



Canadian Council on Animal Care

Conseil canadien de protection des animaux

Crisis Management Program

The CCAC requires that all institutions which use experimental animals have in place a crisis management program for their animal facilities and for their animal care and use program (see the [CCAC policy statement on: terms of reference for animal care committees](#)). This program should be developed in conjunction with any general institutional crisis management plan(s).

The term crisis is defined as being any unplanned event which triggers a real, perceived or possible threat to the life, health or safety of animals and/or personnel, or to the institution's credibility.

A. Specific Types of Crisis

Crisis related to animal care and use programs can involve any of the following:

1. Fire, chemical spill or explosion

The local fire department should be notified of the existence of animal facilities and be informed of the layout of the facilities and of the location of any chemical storage areas. A plan to ensure immediate notification of the fire department should be in place.

As well, a plan to evacuate the animal facilities must be developed, with an absolute priority given to the evacuation of personnel.

A plan for the evacuation of animals should also be considered, taking into account the various species held within an institution, the constraints associated with transporting or transferring the species, and the varying amounts of time that may be available for evacuation.

Finally, within institutions that conduct surgeries or other invasive procedures on animals, a plan should be drawn up to deal with a fire alarm sounding during a procedure. Again, various scenarios should be considered, depending on the species and type of surgery involved, and the amount of time available for evacuation. Priority should be given to the evacuation of humans, and in the event that animals undergoing surgical procedures cannot be sutured and evacuated or evacuated on a gurney with mobile anesthetic equipment, euthanasia procedures should be decided upon in advance.

2. Natural disaster (earthquake, major storm, etc.), power failure

Backup power must be available for critical life support systems in the event of power outages, and plans should be in place for prolonged power failures.

The elements involved in preparing for natural disasters are discussed in the following article:

Anderson S.L. (1998) Hazard Analysis: Preparing for Natural Disasters, *Lab Animal* 27(1): 24-29.

3. Break-in, vandalism, or unauthorized removal of animals

The institution should work with local police officials to plan for and address any potential threats or criminal activity targeting animal care and use personnel or animal facilities. It should also be aware of any animal rights groups operating in its area (this information can be obtained through [Canadians for Health Research](#)).

Further information can be found in the following article:

Lamborn C. and Denny M. (1998) Preparing for an Animal Rights-Related Crisis, *Lab Animal* 27(1):32-35, as well as from [Canadians for Health Research](#) and publications of the [National Association for Biomedical Research](#).

4. Bomb Threat

The local police must be immediately advised regarding any threats or suspicious parcels. Complete information on dealing with bomb threats and suspicious parcels is available from [Canadians for Health Research](#) and from the [Canadian Bomb Data Centre](#), which is part of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Explosives Disposal and Technology Program.

5. A sit-in or barricade action, a demonstration, a negative media event requiring an organized response

Institutions should work with local police officials in regard to possible, planned or actual demonstrations or sit-ins, in order to ensure the security of personnel, facilities and animals. A booklet entitled [Dealing with the Media](#) is available from the [Canadian Institutes of Health Research](#).

B. How to Handle a Crisis

1. Difficulties in handling a crisis well are generally related to one or both of the following:

- a) failure to plan and prepare for crisis
- b) failure to react promptly when a crisis occurs

2. A crisis management program should include the following elements:

- a) Crisis management team or task force, to be comprised of:
 - i. a senior administrator (e.g. VP Research or CEO)
 - ii. deans/heads of faculties/departments/units in which animals are used
 - iii. director/supervisor of animal care services
 - iv. chair of the animal care committee(s) (ACCs)

- v. communications office
 - vi. head of security
 - vii. other representatives as needed (e.g. the chair of the Occupational Health and Safety Committee and possibly a lawyer)
- b) Before the crisis management program is finalized, local police and fire department officials should be invited to tour the animal facilities and provide recommendations on ways to improve security/safety in the facilities.
- c) The crisis management plan should include a general policy statement on the care and use of animals by the institution. This statement can be used for general inquiries on experimental animal care and use, or can be incorporated into a press release following an incident.
- d) A communications plan should be established by the team to ensure that:
- i. telephone numbers are available so that the members of the crisis management team can be reached easily during regular working hours as well as after work
 - ii. emergency telephone numbers are available for:
 - medical assistance
 - police
 - fire
 - assistance with hazardous materials spills
 - iii. information can be efficiently processed and communicated at any time to:
 - members of the institution
 - media outlets
 - the general public

The local police must be informed of any serious incidents.

The CCAC should also be informed of any serious incidents, in order to coordinate the response of the institution and of the CCAC to any queries related to the incident.

- e) Establishment of a cohesive, planned strategy to deal with crisis
- i. While immediate attention must be given to a crisis, there should be no contact with the media/public until all of the relevant facts are known. In the case of a crisis of considerable proportions, a press conference may be the best way for the institution to respond.
 - ii. A principal spokesperson for media and public inquiries should be identified, as well as alternate spokespeople in case the principal spokesperson is unavailable. A spokesperson should be experienced in public/media relations and should preferably not be the ACC Chair or veterinarian. If more than one person is handling inquiries, the spokespeople should agree beforehand on the messages that need to be communicated.
 - iii. Preparation of a general press release, which should include:

- mandate of the institution concerning the use of animals in research, teaching or testing
- name of faculties, departments or units
- lay summaries of animal-based projects, as included in animal use protocols approved by the ACC
- institutional public relations material, such as a brochure or video
- description of the work done by the ACC and animal care personnel, and by other groups such as scientific merit review committees, if relevant
- information/examples to show relations between animal-based research and human and animal health care: Canadians for Health Research and The National Association for Biomedical Research, are useful sources for this type of information

Institutions should identify protocols which, by their nature, may be controversial (e.g. high category of invasiveness and/or use of higher species such as nonhuman primates, cats or dogs). Material which could be used as a press release should then be prepared (and updated regularly) for each of these studies, with input from the researcher(s), to be kept on file for potential use. The material should include the goal of the project, the reason(s) an animal has to be used, the measures taken to control pain (if applicable), other methods used, and potential benefits/relevance to humans/animals.

- f) Once the crisis management plans have been finalized, institutional personnel should be informed and educated with respect to the plans and to the roles that they may be called upon to play.

Institutional personnel must report any untoward or unusual incidents (threatening/mischievous phone calls/letters, inappropriate requests for information/tours, strangers found in inappropriate areas) to the crisis management team leader or task force chairman.

C. General Sources of Information to Assist in Developing a Crisis Management Program

- Public Safety Canada (PS)
- Canadians for Health Research
- National Association for Biomedical Research
- MacKay Emergency Management Consulting Inc
- Institute for Crisis Management