?
- What are your sponsors/partners saying?
- What is your plan to ensure this never happens again?

### **Post Crisis Checklist**

At Tennis New Brunswick, we strive to learn valuable lessons from our handling of difficult situations and apply that learning moving forward. After a crisis, it is important to download important information, commit to writing and analyzing, and make appropriate improvements to this plan. Below is a checklist to review following a crisis:

- Assemble and achieve documentation from the crisis
- Note any future impacts/problems/actions
- Communicate with employees about news, policy changes, etc. Thank them for their patience and understanding during the situation.
- Prepare a post-crisis report for the staff and board.

- Make appropriate changes to Tennis New Brunswick's crisis communications plan and incorporate those into future trainings and simulations
- Schedule briefings with key stakeholders to debrief