

BOARD FOR BRANCH PILOTS
Major Incident Response Plan Committee
***Tentative* MEETING AGENDA**
December 11, 2023 at 11:30 a.m.
VPA Board Room
Norfolk, Virginia

1. Call to Order
2. Safety Evacuation Instructions
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Public Comment Period*
5. Draft Major Incident Response Plan for the Board for Branch Pilots
6. Other Business
7. Conflict of Interest Forms / Travel Vouchers
8. Adjourn

*Five minute public comment, per person, with the exception of any open disciplinary or application files. See page two for instructions on providing public comment.

***The meeting is open to the public; however, a portion of the Board's business may be discussed in closed session pursuant to Va. Code § 2.2-3711(A)(8).*

NEXT BOARD MEETING SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 14, 2024 AT 10:30 A.M.

Agenda materials made available to the public do not include written advice of legal counsel or other information protected by the attorney-client privilege pursuant to Va. Code § 2.2-3705.1(2).

- **Call to Order**
- **Safety Evacuation Instructions**
- **Public Comment**

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Purpose

The Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR)/Virginia Board for Branch Pilots Critical Incident Response Plan outlines the roles, responsibilities, and procedures that will guide DPOR and the Board in promptly sharing information with the appropriate channels, individuals, and departments in the event of a serious incident.

For the purposes of this plan, a serious incident is defined as an event that involves casualties and/or significant economic or environmental damage event and occurred while a branch pilot licensee is operating a vessel. The incident may prompt significant, often sustained, news coverage and public scrutiny.

Objectives

Our guiding principle will be to communicate facts as quickly as possible, updating information regularly as circumstances change, to protect the image of DPOR and the Board for Branch Pilots. Honesty and speed are the most effective means to avoid lasting damage to the agency and its board and to avoid widespread second-guessing by the public. It is imperative to speak with accuracy about what is known and not to speculate about unknown details.

We will use multiple mediums to communicate accurate and timely information. This is especially important in the first hours and days of a crisis. Our goal is to be transparent, accountable, and accessible to all audiences, while also being mindful of legal and privacy concerns.

Crisis Team

This team may consist of:

Technical Review Expert (Determined by Board)
DPOR Director
DPOR Chief Deputy Director
DPOR Branch Pilots Board Executive Director
DPOR Licensing & Regulatory Programs Deputy Director
DPOR Compliance and Investigations Deputy Director
DPOR Director of Investigations - Central Operations
DPOR Director of Investigations - Field Operations
DPOR Investigator – Tidewater Region
DPOR Investigations – Field Supervisor
DPOR Communications & Digital Media Manager
External Stakeholders – Virginia Pilot Association (VPA), Virginia Maritime Association (VMA) and Virginia Port Authority.

Internal Steps

DPOR's Communications Manager shall maintain an updated roster of crisis team members, emergency contacts and public information officers. The Communications manager will also maintain a first hour emergency checklist and message response plan.

Timeline for Responding to a Serious Crisis

Branch Pilot President shall communicate a serious incident immediately to the DPOR Director and the DPOR Branch Pilots Board Executive Director to determine the severity of the situation and initiate crisis plan. Once a crisis has been determined they will:

1. Inform the crisis communication team to address the crisis and create holding statements.
2. Communicate with in-house staff regarding the crisis and planned responses.
3. Develop a process to communicate responses to all external stakeholders and members with the crisis communication team.
4. Ensure spokesperson preparation.
5. Update internal staff of the crisis before external publics.
6. Update the public and stakeholders about the crisis.
7. Determine when the crisis has ended.
8. Hold an end-of-crisis review meeting to discuss improvements to the plan.

Crisis Communication Team

The DPOR Crisis Communication Team will handle all communications in a time of crisis. The DPOR Director and Communications Manager will lead the Crisis Communication Team. *(Note: DPOR shall establish a Communications backup in the event someone is away or ill)*

The team may consist of:

DPOR Director
Technical Review Expert (Determined by Board)
DPOR Chief Deputy Director
DPOR Branch Pilots Board Executive Director
DPOR Licensing & Regulatory Programs Deputy Director
DPOR Compliance and Investigations Deputy Director
DPOR Communications Manager
Designees from the Governor's Office
State Emergency Response Public Information Officers

Response Steps

Upon assembly the Crisis Communications Team, the team will proceed to:

Designate a secretary who can maintain meeting notes, to-do lists, and information files on the ongoing crisis and other items.

Assign Communicators to handle calls, speak with media and/or speak at a press conference. Use script, key messages and facts developed by the Crisis Communications Team.

Log all calls and interview request from media.

Monitor social media and media regarding incident.

Keep a **list of facts**.

Release a holding statement approved by the DPOR Director within 30 minutes of a confirmed incident via social media, press release and website.

Cancel any off topic scheduled social media posts.

Develop several key messages to be included in all communications. All communications must be approved by the DPOR Director.

Determine who will act as head spokesperson. Generally, the DPOR Director or Communications Manager will take on this responsibility.

Determine if press conference and/or on-scene presence is needed. This can be determined by severity of the incident, access to the scene and public or media presence.

Coordinate with other responding agencies (local law enforcement, state police, DEQ, Virginia AG's Office, Virginia Secretary of Labor's Office, Governor's Office, Virginia Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security and/or federal agencies like U.S. Coast Guard, EPA or Homeland Security) if needed.

Issue press release and updates as situation develops.

Within 10 days of the end of the event, assess how the plan functioned.

Spokesperson Preparation and Guidelines

The spokesperson is designated by the Director and the Crisis Communication Team. He/she/they will be responsible for responding directly to the public in real time. The spokesperson will be prepared and guided by the Crisis Communication Team and will be expected to represent DPOR. The Crisis Communication Team will prepare sample Q&A statements for the spokesperson and prepare them for public speaking, particularly news/televised interviews. This also includes preparation for quotes and press releases.

Spokesperson Dos:

- Be informed in all aspects of the crisis, including speculation and which responses to avoid
- Demonstrate competence, expertise, empathy and caring
- Express optimism
- Use positive body language

Spokesperson Don'ts:

- Speak off topic
- Disclose unapproved information
- Answer a question if he/she/they do not fully know the answer; instead say, "We'll look into that for you." Or "It's too early into this investigation right now to answer that. We're still gathering information, but we will get back to you on that."

Location:

The Crisis Communications Team headquarters for most crisis situations will be at the DPOR Office and must be approved by the Director. Some situations may require response from the field or scene of an incident or from the Virginia Port Authority, this will be determined by the Crisis Communications Team and approved by the Director.

End of Crisis

The DPOR Director will determine when an emergency has ended, and routine communications processed can resume. This will trigger a review of the crisis and any needed investigations.

Review

Within one business week of the crisis ending, the Crisis Communications Team will convene and discuss ways to improve the plan, revise or update the crisis plan. They will create an after-action report.

Steps DPOR/Board for Branch Pilots Will Take to Investigate Incident

Following a serious incident, DPOR and The Board for Branch Pilots will interview the captain as well as any witnesses to the incident. Information obtained from the black box onboard will be reviewed thoroughly and documented. Based on the interviews with the captain, witnesses, and information from the black box the Board President and Board Vice President will make a recommendation to the full board. This may or may not result in disciplinary action. The full board would make a final determination.

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