
**Security and resilience — Crisis
management — Guidelines**

Sécurité et résilience — Gestion de crise — Lignes directrices

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 292, *Security and resilience*, in collaboration with the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) Technical Committee CEN/TC 391, *Societal and Citizen Security*, in accordance with the Agreement on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN (Vienna Agreement).

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

This document has been developed to aid in the design and ongoing development of an organization's crisis management capability. It sets out principles and practices needed by all organizations.

Crises present organizations with complex challenges and, possibly, opportunities that can have profound and far-reaching consequences. An organization's crisis management capability and its ability to manage a changing environment are key factors in determining whether a situation or incident has the potential to pose a serious or existential threat to the organization and its environment. The crisis affecting an organization can be part of a broader crisis.

To ensure the crisis management capability has the desired outcome, the organization should provide:

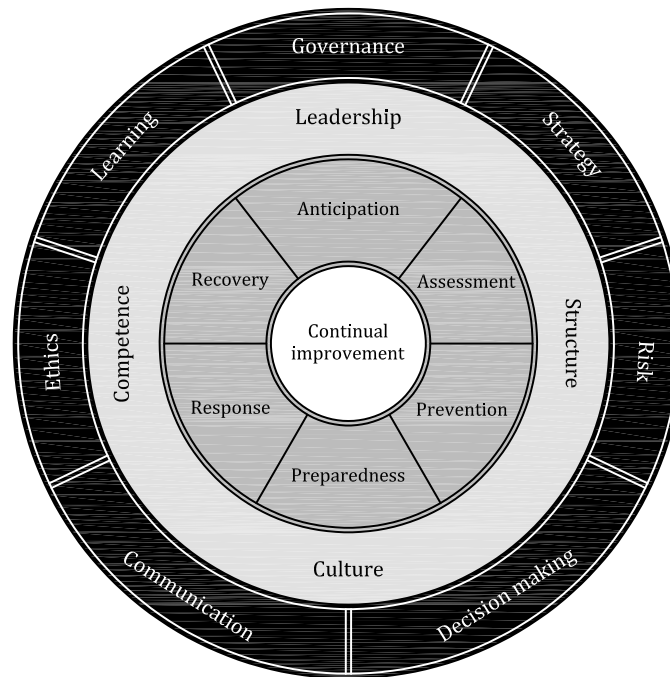
- committed leadership;
- structures (e.g. funding, communications, relationships and linkages, equipment, facilities, information management, principles, processes and procedures);
- a supportive culture (e.g. values, ethics, code of conduct);
- competent personnel (e.g. knowledge, skills and attitude, flexible thinking).

An organization's crisis management capability will be influenced by its relationship with other interdependent areas such as risk management, business continuity, information security, physical security, safety, civil protection, incident response and emergency management.

The organization should adopt a structured approach to crisis management by applying a set of principles on which a crisis management framework can be developed. These interrelated principles, framework and applicable process elements support the implementation of a crisis management capability in a purposeful, consistent and rigorous manner (see [Figure 1](#)).

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
-  principle (see 4.5)
-  framework (see 5.2)
-  process (see 5.3)

Figure 1 — Building a crisis management capability — Principles, framework and process

The structure of the document is as follows:

- the core concepts of crisis management are described (see [Clause 4](#));
- then the framework and process for building a crisis management capability are outlined (see [Clause 5](#)).

The clauses that follow provide more detail on:

- crisis leadership (see [Clause 6](#));
- strategic crisis decision-making (see [Clause 7](#));
- crisis communication (see [Clause 8](#));
- training, validation and learning from crises (see [Clause 9](#)).

Continual improvement is a component of all elements of this document (see [5.3.7](#)), so that while it is part of the process, it also addresses all capability elements.

Security and resilience — Crisis management — Guidelines

1 Scope

This document provides guidance on crisis management to help organizations plan, establish, maintain, review and continually improve a strategic crisis management capability. This guidance can help any organization to identify and manage a crisis. Elements for consideration include:

- context, core concepts, principles and challenges (see [Clause 4](#));
- developing an organization's crisis management capability (see [Clause 5](#));
- crisis leadership (see [Clause 6](#));
- the decision-making challenges and complexities facing a crisis team in action (see [Clause 7](#));
- crisis communication (see [Clause 8](#));
- training, validation and learning from crises (see [Clause 9](#)).

