

Crisis Communication Plan  
Southwest Airlines



Caitlan McCafferty  
November 22, 2015  
Date of Last Revision: December 13, 2015

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	3
2. Acknowledgements .....	4
3. Rehearsal Dates.....	5
4. Purpose and Objectives.....	6
5. Crisis Inventory.....	7
6. List of Key Publics .....	8-9
7. Notifying Key Publics.....	10
8. Crisis Communication Team.....	11
9. Crisis Directory.....	12
10. Media Spokesperson.....	13
11. List of Emergency Personnel and Local Officials.....	14
12. List of Key Media.....	15
13. Spokesperson for Related Organizations.....	16
14. Crisis Communications Control Center.....	17
15. Equipment and Supplies.....	18
16. Pre-gathered Information.....	19
17. Key Messages .....	20
18. Website .....	21
19. Blogs and Social Media .....	22
20. Trick Questions.....	23
21. List of Prodrumes .....	24
22. Evaluation .....	25

## Introduction

To All Southwest Staff:

The following plan details what action our company will take if the worst day happens. Not one person at Southwest expects or wills this plan to be used. We do everything in our power to avoid crisis. But, we must prepare the staff just in case one does occur. If we are not prepared, Southwest could be ruined. It is of the utmost importance to all of us that this never happens. This particular plan is going to cover the most damaging situation an airline could experience — a crash. It will answer the questions that will be asked by all staff members: How does the company recover from this? How do our customers trust us again? How do we retain our customer base? How does the airline make the passenger feel safe again?

This plan covers a crisis communication procedure in the event that a Southwest aircraft is involved in a plane crash due to pilot failure. We have the utmost trust in our pilots and flight crews, but again, we must prepare for the worst. This plan will prepare all staff to continue being proud having successful careers at Southwest Airlines. The necessary staff people will contact the media and be in contact with our customers in order to retain brand equity and recover from the crisis. Executives at Southwest believe that we do everything in our power to protect our customers, and if this were to ever happen that transparency with the media is our best option. This will provide Southwest customers with the knowledge and reason to continue trusting their travel plans with Southwest.

Southwest's mission focuses all of us to always remember that our passengers are safe, while having the best travel experience. This plan ensures that we can continue to the mission during any crisis event.

Always my best,  
Gary C. Kelly  
CEO, Southwest Airlines

## Acknowledgements

- Gary C. Kelly, Chairman of the Board, President & CEO

X\_\_\_\_\_

- Robert E. Jordan, Executive Vice President & Chief Commercial Officer

X\_\_\_\_\_

- Michael Van deVen, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer

X\_\_\_\_\_

- Ginger C. Hardage, Senior Vice President Culture and Communications

X\_\_\_\_\_

- Tammy Romo, Executive Vice President & CFO

X\_\_\_\_\_

- Ron Ricks, Chief Legal and Regulatory Officer

X\_\_\_\_\_

- Mike Delehant, Vice President, Strategic Planning

X\_\_\_\_\_

- Mike Hafner, Vice President Customer Services

X\_\_\_\_\_

- Scott Halfmann, Vice President Safety & Security

X\_\_\_\_\_

- Kevin Krone, Vice President Marketing and Chief Marketing Officer

X\_\_\_\_\_

- Linda Rutherford, Vice President Communication & Outreach

X\_\_\_\_\_

## Rehearsal Dates

The Crisis Communication plan will be practiced twice a year.

Please see below for rehearsal dates in 2016.

February 5th  
November 10th

Please use below table to comment on the rehearsal in order to adjust the plan accordingly.

Date	Crisis	Notes

## Purpose and Objectives

### Purpose

The purpose of the this plan is to put a procedure in place that first protects the safety of all current Southwest staff and passengers; but, also allows for full transparency with the public so that Southwest can continue business as usual and transport passengers to their destinations safely.

### Objectives

1. Keep all passengers and current employees safe during the time of the crisis.
2. Provide excellent customer service during the time of the crisis in order to preserve brand equity.
3. Preserve relationships with the media and industry partners during the time of the crisis.
4. Improve communications practices through the evaluation piece of the plan.
5. Preserve customer trust.

