

Hotel Crisis Communication Plan Template

A practical framework for the first hour, the first 24 hours, and everything after,
built for hotels specifically.

How to use this template

Fill in a spokesperson and approval chain before they're needed. Draft holding statements for realistic scenarios now, while there's time to get the tone right, rather than writing under pressure. Treat this as a living document: revisit it every year, and immediately after any real incident, while the lessons are still fresh.

Section 1: Preparation

Complete this section before anything happens. It is the single most useful part of the plan.

Named spokesperson (primary)

Named spokesperson (deputy / backup)

Approval chain: who signs off a public statement, in order

Legal contact for pre-agreed holding statement wording

Before a crisis happens, make sure the plan covers:

- A named spokesperson and a clear chain of approval
- Holding statements drafted for the most likely scenarios: safety incident, data breach, staff conduct, review pile-on
- A briefed frontline team who know what they can and can't say

Holding statement templates

Draft these now, in calm conditions, so the only thing left to fill in on the day is the specific detail. A holding statement acknowledges the situation and confirms it is being looked into, and it does not speculate on cause or blame.

Safety incident

Data breach

Staff conduct issue

Review pile-on / reputational spike

Section 2: The first 24 hours

- Get the facts straight internally before saying anything publicly
- Issue a holding statement that acknowledges the situation without speculating
- Brief guest-facing staff so nobody is caught off guard by a question at reception

Who briefs frontline / reception staff, and by when

Internal update channel (e.g. WhatsApp group, email chain, incident line)

Section 3: Ongoing management

- Regular, specific updates rather than one statement followed by silence
- Coordination with legal teams and, where relevant, the authorities
- Consistent messaging across social, press, and guest-facing channels
- Actioned commitments stated in concrete terms: what's changing, for whom, and by when, not just that "we take this seriously"

Update frequency and owner (e.g. daily update, owned by ...)

Section 4: Post-crisis review

A crisis rarely ends when the news cycle does. Reviews, search results and social conversation keep surfacing it long afterwards, so the review stage matters as much as the response itself.

- A proper debrief once things have settled, with an honest look at what the plan got right and wrong
- Monitoring for how the story continues to surface in reviews, search results, and social afterwards
- An update to the holding statements and spokesperson list based on what was actually learned

Debrief date (recommend within 2 weeks of the incident closing)

Owner of the post-crisis review

What the response got right

What the response got wrong, and what changes as a result

Quick reference FAQs

Who should be the spokesperson during a hotel crisis?

A senior, briefed individual, usually the General Manager or a regional director, not whoever happens to be on shift. Decide this in advance, not in the moment.

How quickly should a hotel respond to a crisis?

Within hours, not days, even if the first statement is only a holding line acknowledging the situation while facts are confirmed. Speculation fills silence.

What's the difference between a holding statement and a full response?

A holding statement acknowledges the situation and confirms it's being looked into; it doesn't speculate on cause or blame. The full response comes once the facts are known and, ideally, what's being done about it.

What's the biggest mistake hotels make in a crisis?

Sounding defensive, or offering a gesture that looks smaller than the situation warrants. Both read as not taking the issue seriously, even when that's not the intention.

Should legal sign-off slow down the first public statement?

It shouldn't stop a holding statement going out fast. Pre-agree the wording and approval chain for holding statements with legal before a crisis happens.

Does a small independent hotel need a plan as much as a big chain?

Yes, arguably more. A large chain has a communications team on standby; a single property often doesn't, which makes having the plan ready in advance even more important.

How does a hotel's crisis response affect its search and review visibility?

Longer than most people expect. Review platforms and search results keep surfacing a badly handled crisis long after the news cycle has moved on, particularly if the story picked up press coverage.

This template is provided by Prohibition PR as a starting point for hotel crisis communications planning. For a plan built and stress-tested with your team, get in touch: prohibitionpr.co.uk