It is applicable to top management with strategic responsibilities for the delivery of a crisis management capability in any organization. It can also be used by those who operate under the direction of top management.

This document acknowledges the relationship and interdependencies with various disciplines but is distinct from these topics.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 22300, *Security and resilience — Vocabulary*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 22300 and the following apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <https://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

capability

ability to accomplish an undertaking with a defined intended outcome and within specified conditions

Note 1 to entry: An organizational capability depends on the available resources and organizational principles, framework (leadership, structure, culture, competences) and processes.

**3.2
crisis**

abnormal or extraordinary event or situation that threatens an *organization* (3.13) or community and requires a strategic, adaptive and timely response in order to preserve its viability and integrity

Note 1 to entry: The event or situation can include a high degree of complexity, instability and uncertainty.

Note 2 to entry: The event or situation can exceed the response capacity or *capability* (3.1) of the organization.

Note 3 to entry: Given the nature of a crisis, a flexible and dynamic approach is needed in addition to any rehearsed plans and procedures.

Note 4 to entry: Threats can impact upon the organization's ability to function, its reputation, its brand, its physical, political or intellectual property, its organizational structure and its human, environment and economic factors.

Note 5 to entry: The term "organization" also includes governmental and non-governmental agencies and national authorities in the public sector, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and charities.

**3.3
crisis management**

coordinated activities to lead, direct and control an *organization* (3.13) with regard to *crisis* (3.2)

**3.4
crisis management team**

CMT

group of individuals functionally responsible for leading the *organization's* (3.13) *crisis management* (3.3) response

**3.5
crisis management plan**

CMP

document specifying which procedures and associated resources are to be applied by whom and where in a *crisis* (3.2)

**3.6
incident**

event or situation that can be, or could lead to, a disruption, loss, emergency or *crisis* (3.2)

[SOURCE: ISO 22300:2021, 3.1.122, modified — "or situation" has been added to the definition.]

**3.7
interested party**

stakeholder

person or *organization* (3.13) that can affect, be affected by, or perceive themselves to be affected by a decision or activity

**3.8
governance**

<organizations> human-based system by which an *organization* (3.13) is directed, overseen and held accountable for achieving its defined purpose

**3.9
situation report**

summary, either verbal or written, outlining the current state and potential development of an *incident* (3.6) or *crisis* (3.2) and the response to it

**3.10
situational awareness**

perception of the elements in the environment within a volume of time and space, the comprehension of their meaning and a projection of their status in the near future

3.11**top management**

person or group of people who directs and controls an *organization* (3.13) at the highest level

3.12**issue**

event or situation that does not currently present, but can develop into, a long-term or significant negative impact on the strategic objectives, reputation or viability of the *organization* (3.13)

Note 1 to entry: Effectively responding to emerging issues can result in the successful aversion of a *crisis* (3.2).

3.13**organization**

person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives

Note 1 to entry: The concept of organization includes, but is not limited to, sole-trader, company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority, partnership, charity or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private.

3.14**crisis communication**

communications both internal and external to provide information, updates and instructions to internal and external *interested parties* (3.7)

Note 1 to entry: Adequate crisis communication can also protect the *organization's* (3.13) reputation and brand and maintain its public image.

4 Crisis management — Context, core concepts and principles

4.1 The nature of crises

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Crises can be associated with highly complex issues, the full implications and nature of which can be unclear at the time. Possible decisions and actions can have severe negative consequences, and decision-makers at all levels sometimes have to choose the least detrimental solution (see 7.4) and resolve (or recognize and accept) fundamental strategic dilemmas. This can mean that every choice comes with a penalty of some kind and there is no ideal solution.

