



ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 5150
DISASTER & CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN

October 27, 2018 Version

Introduction

Tragedy and crisis can strike at any time. Natural disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes and floods; and events caused by an action or inaction of Rotarian or non-Rotarian such as a violent crime, a traffic accident, a youth protection issue or simple bad judgement can lead to a situation that will place a Rotary Club officer or board member, an entire club, the District Governor or other Rotarians in a situation that requires their utmost and immediate attention.

When such an event occurs, it is important to have a plan in place that can be followed to ensure that the matter is handled with the utmost care, being sure that those involved in the incident are kept safe, that communication with those who need to know are notified quickly and professionally, and that action is taken swiftly and professionally when needed.

Additionally, in our internet-driven information age, written and video content can be transmitted in a matter of seconds, which makes it important that when a crisis erupts, our Rotary District responds with a clear message, presented honestly and in a timely manner.

What Constitutes a Crisis?

A crisis, for the purposes of Rotary District 5150, is defined as an unusual event, often tragic, that affects Rotarians and/or Rotary in a negative manner. Examples include an untimely death or injury stemming from natural event (such as fire, flood or earthquake) or unnatural event (such as accidents or mass casualties); illegal activities where the victim or suspected perpetrator is a Rotarian, a Rotary club, or the District; or other event that involves a Rotarian, a Rotary club, or the District that impacts persons or property in a negative manner.

These events may have youth involved in Rotary functions and activities, such as but not limited to Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) students, Interactors, and Rotary Youth Exchange (RYE) student participants. The District 5150 Youth Protection Plan takes precedence over this plan, which is to be followed prior to following this plan.

Often, the media can become involved if the crisis is newsworthy, making it important to have guidelines preset, so that the message(s) are accurate, timely and consistent.

Policy and Parameters

1. The District Governor currently in office is the only officer of Rotary International (RI) in the District. As such, he/she is the main contact between the District and RI, and between the District and the event or activity manager, if applicable (such as a RYLA Camp Director) when a crisis occurs. He/she will ensure that RI is kept updated. The District Governor will provide information to neighboring Rotary Districts, RI, the media, and others.

2. The District Governor is the “point person” for Crisis Management in District 5150. In the absence of the District Governor, the District Governor Elect, Immediate Past District Governor, a member of the District Governor Line, or another Rotarian (in this order) may be appointed by the District Governor to serve in this capacity or may become the “point person” until the District Governor is available.
3. The District Governor will annually appoint the Crisis Management Team as part of the District Leadership Team to provide support and guidance.
4. The District Governor or his/her designate will activate the Crisis Management Team or individual members of the team when required.
5. An individual Rotary Club’s president or designate will represent an individual club if the incident requires, as requested by the District Governor.

Crisis Management Team

A Crisis Management Team shall be appointed by the District Governor each year, consisting of:

1. The District Governor as Chair.
2. The District Governor Elect, Governor Nominee, Immediate Past District Governor, District Chief of Staff or other member of the District Governor line who will serve as the Assistant to the District Governor.
3. District Youth Protection Officer.
4. A legal professional who is familiar with California local law and can give immediate advice as to confidentiality, potential legal action and liability.
5. The District Public Relations/Public Image Chair.
6. A District Spokesperson who serves as liaison to the media, Public Information Officer, who may or may not be the District Public Relations/Public Image Chair. Ensure that there is an alternate person identified due to other employment obligations or is unable to engage during the activation of the crisis.

Additional Rotarians could be asked to serve on the Crisis Management Team for a specific incident, as determined by the District Governor:

7. Assistant Governor(s) where local presence is important, if applicable.
8. The Chair of the Committee responsible for the activity, where the incident originated, if applicable.
9. Other Rotarians at the request of the District Governor.

If a Crisis Develops

1. The Club President or a concerned Rotarian contacts and consults with the District Governor; or the Activity/Event Chair, Coordinator or Youth Protection Officer and then contacts to consult with the District Governor following the previous established protocols for the activity or event, if any. If the District Governor is not available, the next person on the list of designated “point persons” for the current year is contacted in that order.
2. The District Governor, or designate, determines the need to consult the Crisis Management Team, and decides if the team or certain members of the team should be activated. For example, depending on the situation, the activated team members might consist of the Club President, a Committee Chair, an Attorney, the Spokesperson, the Youth Protection Officer and/or the Public Relations/Image Chair.
3. The Crisis Management Team will cooperate with Law Enforcement and direct individuals in the gathering of facts.

