

Crisis Communications Plan

**What to Say and Do
After an Aviation Accident**



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Introduction

Bottom Line Up Front

As a wise lady once stated, the point in your flight when the engine quits is not the time begin practicing autorotations.

Accidents happen in the helicopter industry, and companies must be well prepared to communicate during the crisis effectively. With a developed, rehearsed plan, companies should be able to successfully communicate the details of the accident until relieved of the responsibility by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). Attempting to wing it may result in damaging your company's reputation or exposing it to liability.

HAI created this document and template to assist its member companies in preparing their crisis communications plan.

Adapting the Plan to Your Needs

Every company is different, and this plan is meant to serve solely as a template. You'll need to adapt it to serve your company and its interests properly.

Depending on your corporate structure, you may need to work with external resources, other individuals, or departments to properly modify your plan. Don't forget to include your corporate legal counsel as a partner in your communications plan.

Update your plan annually, or as needed; it's essential that the plan be accurate and up to date when you need it.

Prepare, Plan, and Train for the Emergency

Social media moves the news of adverse incidents at astonishing speeds. Depending on the circumstances, the first notification of an accident may reach businesses or families through social media posts.

Proximity to news outlets may determine the longevity of coverage. A vast number of other factors, including the existence of compelling images or video, will also influence the duration of coverage. You must be prepared to respond accordingly.

Advanced familiarity with and understanding of your final plan by relevant employees is vital to your company's success during newsworthy events. Plan annual meetings to discuss roles and responsibilities so your employees can act purposefully instead of reacting hesitantly during a time when quick, decisive action is critical.

External Contributors

Depending on circumstances, other parties may be involved in releasing information about an accident or incident. These may include customers or first responders, and could include the NTSB at a certain point. Be prepared to work with their communicators as needed.

Depending on the significance of the incident and the size of your company, you may need to hire an expert in crisis communications. Researching options in advance is recommended if you believe this could be an applicable option for your business.

Suspension of Your Communications Plan

Once they begin their investigation, the NTSB will typically assume the responsibility of further communication with the media. You should see the agency as an asset in these instances. While you no longer have direct control over messaging about the accident, their assumption of the communications role allows you to focus on assisting with the investigation and communicating through internal channels with your employees and families.

If the primary communications role is assumed by the NTSB, you're still welcome to work with the media if you wish. The NTSB policy is that you can't speak about the incident they are investigating. However, you're welcome to communicate anything you might have said to the media before the incident took place. This would include company history, safety record, mission segments, etc.

If action by the NTSB is not required, media interest in the accident should dictate the duration of your company's plan.

Final Steps in a Plan

If the NTSB is involved, your communications role doesn't end when they take over media communications. Depending on the elements of the accident, there may be additional media attention when the NTSB issues its final report.

The NTSB should notify you before it issues its final report, and you should also have a very good idea of what the report will reveal before it is made public. Be prepared to communicate appropriately.

If the NTSB is not involved, it is typically best to let the story find its natural finish before closing your plan.

Producing Your Plan

As you prepare your plan, consider how you want to address any incident of enough significance that it draws media attention.

Given the opportunity, HAI recommends you develop your plan as part of a team. Depending on the size of your business, this could include partners, a management team, and internal or external communications experts.

HAI also recommends a review of your plan by legal representation and including your legal counsel as part of your crisis communications team.

Simply, one can never be too prepared when a catastrophe occurs. Your company's ability to survive the incident may depend on your planning.

ACT! Don't React.

Plan ahead! Immediate, appropriate communications are critical following an accident, or you lose the best opportunity to manage communication channels with the media. **Swift, effective communication is particularly vital in today's rapidly responsive digital and social media age.**

To Speak or Not to Speak

There are two schools of thought in communications following a crisis; say nothing at all or address the incident. HAI advocates for addressing the incident with planning and professionalism, ensuring your company maintains some control over the messaging.

Conversely, saying nothing is simple and easy. However, the media and social media will fill the vacuum where you would typically share your message. Without your input, these sources can quickly spiral away from the facts of an incident and begin producing damaging conjecture.

