

In Crisis Recovery

“Just Do It”

Integrated Emergency
**Management
and Recovery** 



The impacts of crisis are confronting. The most seasoned and trained practitioner of crisis management still deals with human emotions. And because of this humanity, crisis recovery is imperfect. As a crisis evolves decisions must be made to respond to emerging and changing information. Prompt action must be taken to control the situation, stabilise your organisation and accelerate your recovery ([1](#)).

Let me share some of my experience.

An operator of an enhanced oil recovery operation experienced a loss of containment incident in the early hours of the morning. High pressure oil and steam from underground wells found their way to surface. Because of the high pressure, this

release to surface caused rocks and earth to be thrown at high velocity into the air and radially from the site. Environmental damage to surrounding flora and fauna was severe. Debris was found more than 200m away; and on the access road into the operating site. And a large crater in the earth was left at the release point. Thankfully the incident resulted in no human fatalities or injuries, though it was recognised this was only due to the time of day at which the incident occurred. To make matters worse, the exact reason or source of the loss of containment was unclear.

The incident management team had to act quickly. Rather than further initial investigations, they took decisive action;

- Immediately shutting down both operations and access to the area.
- Adjacent operations were also shut down, even though the data did not suggest they could be impacted.
- Appropriate communications with internal and external stakeholders were initiated.
- Technical support from business partners was accessed.
- Recovery action was well underway before the start of business.

And while the long term recovery from this incident unfolded over weeks and months, the strength in the response was the immediacy of initial action.

Here is what happened;

1. **The crisis recovery action was swift and decisive.**

Recovery action started right away. The response team ensured the incident was contained, people were safe and the on-going risk to people was reduced. With this in place they were then able to respond appropriately to emerging information.

2. **They were proactive in their early communications with critical stakeholders.**

They already knew who their critical stakeholders were and how to contact them. This included their own operations team, human resources, management, legal and financial teams, as well as external regulators and partners. By ensuring early communications with stakeholders they were able to provide clear information to regulators, providing confidence that appropriate action had occurred. It ensured internal staff were confident in the safety of their colleagues. And it enabled them to seek technical support from their partners which supported them in analysis and getting back to safe operations.

3. **They allowed time to reflect.**

While it sounds counter intuitive, a bit of time to think will enable you to make stronger and more effective decisions. This may only be 5 or 10 minutes after a briefing when you take a breather so everything can 'sink in'. Ideally this includes a timeout together, time to think on your own, and then coming together as a team for decision making. The incident response team recognised this need for reflection, before seeking input on decisions to be made. This ensured they did not miss key

strategic decisions while most of their focus was on a few urgent actions. The end result was collaborative decisions and an accelerated recovery.

Your recovery and return to business as usual will not be perfect. But you help bring your business back to business as usual with the above steps. In the words of Nike, when it comes to crisis recovery, "just do it".

Article posted on LinkedIn by Laura Sullivan

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