



PR Crisis Management Toolkit for CTA Members

How to Use the Toolkit

Preparation: Keep the toolkit readily available to your crisis management team. Regularly update contact lists, regulatory references, and pre-drafted statements to reflect the current industry environment.

Training: Use these templates and guidelines for internal team training, ensuring everyone knows their role during a crisis.

Evaluation: After a crisis, use the post-crisis checklist to refine your approach for future incidents.

This PR Crisis Management Toolkit provides a structured and adaptable resource to ensure you are fully prepared for the unique challenges of the cannabis and hemp industries. By having these resources ready and training your team, you can stay ahead of potential crises and maintain your company's reputation.



1. Crisis Identification Checklist

This document helps you quickly assess the severity of the crisis and determine whether immediate action is needed. It can be divided into categories based on the type of issue you may encounter.

Sections to include:

- **Regulatory Issue:** Compliance, labelling, legal action.
- **Product Issue:** Product recall, mislabelling, customer safety.
- **Media Issue:** Negative media coverage, misinformation.
- **Public Perception Issue:** Social media backlash, misconceptions, customer complaints.
- **Internal Issue:** Staff misconduct, insider leaks, operational failures.

| Category | Issue | Severity | Likelihood |
|------------------|--|----------|------------|
| Regulatory Issue | Sudden change in THC limit regulations | High | Medium |
| | FSA recalls product over labelling non-compliance | Medium | Medium |
| | Delayed novel food authorisation affecting product sales | Medium | High |
| | Inspection failure due to non-compliant practices | High | Low |
| | Lack of response to regulatory inquiry within a deadline | High | Low |
| Product Issue | Product contamination (e.g., unsafe levels of THC) | High | Low |
| | Mislabelled ingredients causing allergic reactions | High | Low |
| | Product recall due to testing inconsistencies | High | Medium |
| | Out-of-date or expired stock sold | Medium | Medium |
| Media Issue | Negative media coverage due to perceived health risks | Medium | Medium |
| | Misinformation about legality of products in the press | Medium | High |
| | Unverified media reports of illegal business practices | High | Low |
| | Investigative media piece questioning product safety | High | Medium |



| Category | Issue | Severity | Likelihood |
|-------------------------|--|----------|------------|
| Public Perception Issue | Social media backlash over health claims | Medium | Medium |
| | Activists targeting company over cannabis legalisation | Medium | Low |
| | Public confusion over product legality (e.g., CBD vs. THC) | Low | Medium |
| Internal Issue | Staff misconduct affecting company reputation | High | Low |
| | Insider leak of confidential information | High | Low |
| | Supply chain disruption causing delayed deliveries | Medium | Medium |
| | Breach of GDPR or customer data | High | Medium |
| Social Media Issue | Inappropriate or non-compliant social media post | Medium | High |
| | Unauthorised person responding to social media crisis | High | Medium |
| | Customer complaint going viral | Medium | High |
| Operational Issue | Major supply chain failure | High | Medium |
| | Loss of key supplier affecting product availability | Medium | Medium |
| | Sudden staff shortages due to illness or industrial action | Medium | Medium |

How to Use the Risk Assessment Table

This table provides an overview of potential issues that could arise in the cannabis and hemp industry, helping businesses assess their risk and prepare for potential crises.

Severity reflects the potential impact the issue could have on your business and reputation, while Likelihood assesses how probable it is that this issue will occur.

1. **Focus on High-Impact/High-Likelihood Issues:** Prioritise planning for scenarios that are both highly likely and highly severe, as these represent the greatest risk to your business.
2. **Develop Contingency Plans for Medium/High Issues:** Address medium-severity issues that have a high likelihood or high-severity issues that have a medium likelihood.
3. **Monitor Low-Likelihood/Low-Severity Issues:** These may not need immediate action but should still be monitored to ensure they don't escalate.

