

**Planning Against Panic: Navigating a Crisis Through Strategic Communications  
January, 24 2024****Link to the recording:** <https://youtu.be/VNjOlrS0g8w?feature=shared>**eePRO post:**<https://eepro.naaee.org/learning/plan-against-panic-navigating-crisis-through-strategic-communications>**Speakers:****Kristen Grimm, Founder and Strategist of Spitfire Strategies****Highlights of the chat transcript:****Welcome & introductions!**

NAAEE Staff (Carrie, she/they): Welcome everyone! Please share your name, organization, and where you're joining us from!

Emory Harger: Hey all, Emory here from Maine Environmental Education Assoc. I'm our comms person

Onnolee Jansen: I'm Onnolee Jansen from PA State Parks, Kings Gap EEC near Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Keith Willoughby: Keith Willoughby Environmental Education Association of South Carolina

Jacque Martinez Marquez: Hello My name is Jacque Martinez Marquez I am a college student from Sacramento, California.

Vanessa Barela: Vanessa Barela, New Mexico Public Education Department, Outdoor Learning Specialist. I am on Tewa lands.

Melanie Costello: Hi! Melanie Costello, NIU Lorado Taft Field Campus in Oregon, IL

Betty Olivolo: Betty Olivolo with NAAEE and the Natural Start Alliance, living in Kittery, ME

Holly H: Hi. Holly from The School for Field Studies Panama. From Texas live in Panama.

Emily Cantor: Hey everyone! Emily Cantor here from Berks County, PA. I work for the Schuylkill Conservation District as our Environmental Education and Outreach Coordinator.  
:)

Estrella Risinger: Great to be here! Estrella Risinger (she/her) from the Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education in California

Abby Weinshenker: Abby Weinshenker, Greenville Water, Greenville, SC

Paul List: Paul List, with the Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust

NAAEE Staff (Carrie, she/they): Great to have so many folks joining us! Please chime in with your name, organization, and where you're attending from.

Nathan Broaddus: Nathan Broaddus, Network Coordinator for the Nature Based Education Consortium in Maine

joanna johnson: Joanna, from Sustainable Learning. Calling from North Carolina

Abby Weinshenker: Hi! Libby Young, Greenville Water in Greenville, SC

Emily weyrauch: Emily Weyrauch, Communications Coordinator for the Nature Based Education Consortium in Maine. I'm located in Southern Maine!

Zach Behrens: Zach Behrens, Carson National Forest out of Taos, NM.

NAAEE Staff (Carrie, she/they): Hi, all! I'm Carrie (Bloomington, IN) and I'm happy to help if you need any tech support during today's eeWEBINAR.

Steven Johnson: Steve Johnson, Public Affairs Specialist, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

Esther Cowles | she, her: Esther Cowles in snowy, central Vermont. Glad to have our power back to join the webinar!

Betty Olivolo: Hi Emily and Nathan!!

Archana Palaniappan: archana Palaniappan, Outdoor Equity Coordinator for the Nature Based Education Consortium in Maine

NAAEE Staff (Carrie, she/they): Glad to have you online, Esther 🍷—welcome!

Sydney Murray: Sydney Murray, Conference & Communications Coordinator with the NAAEE's Natural Start Alliance :)

Richard Tusabe: Great one. Thank you for organizing. I am Richard Tusabe (A CEE-Change Fellow) listening in from Uganda.

Sarah Bodor: Hi Ritchie! ❤️

**How Many of you have a crisis plan/rapid response**

Emory Harger: Rapid response

Onnolee Jansen: Crisis Comms

Holly H: Crisis

Vanessa Barela: Crisis

Jane Hurley: We do.

Jane Hurley: both

Holly H: Emergency plans but no not a communications plan

Zach Behrens: Yes to both for wildfires

Vanessa Barela: I think our organization has a crisis response team, but I do not know the plan or the rapid response plans.

Melanie Costello: Crisis - yes, rapid response - no

Onnolee Jansen: Emergency plans and the comm plan is refer everything to 1 person

Emory Harger: We didn't have a staff comms person until September 2023, growing as an org, so building this now.

**Anticipate and think ahead**

Vanessa Barela: What about using templates/messages? How do you do this authentically because they can seem performative.

Sarah Bodor: Two questions--how important is it that representatives of the community most impacted by the event have vetted the messaging? And to what extent should timing be a factor in whether you make a statement? For example, your conference is two days after a global crisis or natural disaster takes place? Does that matter?

Richard Tusabe: What if the crisis isn't within nitch or organization, but somehow it affects me and how I do my work, such as the war in Gaza as you have mentioned.... or maybe, wouldn't that feel like one is crossing the line?....And I think such fears are the ones keeping people away from such incidences but suffer with internal conflicts....

Nathan Broaddus: How do you balance the legal risks of speaking out to your community when the crisis is a legal one for your organization and you may be constrained in what you can say because of an active or threatened lawsuit?

Richard Tusabe: This tool is really great even for self-behavioral check 

**Setting up for success:**

NAAEE Staff (Carrie, she/they): So much great information already! Are any of these initial steps raising additional questions? Please share them in the chat for Kristen to address.

Sarah Bodor: One thing I think many (esp smaller orgs) struggle with is how much to engage with detractors on social media once you've posted a statement. Any guidance on that? Deleting critical posts/comments can often make the situation worse, but on the other hand, leaving them out there feels vulnerable.

Holly H: @ Richie that has happened to my colleague who is Jewish. I think showing empathy is important. It must be hard to be working in an organization that may not have empathy for you or your crisis. The least I can do as a colleague is show care for them,

Olivia Griset: Do you have recommendations on how to prepare for crisis in a network with a lot of partner organizations?

Judy Braus (she, her) NAAEE: Mission, expertise, and competence!

NAAEE Staff (Carrie, she/they): Check out some of Spitfire Strategies' incredible resources, including the SmartChart you heard about: <https://spitfirestrategies.com>

Steven Johnson: One of the hardest parts of my job is coming up with something meaningful to say to reporters when all you can really say is 'it's under investigation'? And you know it's going to be in that status for a substantial amount of time.

**Closing:**

Melanie Costello: Very helpful! Thank you!

Emily Cantor: Thank you so much! This has been so helpful.

Megan Fink: Thank you! Wonderful advice and guidance!!

Abby Weinshenker: Thank you for the advice!

Stacie Pierpoint: Thank you, Kristen! Really helpful guidance.

Sarah Bodor: That's great advice! Give them the story YOU want to tell.

Steven Johnson: Thank you!

Esther Cowles | she, her: Such great practical and thoughtful guidance. Thanks NAAEE for covering this important topic.

Estrella Risinger: This was fantastic. Thank you Kristen and NAAEE!

Olivia Griset: Thank you!

Zach Behrens: Thank you!

Sarah Bodor: Thanks, Kristen!

Preethi Mony: Thank you Kristen! this was so useful

Judy Braus (she, her) NAAEE: Thanks, Kristen. And thanks for the great questions, everyone!  
:-)

Vanessa Barela: Thank you!

Sydney Murray: Thanks for the shout out, Carrie!