A company also has the right to halt communication at any given time. Be aware that halting communication with the media prematurely can result in additional coverage. We recommend that you tell it all, tell it fast, and tell the truth. With today's fast news and social media cycles, many stories are unlikely to receive extended attention by the media.

Tell It All, Tell It Fast, and Tell the Truth

A thorough crisis communications plan should cover several stages of announcements or press releases. Ideally, a company should also create a variety of templates to use in each of the crisis scenarios most likely to occur with that company's operations. Your plan **must** include postings to social media, perhaps giving those platforms higher priority than traditional media outlets.

Don't lie. Producing false statements or trying to avoid disclosing information will likely come back to hurt you and your company.

What NOT To Say

- ❑ Don't discuss the cause of an accident or incident prior to final determination. What may seem readily apparent may not be the underlying cause as ultimately determined by the NTSB.
- ❑ Don't speculate.
- ❑ Don't compare your incident with any others.
- ❑ Regretfully, one can't express sympathy any longer by using the words "I'm sorry," especially when speaking with family members of the victims. Any reasonable attorney will quickly flip your sympathetic phrase to an admission of guilt.
- ❑ There will be other topics you should avoid when communicating with the media and public following an accident. Including your company's legal counsel in planning the details of your crisis communications plan, as well as during an actual crisis, could mean the difference between saving or losing your company.

First Warning

EVERY MICROPHONE IS LIVE. EVERY. SINGLE. ONE.

- If you **see or wear** a microphone, consider it active.
- There are no exceptions! **EVERY microphone is live!**

It is impossible for HAI to stress strongly enough that every microphone is live.

This is especially true if you have a lavalier or lapel microphone attached to you. Then the camera doesn't need to be close to you or pointed your direction to pick up everything you say.

Crisis Communications Plan Template

How to Use This Plan

What follows is a template that you or someone in your company must adapt to your specific requirements. HAI produced this template as a guideline for our members. We prepared this template from the point of view of a helicopter operator that experiences a crash resulting in the loss of life to employees of the company.

Obviously, every company and each newsworthy incident will be different, so adapting this plan to the needs of your business is an essential step. This plan assumes the company will have a medium-to-large staff from which to draw on for its communications team. Smaller businesses may need to bring in external assistance, depending on the situation.

We know that every company and every incident are different. Again, for effective communications during a crisis, you **MUST** modify this plan appropriately.

We included some elements bracketed in]RED[for you to insert information applicable to your company. Sections highlighted in yellow provide our suggestions or reasons for including particular elements. Users should ascertain the relevance to their situation and modify the document accordingly. The brackets or highlighted sections are not meant to live within your company's final draft.

Using this document as a guide, you may also want to consider crafting additional versions of the included templates to cover other potentially newsworthy events related to your business.

You'll see several places where we suggest consulting your company's legal counsel. Again, every company is different, and your exposure to media scrutiny may be different than companies offering similar missions. As you read through this plan, you probably already know which circumstances will require you to seek legal advice.

]COMPANY'S[CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

]Date[

Plan Objective

Knowing that each accident will bring unique circumstances,]COMPANY[will produce appropriate and timely news releases that best meet the needs of the company, affected families, and our customer(s). No employees will create or release communications during the crisis without the approval of senior management.

Activation of Plan

Upon notification of a potentially newsworthy event, all members of the Crisis Communications Team will be alerted as quickly as possible. The group will then decide how to manage the incident.

Once activated, this plan will remain in place until otherwise directed by senior management or investigating authorities.

Roles and Responsibilities

Crisis Communications Team

Each crisis communications team will include internal or external individuals who are key to the situation. Members could include:

- CEO or president
- Vice presidents
- General counsel
- Department heads as needed
- Director of safety
- Director of human resources
- Director of communications or public relations
- Other necessary employees.

Create and attach a Key Contact Recall List for use after hours or on weekends. *(See draft recall list on p. 14.)*

- Include email addresses and all necessary phone numbers.
- Depending on the size of your company, you may need to create a contact tree to spread the word quickly.

Official Spokesperson

]NAMES OF PRIMARY SPOKESPERSON AND ALTERNATE(S)[

The spokesperson will appear before any interested media to make official statements and respond to their questions.