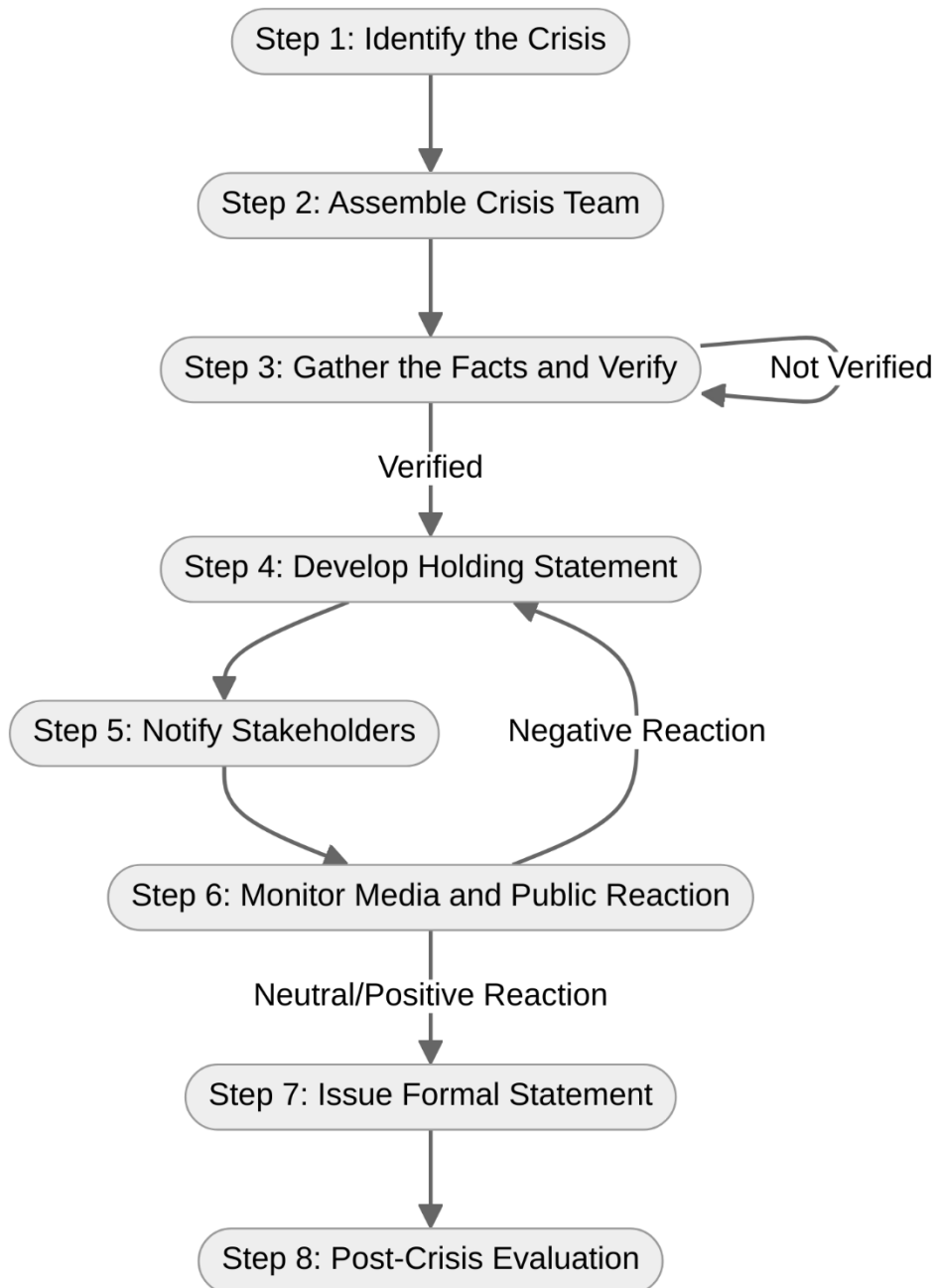


 www.cannabistrades.org
 info@cannabistrades.org
 41 Wincolmlee, Hull, Yorkshire, UK, HU2 8AG

The Hemp Trades Association (trading as the Cannabis Trades Association UK) is a not for profit company limited by guarantee without share capital in England and Wales No. 10472540 incorporated in November 2016.

2. Crisis Response Flowchart

A step-by-step visual guide on how to handle different crises. This document should include a flowchart that provides instructions for different scenarios.