## Crisis Inventory

This plan only covers what SWA's course of action will be in the event that we experience a plane crash caused by a pilot's failure or error. However, please see below crisis inventory for reference.

Crisis	Possibility	Potential Damage
acquisition	4	2
age discrimination	3	2
alcohol abuse	2	4
bankruptcy	2	2
boycott	1	4
bribery	1	1
computer hacking	3	4
data loss/theft	3	3
drug trafficking	4	2
fire	3	3
flood	3	3
hurricane	3	3
lawsuits	4	2
layoffs	2	2
plane crash caused by pilot failure	3	5
strikes	2	4
racial issues	2	4
sexual discrimination	2	4
terrorism	3	5

## List of Key Publics

### Enabling

- Gary C. Kelly, Chairman of the Board, President & CEO
- Robert E. Jordan, Executive Vice President & Chief Commercial Officer
- Michael Van deVen, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer
- Ginger C. Hardage, Senior Vice President Culture and Communications
- Tammy Romo, Executive Vice President & CFO
- Ron Ricks, Chief Legal and Regulatory Officer
- Mike Delehant, Vice President, Strategic Planning
- Mike Hafner, Vice President Customer Services
- Scott Halfmann, Vice President Safety & Security
- Kevin Krone, Vice President Marketing and Chief Marketing Officer
- Linda Rutherford, Vice President Communication & Outreach

### Functional

- Pilots at Southwest Airlines
- Flight Attendants
- Technical and Mechanical Staff
- Communications Staff
- Consumer Service Staff
- Airport Staff

### Normative

- TSA
- Key Staff at the following airports (picked for high volume of Southwest Flights)
  - Dallas - Love Field (Headquarters)
  - New York- Lagueardia
  - Baltimore - BWI
  - Washington, DC - Washington Reagan National
  - Fort Lauderdale
  - Orlando
  - Tampa
  - Atlanta
  - Nashville
  - Chicago - Midway
  - Denver
  - Las Vegas
  - Los Angeles
  - San Diego

### Diffused

- Passengers via social media - Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram
- Media
  - New York Times
  - Wall Street Journal



- Conde Nast Traveler
- Huffington Post Travel
- BuzzFeed Travel
- CNN, CNBC, Fox News, MSNBC
- ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC

## Notifying Key Publics

The CEO will be immediately notified of the crisis by phone or in person. The remaining executives will be told by the CEO's executive assistant. The CEO will contact board members. The financial press will be contacted with our statement in order for all company stakeholders to be notified.

The crisis communication will put this plan in immediate effect contacting the entire staff via email. In addition, each department lead will call their immediate subordinates to advise them. And the process will continue until an employee that doesn't supervise any other employee. See below chart for clarity, in addition to contacting other external parties.

	Phone	Email/ ENewsletters	Mail	Personal Visit	News Release	Meeting	Social Media	Interview
<b>Employees</b>								
<b>Executives</b>	x			x		x		
<b>Customers</b>		x			x		x	
<b>Board of Directors</b>	x					x		
<b>Internet Media</b>		x			x		x	x
<b>Newspapers</b>					x			x
<b>TV</b>					x			x
<b>Shareholders</b>	x			x		x		
<b>Community Leaders</b>				x	x			
<b>Airports</b>	x	x		x		x		

## Crisis Communication Team

The team will report to the executives responsible for marketing, communications, community relations, and customer service.

### Crisis Communication Manager

Linda Rutherford, VP of Communications and Strategic Outreach will act in this role. She will be responsible for communicating with fellow executives about the status of the crisis. In addition, she will be the chief architect of the message to the key publics and will delegate work to the rest of the team.

The Corporate Communications Director will act as the Crisis Communication Assistant. This role will mainly be the Crisis Communication Manager's backup. He or she will assume that role if needed. Also, he or she may be responsible for media relations and social media.

The Executive Assistant of the VP of Communications and Strategic Outreach will act as the Control Coordinator . He or she will be responsible for setting up the crisis control center.

Two administrators for support.

Community Relations Coordinator

Marketing Coordinator

The two support staff members will be writing press releases, responding to media inquiries, and writing social media posts about the events of the crisis.