4. The District Governor should contact Rotary International and the RI Director.
5. The District Governor should confirm that Law Enforcement has been contacted, if applicable and not already involved.
6. The District Governor should designate a Rotary Spokesperson. This should be someone who is current on the issues, communicates well, and is experienced interacting with the media.
7. The District Governor should ask Club Presidents and Assistant Governors to communicate appropriate and approved information to affected clubs, and instruct all Club members to refer press inquiries to the Spokesperson.
8. The District Governor may communicate through the Assistant Governors, and/or, the District Leadership Team members, clubs and/or individual Rotarians if needed.
9. The District Governor should direct the Spokesperson to prepare a statement that accurately states the facts, expresses Rotary's position, and conveys the appropriate tone (*sympathy, apology, commitment, etc.*) and develop key messages to help the Spokesperson convey Rotary's position consistently and accurately. The Spokesperson should update the statement as needed; including what individuals can do, and should not do, where to send monetary donations, and other types of acceptable in-kind donations. This information may be made publicly available through local and national communication methods such as but not limited to the Media, websites, emails, and social media.
10. The District Governor should seek further assistance from RI regarding media inquiries as needed.

If the Media Contacts You

If a Club President, event or activity chair or some other person is contacted, please keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. Follow the protocols outlined above. Do not issue a statement or make any comments to the media.
2. Immediately contact the District Governor or designate, even if in doubt of the urgency or importance of the matter. Let the DG or designate make the decisions as to urgency and importance.
3. Respond to all media inquiries promptly. Ignoring the media can contribute to unnecessary speculation. A media interview is a good opportunity to convey the facts and Rotary's position to the public, but this is the responsibility of the District Spokesperson under the guidance of the District Governor.
4. Refer the media contact to the District Governor, or in an on-going situation, designated District Spokesperson. If you need time to confirm or determine the District Governor or Spokesperson's contact information, tell the reporter you will call back promptly.
5. The District Governor and/or Spokesperson will be completely honest and truthful, will not say anything he/she is unsure of and will not cover up or make excuses.
6. The District Governor or Spokesperson will represent Rotary. When they speak, they ARE Rotary. No personal observations or speculations shall be issued.
7. Monitor the media's local coverage of the issue for accuracy and tone. If Rotary is misrepresented, let the Spokesperson know who will convey the concern to the District Governor for action, if needed.

How to Accept Monetary Funds

The Rotary District 5150 Disaster Relief Fund is to provide help in the most efficient and effective way to those devastated by the “Crisis” in District 5150 (Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo Counties). Contributors/Donors are directed to check the District 5150 website at rotary5150.org for steps to make financial donations for a disaster/crisis to the Donor Advised Fund (DAF).

As Rotary learns about locally-led response and relief efforts, information about supporting these activities is posted on www.rotary.org/disaster-response. Members are asked to share club and district led response efforts with Rotary International for publication through their District Governor Team, which is then shared with Rotary International at relief@rotary.org.

Rotary members inquiring about supporting communities impacted by disasters are directed to www.rotary.org/disaster-response to support known response efforts.

Rotary communicates with partners (ShelterBox, Habitat) and Rotary affiliated groups (Disaster Network of Assistance Rotarian Action Group) to stay abreast of their response activities and connect them with local Rotarian contacts as appropriate. Responses undertaken by Rotary’s partners and Rotary affiliated groups are also publicized on www.rotary.org/disaster-response.

A Final Word

Remember: Clubs, District Committees and individuals are *NOT* to handle any crisis alone!

District 5150 DG , Spokesperson, and Rotary International can relieve you of the worry of facing the media when your attention is needed dealing with the actual crisis. The District Governor may decide the most appropriate course of action. Contact the District Governor as soon as a crisis develops.