

4. Media Relations

Media relations is another critical consideration in COOP planning. Since the media play an important role in disseminating information to the public, great care must be taken in managing contacts to avoid the spread of misinformation and unfounded rumors. Organizations should consider having a media relations representative on the COOP team. At a minimum, an organization should designate a contact person for the media in its COOP plan. This person will be responsible for preparing press releases and regularly speaking with the media regarding the organization's response to crises.

Press releases and initial scripts should be prepared in advance of disasters or emergencies. This will save time and help eliminate confusion.

5. Chain of Communication

Use Worksheet #37 to complete this task.

An emergency or disaster could strike at any time, not just during work hours or off hours during the workweek. A clear and organized plan for communication between key personnel, general staff and the public is necessary to ensure efficient implementation of a COOP plan.

At the center of a communications plan is the ability rapidly to recall personnel.

One method of rapid recall is called a Rapid Recall List in some circles—a Pyramid Alert Roster in others. This method is in widespread use and is probably the preferred solution in most places. It amounts to a cascading list of personnel within the organization, in order of notification. The first person on the list, generally the director, is contacted in the event of an emergency. That person in turn is responsible for contacting next person below his or her name on the list. If the next person on the list is not available, the person should contact the person below that person on the list and so on until he or she is able to speak with someone. This continues until the last person on the roster is contacted. There are problems with this method:

- There are multiple points of failure.
- It is impossible to know, during the process who has been contacted and who has not been contacted.
- If there are more than a very few communications failures (that is, an inability to contact particular individuals), the process breaks down, and rapid notification becomes impossible.

In organizations with the necessary resources, it is preferable to establish a recall cell of three or four individuals who are tasked to make all notifications. This