- Only one person will act as a spokesperson unless the situation requires additional people to provide technical or incident-specific information
- See additional spokesperson criteria and suggestions, beginning on p. 16.

The official spokesperson for the company during a crisis should be the company president or CEO, general counsel, and others identified by the demands of the situation and selected by senior management.

- Your most senior person will provide the necessary level of gravity, sincerity, and transparency to your messaging.
- Avoid selecting the vice president or director of communications as your primary spokesperson. The media and public are less inclined to trust “spin doctors.”
 - This person will still interact with the media (*see liaison information below*).
- Take advantage of disaster media training before it is needed.
 - Learn what to say and what NOT to say to the media and learn how to say it effectively.

Media Liaison

]NAMES OF PRIMARY LIAISON AND ALTERNATE(S)[

The duties of the media liaison include:

- Maintaining an accurate, current press release distribution list, including:
 - Local and regional media.
 - Aviation media.
- Having full access to social media channels, including:
 - Keep an up-to-date list of user names or handles, and passwords.
 - Make sure links to these channels are available on your website.
 - Invite the appropriate media to follow your channels.
- Preparing draft press releases for management review.
- Releasing press releases but only after management approval.
- Coordinating media responses with any relevant public agencies.
- Keeping track of media questions requiring follow-up answers.
- Planning for a press conference, as necessary.
 - Prepare an appropriate site.
 - Alert the media to the date and time.
 - Prepare and distribute to the media appropriate background information on the company.

- As appropriate, before a press conference, appear in front of the media to provide appropriate background information:
 - o Name and title of the spokesperson.
 - o Brief company history.
- Unless this person is the designated spokesperson, this is the only time the media liaison will speak on the record, as he or she will mostly work behind the scenes.

Ideally, the director of communications or public relations is in this position, assisted by others identified by demands of the situation.

Communications Assistant

]NAME(S)[

The duties of the communications assistant include:

- Researching and preparing a media distribution list if the accident occurs outside of your normal area of operations.
- Tracking media calls in the event the spokesperson or liaison is already on the phone.
 - Spokesperson or liaison should return calls ASAP, in the order they are received.
- Keeping track of media representatives attending press conferences.
- Tracking media coverage and prepare a clip file (print and digital).

Any capable staff member, as assigned, can fulfill the duties of this position.

Other Company Employees

Members of the media may attempt to contact other employees for information. When initially notifying the staff of the accident, ensure employees know to direct all queries—**no matter how small**—to the designated spokesperson or media liaison.

Immediacy and Release of Information

One of the first responsibilities of the communications team will be to work with management to determine the appropriate message for the incident.

Public Relations Standard: “Tell It All, Tell It Fast, and Tell the Truth.”

Never lie, deny, or hide company involvement.

Names of Those Involved

- **DON'T** release names until the company has notified ALL affected families.
- Required notifications include families of employees assigned to an aircraft or project but who were unaffected and don't have immediate access to communications.

- Any company employee contacting affected families should notify them that they are not obligated to meet with the media. The family has the right to set parameters for engaging with the media, should they decide to do so.
- Many people feel they are obligated to talk to the media simply because a reporter arrives at their door. There is absolutely no requirement to do so.
- The communications team must coordinate the release (or temporary withholding) of names with the customer(s) and relevant public agencies, which may have their own rules regarding release of names.
- **For additional information, please see the section on notifications, beginning on p. 25.**

Initial Press Release

See a draft of an initial press release on p. 20.

- A fast initial release will generate media interest but will also provide the company time to further assess the situation and develop the next phase of external communications.
- This first release can be limited to: Who, What, When, Where.
- The communications team may send this release as an email.
- Send the release to local and regional media, relevant area media if an incident occurs away from your base of operations, and to the aviation media if desired.

Initial Social Media Post

See a draft of an initial social media post on p. 20 of this document.

- Posting to social media is the fastest method of disseminating information today.
- Know your company's social media handles and passwords.
 - If you don't have accounts for all major platforms, create them.
- Ensure the media is aware of these channels.
 - Include links to these channels in your press releases.
 - Join their channels and invite them to join yours.
 - Your company can use these accounts for marketing or advertising at other times.
- If applicable, ensure your posts meets character limits.