Premature or ill-considered decisions on actions or processes to manage a crisis can have potential to cause significant consequences and cause additional harm or exacerbate the crisis situation and should be avoided. If the range of available options being considered can reduce the impact of a crisis yet have adverse consequences upon other organizational objectives, it can be necessary to choose the option that has the potential to create the least amount of loss or disruption to the organization

Crises often involve threats to people, the environment, assets (such as property or information) or reputation.

A crisis can require the organization to review its objectives, opportunities, strategies, policies, practices or procedures and culture and as part of continual improvement.

A well-managed crisis can demonstrate the positive qualities of an organization and enhance its reputation

4.2 Characteristics of a crisis

A crisis can be complex and challenging and can also provide opportunities for an organization to demonstrate core values, effective controls, governance, crisis response, review and learning.

Although many crises appear to be unique there are often consistent characteristics. Understanding these characteristics enables the improvement of the crisis management capability by comprehending their differences.

Often, a crisis is precipitated by an incident. There are some common characteristics found in both an incident and a crisis. [Table 1](#) highlights some of the differences and [Figure 2](#) shows the relationship between an incident and a crisis.

Table 1 — Key characteristics between incidents and crises

Characteristics	Incidents	Crises
Predictability	Incidents are generally foreseeable, although their specific timing, type and impact are variable.	Crises are typically unique, rare events or situations. Some crises can be anticipated; however, timing and impact usually are not always foreseeable.
Onset	Incidents can be no-notice or short-notice disruptive events, or they can emerge through a gradual failure or loss of control.	Crises can also occur from a no-notice or short-notice event. They can also emerge from an incident that has not been contained, has been managed badly or further escalates to have reputational consequences, and which requires a crisis-level response.
Urgency and pressure	In managing an incident, there is usually a high sense of urgency to act to either prevent the situation from getting worse or to minimize its impact.	A crisis always needs urgent attention as the impact can be very high. Given the potential impact and the fact that a crisis has more visibility it is common that it places a high level of pressure on the organization.
Impacts	<p>Incidents are events which, although they can take considerable resources to manage, rarely threaten the existence of the organization or have a major long-term impact on its reputation. The impacts are usually local or affect only a part of the organization.</p> <p>Incidents are generally manageable, and although the impact on interested parties can be severe, it is manageable and temporary.</p>	<p>Crises can disrupt or affect the entire organization, transcending organizational, geographical and sectoral boundaries. As crises tend to be complex and inherently uncertain, the long-term impacts can be difficult to assess. A badly handled crisis can lead to a catastrophic loss of functionality, values, trust and reputation. These negative impacts can have a lasting detrimental effect on the organization. Crisis can lead to the conclusion that the legal situation should be adjusted during the crisis.</p> <p>The size, location and type of an organization can make it more susceptible to certain incidents which can become a crisis.</p>
Scrutiny by public, media and other interested parties	<p>Effective incident management, whereby adverse events are quickly identified, impacts rapidly mitigated and business-as-usual quickly restored, will probably attract little or no negative media attention.</p> <p>Where there is adverse publicity, this can be confined to a locality or a specific group. However, there is always the possibility of the adverse publicity growing and spreading to additional groups, leading to the event becoming a crisis.</p>	<p>Crises are likely to result in significant scrutiny and interest among interested parties including members of the public, product and service users, specific groups (such as regulators, shareholders or industry bodies) and the media, including social media.</p> <p>The specific parties taking an interest in the crisis will depend on the type of event, who it threatens, and who it impacts. It is very likely that all actions and responses by the organization will be scrutinized and any perceived poor decisions, attempts to avoid responsibility, blaming of others, poor treatment of victims or attempts to cut costs on the response can lead to further sustained criticism and a deepening of the crisis, or can create new challenges.</p>

Table 1 (continued)

Characteristics	Incidents	Crises
Manageability through established plans and procedures	Incidents can often be resolved by using plans which contain incident management procedures and structures and details of predetermined solutions and available resources. Top management can potentially be informed or need to provide direction and supervision	Crises, through a combination of their novelty, inherent uncertainty and potential scale and duration of impact, are rarely resolvable through the application of predefined procedures and plans alone. They demand a flexible, creative, strategic and sustained leadership response. Values and behaviour can be challenged and amended. The organization will rely on its crisis management structure, methods, planning, training and exercising. Crises challenge the capabilities of the organization beyond its inherent coping capacity.