## Crisis Directory

Name	Role	Phone	Email
Linda Rutherford	Crisis Communication Manger		
Corporate Communications Director	Crisis Communication Manger		
Corporate Communications Manger	Control Coordinator		
Community Relations Coordinator	Administrative Support		
Marketing Coordinator	Administrative Support		

## Media Spokesperson

Gary C. Kelly, CEO acts as the media spokesperson.

Ginger C. Hardage, Senior Vice President Culture and Communications will act as an alternate media spokesperson or as spokesperson for certain minor crises

Mike Hafner, Vice President Customer Services will also act as an alternate media spokesperson.

All three are media trained.

## List of Emergency Personnel and Local Officials

Based from Southwest Headquarters, Love Field Airport, Dallas, TX

Organization	Name	Phone	Email
Transportation Security Administration	N/A	571-227-2829	N/A
NTSB	Kelly Nantel, Chief of Public Affairs	(202) 314-6100	N/A
FAA	Office of Public Affairs	(202) 267-3883	N/A
FAA- Southwest Region	Lynn Lunsford	(817) 222-4455	N/A
Dallas - Love Field	Jose L. Torres, Media Relations	214-670-3484	<a href="mailto:jose.torres@dallascityhall.com">jose.torres@dallascityhall.com</a>
Dallas Fire Department	Jason Evans, PIO	214-670-5466	<a href="mailto:DFRquestions@dallascityhall.com">DFRquestions@dallascityhall.com</a>
Dallas Police Department	N/A	(214) 671-4065	<a href="mailto:pio@dpd.dallascityhall.com">pio@dpd.dallascityhall.com</a>
Texas State Police	N/A	(512) 424-2080	<a href="mailto:media@dps.texas.gov">media@dps.texas.gov</a>
Texas Health Alliance	Stephen O'Brien	682-236-6390	<a href="mailto:StephenO'Brien@TexasHealth.org">StephenO'Brien@TexasHealth.org</a>

## Key Media Contacts

Media	Name	Position	Email
Wire Services	Associated Press		
New York Times	Matt Flegenheimer	Transportation Editor	
Wall Street Journal	Andy Pasztor	Aviation Industry reporter	
Washington Post	Del Wilber	Aviation reporter	
LA Times	Laura J. Nelson	Transportation Editor	
Dallas Morning News	Brandon Formby	Transportation Reporter	
Huffington Post	Kate Auletta	Executive Editor of Voices	
Buzzfeed	Adam Serward	National Editor for Buzzed News	
CNN	Rene Marsh	Aviation and Government Regulation Correspondent	
NBC/MSNBC	Tom Costello	Aviation Correspondent	
Fox News	Lea Gabrielle	Aviation Correspondent	
CNBC	Phil LeBeau	Airline Industry Expert	
ABC	Lisa Stark	Aviation Expert	

## Partner Company Spokespersons

Organization	Contact Name (Public Relations contacts, unless otherwise specified)	Email	Phone
Dallas - Love Field	Joes Torres	jose.torres@dallascityhall.com	214-670-3484
New York - Laguadia	Ron Marisco		212 435-7000.
Baltimore - BWI	Jonathon O. Dean		410-859-7027
Washington - Regan National	Kimberly Gibbs	PublicAffairs@mwaa.com	703-417-8370
Fort Lauderdale	Greg Meyer	gmeyer@broward.org	954-359-6116
Orlando International	Public Affairs Office		407-825-2001
Tampa International Airport	Janet Zink	<a href="mailto:jZink@TampaAirport.com">jZink@TampaAirport.com</a>	813-554-1460
Atlanta Airport	Reese McCranie	reese.mccranie@atlanta-airport.com	404-382-2319
Nashville Airport	Shannon Sumrall		
Chicago- Midway	CDA Media Relations Office		773) 686-3700
Denver Airport	Kim Day, CEO		
Las Vegas	Tina Frias		702-261-4003
LAX	Public Relations Office		(424) 646-5260
San Diego	Rebecca Bloomfield		619-400-2880



## Crisis Control Center

The Crisis Control Center will be in the SWA headquarters in Dallas, TX. We will use the executive board room.