Later Press Releases and Social Media Posts

See a draft of later press releases and social media posts on pp. 21–23.

- Continue to add appropriate details, as known, in subsequent press releases.
- Plan to include quotes from relevant members of management to humanize the otherwise sterile press release.
- Plan for two or three releases of information.
 - Depending on the accident and the amount of information, several releases may be necessary before the NTSB relieves **]company[** of this responsibility.

Press Conferences

Press conferences may be necessary depending on the event. Holding one under these circumstances is never enjoyable, but they can be an inspiring or positive experience for your company. Take the time to prepare and practice for them.

- Plan the event so that the media has adequate time to attend.
 - Send the announcement of a press conference with your latest press release.
 - See the draft on p. 21 of this document, which includes an example of this announcement near the top of the page.
 - This announcement can be as simple as an email to your media contacts.
- When applicable, alert your neighbors to the expected media presence and coordinate parking as necessary.
- Work with security or staff to provide parking for the media and to secure the area around the site of the press conference.
 - Microwave or satellite trucks and vans require additional space, overhead clearance, and possibly clear lines of sight to the horizon.
 - Microwave or satellite trucks may require lights or flagging if raising their masts above a certain height at or near airports.
- Don't schedule press conferences during broadcast times.
- Set a time limit and stick to it as much as possible.
- Set up a podium, table, or desk where the speaker will stand.
 - This provides room for microphones and notes for the speaker.
 - Provide water for the speaker.
- Provide copies of all press releases, official statements, and company background information to all reporters.
- If the press conference is outside, provide appropriate shelter from the elements whenever this is necessary.
- Provide water for the media. **This small gesture can provide positive dividends.**

Live Media Stand-Ups

- Depending on varying factors, the television media may want to conduct live stand-ups during scheduled broadcasts.
- Prepare your spokesperson for after-hours interviews, when applicable.
 - Live follow-up interviews are encouraged but not mandatory.
- Work with the media to find a suitable location for their live shot.
- If held on-site, plan for the following:
 - After-hours security (if necessary).
 - Access to water and restrooms.

The company is not required to allow the media to remain on their property for these events but doing so will generate some goodwill with the media. Hosting the media for such an event is only

applicable when you have adequate space and the workforce to accommodate one or more reporters.

Depending on the circumstances, use the off-air time to develop a stronger relationship with the reporters. Positive relationships will help when you want to pitch a story to the media in the future.

OTHERS AS NECESSARY

Director, Flight Ops

]NAME[

cell phone _____

Director, Maintenance

]NAME[

cell phone _____

Director, Quality

]NAME[

cell phone _____

Director, Field Maintenance

]NAME[

cell phone _____

Director, Shop Maintenance

]NAME[

cell phone _____

Aviation Safety Manager

]NAME[

cell phone _____

HSE Manager

]NAME[

cell phone _____

Insurance Coordinator

]NAME[

cell phone _____

Crisis Communications Spokesperson Criteria and Recommendations

Spokesperson Criteria

The spokesperson representing the company should have the following skills or attributes:

- Be comfortable with public speaking.
- Be comfortable speaking on camera with reporters.
- Be patient, sincere, and credible.
- Be skilled in redirecting responses to questions.
- Be able to speak without using industry jargon.

Spokesperson Appearance

The company spokesperson should wear professional dress when meeting with reporters. Due to the emergency nature of the spokesperson's duties, HAI recommends having a fresh, clean set of "media clothes" on standby that can be accessed in a hurry. These will also be useful for times when the spokesperson dresses comfortably, such as casual Friday or other situations.

- Don't wear patterns, which may appear fuzzy on camera.
- Preferred dress for male spokespersons: dark coat, solid-color dress shirt, and nonpatterned tie.
- Preferred dress for female spokespersons: dark skirt, solid-color blouse, and appropriate accessories for women.
- Professional-looking shirt with the company logo is another option.

Working with the Media

Be respectful of the reporters' role.