An issue could escalate to an incident, then a crisis. The organization should recognize the change in the situation and be flexible so it can adjust its response accordingly.

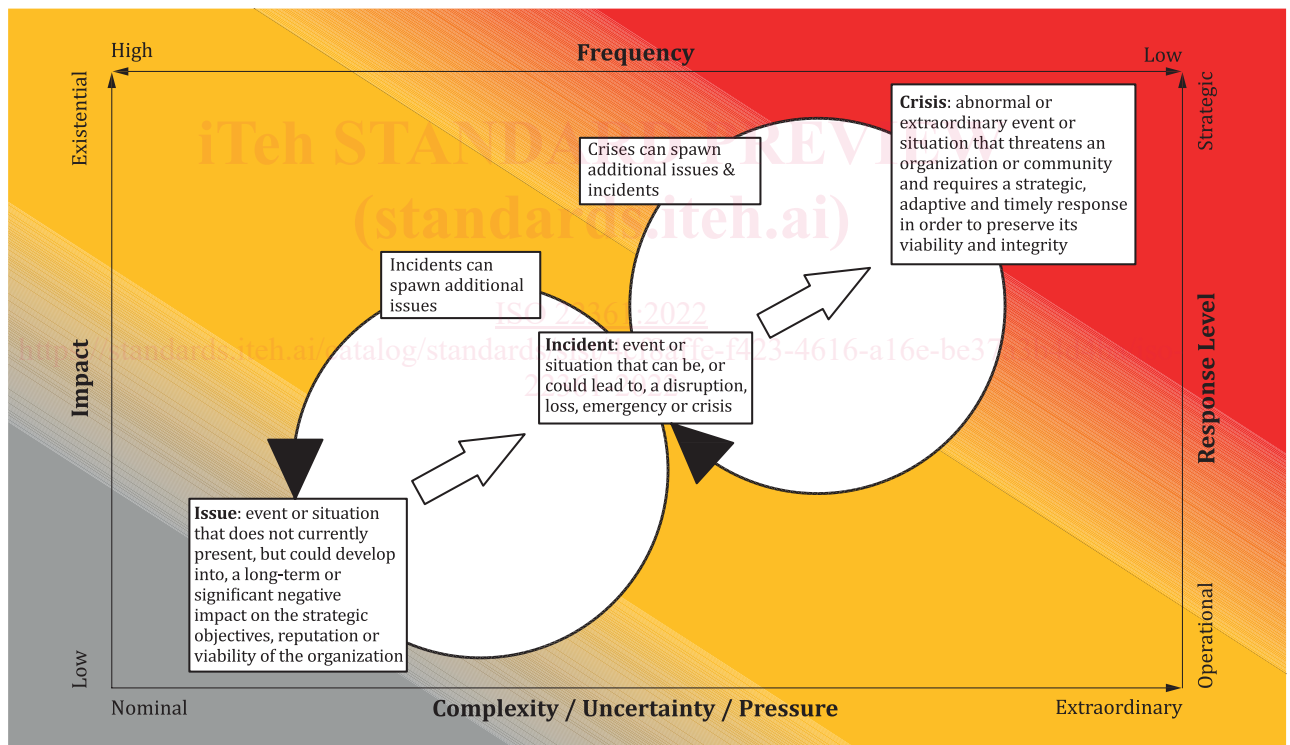


Figure 2 — Relationships and characteristics between an issue, incident and crisis

4.3 Potential origins of crises

Crises can be caused in a number of ways, including:

- a) disruptive incidents that have immediate and strategic implications: these can arise from acts of malice, misconduct or negligence, or a failure (perceived or actual) to deliver products or services that meet the expected standards or legal requirements of quality or safety, unpopular (political) decisions or actions, rumours and false information;