Address: 2702 Love Field Drive  
Dallas, TX 75235

If this space is not available or if the crisis happens in another location, the crisis control center will be in SWA's office in that particular airport.

For example, if a crisis occurs at the Chicago Midway Airport the crisis control center will be in the Southwest Offices in that airport.

Address: 5700 South Cicero Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60638

### Equipment and Supplies Needed for the Crisis Control Center

- Desks for each person of Crisis Communication Team
- Chair for each person
- Laptop for each person
- Large dry erase board
- 2 boxes of dry erase markers
- 10 legal pads
- 2 boxes of blue/black pens
- 1 box of red pens
- 1 printer/copier/scanner
- Coffee maker
- water cooler
- Charging station for phones
- 3 land line phones
- Camera (photo and video capable)

### Important Documents

- Annual Report 2015
- Annual Report 2014
- Safety Reports from each month in 2015, Safety Statistics from 2014
- Key Training Documents
- Training Logs
- Human Resources policies and procedures
- Personnel files on all pilots (credentials, incident reports)
- Plane Malfunction Procedure Documents
- Financial Reports 2015
- Mission and Value Statements
- Staff biographies
  - Pilot and flight crew biographies

The above documents will be stored digitally on the company's server a password protected folder. In addition, the crisis communication coordinator will also upload them to password protected microsite in the event of a crisis in order to access them when not logged on to the company network.

## Key Messages

Key Message #1	Key Message #2	Key Message #3
In light of recent events, Southwest Airlines wants to remind passengers that safety of our passengers and flight crews is our most important priority.	We extend our deepest sympathies to any affected passenger or passengers' family during this time of crisis. We are doing everything in our power to correct the current situation and prevent future events.	We have rededicated ourselves to being our passengers' most reliable option for travel. Please if you have any questions or concerns to contact us. We are happy to answer any question, explain any policy, and calm any nerves you may have about traveling.
Southwest is doing a full safety investigation following the incident. We are dedicated to find the cause, find a solution, and communicate the finding of the investigation to our customers.	To find out more about what happened, please find our detailed report on Southwest's website.	Please email, call, write, or tweet to us! The conversation with the consumer is always open.
Southwest has always based daily operational and scheduling decisions on safety.	We will be providing families support during this time. Please fill out a claim inquiry at <a href="http://southwestair.com/claim">southwestair.com/claim</a> in order to receive the full support you and your family may need.	24 -Hour Support is available at our toll free call centers. The number to contact is 1-800-I-FLY-SWA. We also have two listening centers complete with accomplished and qualified staff to attend to consumers via social media.
Southwest has always valued safety. It may delay a flight, but we will not sacrifice a safe journey for a quick one.	Again, SWA would like to extend our deepest apologies for the harm that this incident has caused. We assure everyone that we are doing everything in our power to correct it and provide support for all affected.	Other important contact information is as follows: Email: <a href="http://www.southwest.com/contact_us">www.southwest.com/contact_us</a> Twitter: @southwestair Facebook: /Southwest

## Website

The staff person in control of the digital communication during the crisis will be the Crisis Communication Coordinator. The administrative support members (Community Relations Manager or Marketing Coordinator) will act as back up in the event that the Crisis Communication Coordinator is not available.

With administrative support from the other team members, this staff member will activate the “dark” site. The “dark site” will feature Southwest’s statement on the situation, blog updates as the situation develops, and media information. In addition, staff biographies and safety information will be made available. Most importantly, there will be a portal for passengers to contact the appropriate staff member with their concerns or needs.

### Blogs and Social Media

The crisis coordinator and administrative support staff will also be in control of social media during the time of the crisis. They will monitor the online conversation about the situation and use Twitter and Facebook to communicate our key messages to that particular audience. Also, they will directly respond to certain concerns. The message and tone of the social media response will be approved by the Crisis Communication Manager and delegated to the Crisis Communication Coordinator if needed.