- Treat all members of the media equally.
- Reporters are paid to ask uncomfortable questions during a time of crisis; it's part of their job to do so.
- They all want a different angle from the other reporters.
- Reporters, particularly those working in television, may repeat the same question several times.
 - It allows them to show the reporter answering a question on camera and getting a response.
- Reporters are generally uninformed about our industry.
 - They will initially trust us, but they could create issues if they believe we are hiding information.

Restarting a Statement

- If you cough, stutter, stammer, or misspeak, ask to restart the answer to a question.
 - Television and radio reporters prefer clean audio and will be grateful that you want to try again.
 - Unless your interview is live, it is unlikely you'll ever see that segment put on the air.
- An extra benefit of this situation is that it also gives the spokesperson time to consider a better way to answer the question.

Professional Media Training

HAI recommends crisis communications media training for the full team or at least for those who may appear on camera.

Press Conference and Interview Dos & Don'ts

EVERY MICROPHONE IS LIVE!

- If you **see or wear** a microphone, consider it active.
- There are no exceptions! **EVERY microphone is live!**

It is impossible for HAI to stress strongly enough that every microphone is live. This is especially true if you have a lavalier or lapel microphone attached to you. Then the camera doesn't need to be close to you or pointed in your direction to pick up everything you say.

Press Conference and Interview Dos

Here are some items that you SHOULD do during press conferences or interviews:

- DO become a human face for a company that has suffered a loss. Now is the time to let your emotions show.
- DO begin a press conference by stating your name and title, and then spell your name.
 - This introduction will not appear on television unless someone is airing it live.
- DO speak distinctly and with the appropriate level of emotion.
- DO make eye contact, especially when responding to a question.
- DO stick to the prepared statement.
 - Print with LARGE type and wide margins for notes.
 - Use staples or binder clips on pages, particularly when the conference is outside.
- DO answer as honestly as possible, given the circumstances.
- DO be willing to say, "I don't know," and offer to contact the reporter with the answer later.
 - **Keep this promise.**
 - Your media liaison can do this for you.
 - It is unlikely that "I don't know" will appear on the air.

Here are some items that you SHOULD NOT do during press conferences or interviews:

- DON'T comment on the cause of an accident or incident.
- DON'T speculate.
- DON'T compare accidents or incidents.
- DON'T assume you can wing it. Work from a prepared statement when possible.
- DON'T volunteer information that is not part of the prepared statement.
- DON'T effusively eulogize the pilot or mechanic—they might ultimately end up being responsible for the accident.
 - You can state that the person was a close friend or that you enjoyed working with them.
 - Avoid extreme, but probably heartfelt, emotional statements.
 - EXTREME EXAMPLE: "Name was one of the best pilots I've ever known."

- ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE: “Name was a close friend, and I will sincerely miss him/her.”
- DON'T talk off the record with an individual reporter or a group of reporters.
 - Assume all conversations with any members of the media are on the record and behave accordingly.
- DON'T say “No Comment.” EVER. It makes it appear that you're hiding information.
 - Redirect the question to a prepared answer.
 - If you don't know the answer or want time to think it over, promise to answer later and then keep the promise.
 - EXAMPLE: “]Reporter's name[, I know you're on deadline and have a job to do, but I simply can't answer that question right now. I'll make sure to contact you directly when I can provide you with a response.

Sample Press Releases

Example 1: Initial Press Release and Social Media Post

ABC Helicopters regrets to announce the crash of one of its Chariot 123T helicopters in a field southwest of Capitol City at approximately 10:20 am today. No further details are immediately available. We will provide additional information as quickly as possible.

Rationale

This sample release is simple, so it is quick to prepare, approve, and release. It includes:

- Who ABC Helicopters.
- What Crash of a company helicopter.
- Where Southwest of Capitol City.
- When Approximately 10:20 today (local time is assumed).

The remaining elements of a lead news paragraph (Why and How) are not included but are not necessary at this point.

This statement contains 263 characters, which is below the current 280-character limit for Twitter. Therefore, it is acceptable for distribution on all social media platforms. Twitter is the only current platform with limits.