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3. Pre-Drafted Holding Statement Template

This is a brief statement that buys you time while you gather facts and develop a more detailed response. It acknowledges the issue without committing to specifics and shows that the company is handling the situation.

Template Example:

"We are aware of [specific issue] and are currently looking into the matter. Ensuring compliance and customer safety is our top priority. We will provide additional information as soon as it becomes available. Thank you for your patience and understanding."

4. Detailed Crisis Response Statement Template

Once you've gathered all the necessary information, you'll need a formal statement for public release. This template should be adaptable depending on the situation but should always be clear, transparent, and compassionate.

Template Example:

Headline: "[Company Name] Issues Statement on [Specific Issue]"

Opening: Acknowledge the issue (what, where, and when).

Details: Provide facts and context without assigning blame prematurely.

Actions: Explain the steps being taken to resolve the issue.

Closing: Reassure stakeholders (customers, regulators, public) that you're committed to compliance and safety.

5. Internal Communication Template

When a crisis happens, it's essential to keep your employees informed. This template ensures your team knows what's happening, what's expected of them, and how they should respond if asked by customers or media.

Template Example:

"Team, we are aware of [specific issue] and are currently managing the situation. Our priority is to ensure [customer safety, regulatory compliance, etc.]. If you receive any inquiries from customers or external parties, please direct them to our [PR/communications team] for an official response."



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6. Media Inquiry Handling Guide

A document for staff or PR teams detailing how to handle incoming media inquiries during a crisis. This should include guidelines on what to say, what not to say, and who to redirect questions to.

Key Points:

- Do not speculate or provide unverified information.
- Always acknowledge receipt of the inquiry.
- Provide the holding statement or refer the media to your PR team.
- Offer a time frame for when more information will be available.

7. Social Media Response Plan

A guide for responding to social media comments, backlash, or questions related to the crisis. It should include a general approach (e.g., when to respond and when not to engage) as well as pre-approved templates.

Sections:

- **Immediate Response:** Thank users for their concern and direct them to the holding statement or official response.
- **Escalation Plan:** Flag critical or inflammatory comments for further action.
- **Monitoring Guidelines:** Assign a team to monitor social channels in real-time during the crisis.

8. Stakeholder Notification Template

This document is designed for notifying key stakeholders (e.g., customers, regulators, suppliers, investors) about the issue, outlining the next steps, and maintaining transparency.

Template Example:

"Dear [Stakeholder], we are writing to inform you of [specific issue] that has affected [product, service, operations]. We are working closely with regulators and relevant authorities to resolve the situation promptly. In the meantime, we want to reassure you that [business continuity, compliance measures]. Further updates will be shared as the situation develops."



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9. Post-Crisis Evaluation Checklist

After the crisis has been resolved, it's important to evaluate your response and see what lessons can be learned. This checklist helps you and your team review how the situation was handled and identify areas for improvement.

Checklist:

- Were our internal and external communications timely and clear?
- Did we follow the crisis response flowchart effectively?
- Was our messaging consistent across all platforms (press, social media, internal communications)?
- What feedback did we receive from customers and stakeholders?
- What should we do differently next time?

10. Crisis Team Contact List

A pre-prepared contact list of all relevant internal and external contacts that would be involved in managing a crisis, including their roles and responsibilities.

Sections to Include:

1. **Internal team:** PR, legal, compliance, leadership.
2. **External contacts:** Regulatory bodies (FSA, Home Office), industry advisors, key stakeholders, crisis communication experts.

11. Legal Considerations Document

A guide that outlines any legal obligations you may have during a crisis, including notifying regulators, complying with advertising standards, or managing customer complaints.

Topics Covered:

1. **Regulatory requirements** (e.g., product recall protocols).
2. **Advertising and product claims regulations** (Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, Cancer Act 1939, MHRA Guidance Note 8).
3. **Consumer protection laws** (fair trading, product safety).



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12. Media Training Materials

This section includes resources to help your key spokesperson or team prepare for media engagement during a crisis. This could involve training exercises, best practices for interviews, and tips for staying calm under pressure.

Key Resources:

Mock interviews: Practice answering tough media questions.

Key message development: Ensure your spokesperson has three main points to communicate clearly in any interview.

Body language tips: How to appear calm and confident during media engagement.



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