Please see below for a list of blogs that will be monitored:

<b>Name of Blog</b>	<b>Web Address</b>
The Cranky Flier	<a href="http://crankyflier.com/">crankyflier.com/</a>
One Mile at a Time	<a href="http://onemileatatime.boardingarea.com">onemileatatime.boardingarea.com</a>
Ask the Pilot	<a href="http://askthepilot.com">askthepilot.com</a>
Airline Reporter	<a href="http://www.airlinereporter.com">www.airlinereporter.com</a>
Cranky Concierge	<a href="http://crankyconciierge.com/">crankyconciierge.com/</a>
Airfare Watchdog	<a href="http://Airfarewatchdog.com">Airfarewatchdog.com</a>
Flights From Hell	<a href="http://www.flightsfromhell.com/">www.flightsfromhell.com/</a>
Jet Lagged Blog, <i>The New York Times</i>	<a href="http://jetlagged.blogs.nytimes.com">jetlagged.blogs.nytimes.com</a>
Thirty Thousand Feet	<a href="http://www.thirtythousandfeet.com/travel.htm">www.thirtythousandfeet.com/travel.htm</a>
The Middle Seat Terminal, <i>Wall Street Journal</i>	<a href="http://blogs.wsj.com/middleseat/">blogs.wsj.com/middleseat/</a>

## Trick Questions

1. Q. Were there any warning signs for this crisis?

A. Right now, a investigation is underway. The press will be notified when the report is completed. However, I can also tell you that Southwest is fully compliant with all FAA safety procedure and safety logs are available on the website.

2. Q.Explain the timeline. Why did Southwest make these particular choices?

A. SWA notified all pertinent parties, as well as, the press and public almost immediately after the crash. We are dealing with federal, state, and local authorities during every step of this and they really dictate procedure. As far as internally, we immediately launched our own investigation. Simultaneously, we are in constant contact with our partners and passengers, informing them on the events.

3. Q.How does an airline prepare for these types of incidents?

A. Safety policies and procedures are key. As well as strong human resources so that pilot and flight crews have support. Our current safety and HR policies are available on the website.

4. Q. What rights do your customers have?

A. For anyone directly affected by this incident, we are providing support. They can file a claim on the website. In addition for any concerned person or future passenger, they can contact us via the website, call center, or social media.

5. Q.What other dangers may occur in the future?

A. We can't say what may happen in the future. However, every possible situation is outlined in our policies and procedures. We are prepared for any future dangers.

6. Q.Does Southwest really have any control over preventing these types of things?

A. We control how our staff is trained and that is the best way to avoid these events. We have detailed procedures, and after our internal investigation we will continue to get better.

7. Q.How do you make your passengers feel like the airline has control? Is there any information that Southwest can provide to calm passengers' fears?

A. We provide excellent customer service and we are always available if a passenger has a concern. Please contact us and we will answer any question you may have. Hopefully with a honest, trustworthy answer, all your fears will be calmed.

## Prodromes

Based on a crisis caused by plane crash due to pilot failure

- Increase in complaints from passengers via social media
- Complaints about safety of aircraft
- Complaints about pilots
- Complaints about flight crews
- More problems arise when safety checks take place
- Problems with other airlines increase
- Press focused on problems arising at airports
- More press inquiries about Southwest's policies
- More press inquiries about pilot behavior
- News stories about pilots being unhappy with their jobs
- News stories about pilots at other airlines
- More general airline mishaps happening



## Evaluation Form

Please fill out the following questionnaire so that we can adjust crisis communication protocol accordingly.

1. Is this a readable document? Meaning does it provide the information in a concise, clear way?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
2. Are you aware of where this plan is kept both digitally and physically in the office space?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
3. Is it clear where pre-gathered information is kept so that you have easy access to it?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
4. It is clear that this plan has been approved by decision makers at the company?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Are the responsibilities for the staff included in the Crisis Communication Team clear from this plan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
    - i. If no, please elaborate.
6. Were you provided all necessary emergency contacts?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
7. Was the chain of command used to contact each staff member about the crisis clear?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

Please answer these questions in an open-ended fashion. Also if you have any suggestions for improvement, please cite them here.

1. Do you feel this plan aptly prepared you for the crisis?
2. Do you feel that this plan was flexible enough so that you felt you were able to adjust as needed?
3. Did it provide the necessary contacts to get SWA's intended message to key audiences?
4. Did it prepare the media spokesperson(s) appropriately?
5. What is your perception of how customers feel about SWA in the wake of this incident?