Example 2: Second Press Release and Press Conference Announcement

This draft starts with a press conference announcement in the body of the email, not in the press release itself.

MEDIA ALERT: ABC Helicopters will hold a press conference at the company's headquarters at the Capitol City Airport at 2 pm today. The address is 123 Rotorwash Way, Capitol City. Please contact us for directions and parking information.

Press Release Body

Capitol City – ABC Helicopters sadly announces that two employees have died in the crash of one of the company's Chariot 123T helicopters. The company is withholding the names of the employees pending notification of their families.

The crash occurred in a field at approximately 10:20 am (local), 10 nautical miles southwest of the Capitol City Airport, near the community of Suburbia. The crew and aircraft were conducting a wildlife survey for the state department of fish and wildlife at the time of the accident.

"We are devastated by this news," said First Last, president of ABC Helicopters. "We are small enough that every employee is a family member. Every one of us is hurting right now, and we ask that everyone keep the families of our lost employees in their thoughts and prayers.

"It is much too early to know what caused this incident," added Last. "However, we have a team of senior employees at the scene of the accident to assist in the investigation. We will work closely with the responsible government agencies to determine the cause in a responsible, timely manner."

ABC Helicopter operates a variety of helicopters and uncrewed aerial systems (UASs, or drones) from the company's headquarters. The company specializes in contracted flight services, including flight training, aerial tours, wildlife surveys, and energy infrastructure inspection. The company was founded in 1982 and employs 70 highly skilled men and women. Today's crash was the company's first accident since 1991 when an Apini 100 crashed during flight training operations.

Rationale

This version is much more detailed but still follows a simple format:

- Paragraphs 1 and 2: the Who, What, Where, When, and Why are answered appropriately.
- Paragraphs 3 and 4: two paragraphs of quotes.
 - The first paragraph of quotes should address the fatalities and what it means to you and the families.
 - People are always first, not the business.
- The second paragraph of quotes can provide some limited insight into the crash and indicates your willingness to find the cause of the accident.

- Paragraph 5 offers you an opportunity to tell a little more about your company and what it does, as well as identifying elements of your safety record.

This press release is much too long for social media. Post this on your website, and then provide a link to it through your social media channels.

- To shorten URL links, consider a free subscription to Bitly, and use it to shorten longer web addresses: https://bitly.com/a/sign_up.
- A click-counter built into Bitly provides an inexpensive way to see how much activity your link receives.

Example: For the Press Conference or Third Press Release

Capitol City – ABC Helicopters sadly announces the names of the two employees who perished in the crash of one of the company’s Chariot 123T helicopters near the company’s headquarters. The employees are:

- Name, Job Title, Hometown.
- Name, Job Title, Hometown.

“These two are members of our family,” says First Last, president of ABC Helicopters. “We knew them well, and we are mourning their loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with each of their families, and one of our senior employees is currently with each family to provide support. We ask that everyone keep the families and our employees in their thoughts and prayers.”

The crash occurred in a field at 10:20 am (local), 10 nautical miles southwest of the Capitol City Airport, near the community of Suburbia. The crew and aircraft were conducting a wildlife survey for the state department of fish and wildlife at the time of the accident.

“We are still in the initial phase of the investigation into this accident,” adds Last. “We are already working closely with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and we will continue to assist them through every stage of the investigation process. Due to the extremely thorough nature of these investigations, we don’t anticipate immediate results.

“Immediately following the crash of the helicopter, we grounded every one of our aircraft,” says Last. “We did this out respect for the crew members whom we lost in the crash, and it also allowed us to conduct a safety stand-down and inspection of our fleet. Since then, we have returned all of these aircraft to service.”

ABC Helicopter operates a variety of helicopters and uncrewed aerial systems (UASs, or drones) from the company’s headquarters. The company specializes in contracted flight services, including flight training, aerial tours, wildlife surveys, and energy infrastructure inspection. The company was founded in 1982 and employs 70 highly skilled men and women. Today’s crash was the company’s first accident since 1991 when an Apini 100 crashed during flight training operations.

Rationale

- First, properly and completely identify your fatalities.
 - If you wish to include photos of the victims in the press release, ensure that you have permission from the families.
- Once again, the press release follows a formula:
 - Paragraph 1 remains fairly simple and self-explanatory. It covers the Who and What elements of the story.
 - Paragraph 2 provides you the opportunity to share your feelings about the victims and provide some information about how their co-workers and families are faring.

- Paragraph 3 is a direct copy from the last press release. Copying the words is acceptable only if the details remain the same as the prior release. It covers the When, Where and Why elements of the accident.
- Paragraph 4 provides you the ability to discuss your support and assistance in the investigation.
- Paragraph 5 allows for additional details and elaboration.
- Paragraph 6 is a direct copy of the previous release. Again, presenting the same information multiple times is acceptable.

Family Member or Next-of-Kin Notifications

Notifications for Victims Who Are Company Employees

There is probably no tougher job than telling the family of an employee that their loved one has perished in an accident. It is an unfortunate part of this industry, and each company should plan for this communications element.

When you're contacted by the NTSB, ask about their assistance program for families and survivors.

Legal Information

When conducting notifications, there will be things you can or can't say, or things you can or can't do. HAI strongly recommends working with your company's legal counsel to establish these parameters before an accident occurs.

Designated Representative(s)

Ideally, the president or CEO of the company will provide the notification. When circumstances dictate, companies should identify another person (or two) as the official representative(s).

- This person should be compassionate and empathetic.
- It may help if the representative knew the victim or at least worked in the same segment of the company:
 - The chief pilot notifies the family of a pilot.
 - The director of maintenance notifies the family of a mechanic.
- Companies should consider sending a representative from the Human Resources Department as well to provide assistance and information about any applicable benefits.
- Within the parameters set in place with your company's legal counsel (see above), provide your representatives with the authority to offer physical and financial assistance to the family or families.

Delivery of the News

- Unless there is simply no other timely way to do so, deliver this news in person.
- Unless specific circumstances require notification in the middle of the night, HAI recommends following US military policies that dictate that notifications occur between the hours of 6 am and midnight.
 - These families are about to have their lives turned upside down. Interrupting the last night of peaceful sleep they will have in the immediate future serves no useful purpose.

Notifications for Victims Who Are Student Pilots

This category is no less difficult than when you lose an employee in an accident, and the responsibility for notification of family in this instance typically remains with the company.

Legal Information

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- This person should be compassionate and empathetic.
- It may help if the representative knew the victim.
- Within the parameters set in place with your company's legal counsel (see above), provide your representatives with the authority to offer physical and financial assistance to the family or families.

Delivery of the News

- Unless there is simply no other timely way to do so, deliver this news in person.
- If the person is an international student, HAI suggests ensuring the student's emergency contact information include someone who is an English-language speaker.
 - Conversely, work with someone on your staff who is fluent in the student's language.
- Unless specific circumstances require notification in the middle of the night, HAI recommends following US military policies that dictate that notifications occur between the hours of 6 am and midnight.
 - These families are about to have their lives turned upside down. Interrupting the last night of peaceful sleep they will have in the immediate future serves no useful purpose.

Notifications for Victims Who Are Customers or Nonemployees

Losing an employee in an accident is a terrible occurrence; having a fatal accident with a paid customer is equally devastating. This section is a very sensitive segment, and you're strongly urged to contact your company's legal counsel for advice.

Legal Information

When conducting notifications, there will be things you can or can't say, or things you can or can't do. HAI strongly recommends working with your company's legal counsel to establish these parameters before an accident occurs.

Designated Representative(s)

In many cases, law enforcement or other first responders may take on this responsibility.

HAI doesn't recommend contacting the families unless you're advised to do so by your attorney.

Necessary Information

If your company routinely carries passengers, paid or not, the company should be collecting emergency contact information for every nonemployee carried on any flight. This information should include:

- Full passenger name.
- Names of emergency contacts.
 - Include English-speaking contacts, when necessary and available.
- Phone numbers of emergency contacts.
- Physical home address.
- Relationship of contact to the passenger.

Either your company or law enforcement officials will need this information immediately. Plan on making multiple copies of the manifest or contact information.