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Emergency & Crisis Communications Report 2026





Foreword

I am delighted to present a new edition of BCI's Emergency and Crisis Communications Report. When a crisis hits, the quality of an organization's response is often judged not only by what it does, but by what it says and how quickly and clearly it says it. In a world of constant disruption, instant scrutiny and competing narratives, emergency communications have become more visible and demanding than ever.

The frequency with which organizations are activating their emergency communications arrangements is increasing, reflecting the reality of today's risk landscape. Weather-related events, technology failures, and cyber incidents are no longer exceptional, but expected challenges that test preparedness and resilience.

One of the strongest themes to emerge from this year's research is the central role of leadership. Effective emergency communications are led from the top. Senior management is consistently involved in shaping both internal and external communications during crises, setting direction, providing reassurance, and ensuring accountability. This leadership is reinforced by specialist communications and public relations functions, alongside resilience teams such as business continuity, creating a clear framework for decision-making when time is critical.

Alongside governance and structure, the report places the human factor firmly at centre stage. Plans, tools, and technologies are essential, but it is people who bring them to life under pressure. The findings show that while most organizations have well-defined emergency communications plans and the ability to activate them quickly, real events continue to expose vulnerabilities linked to human behaviour - such as lapses in attention, reliance on outdated information or challenges in coordination. As a result, training and exercising play a vital role in building confidence and capability, helping teams translate plans into effective action at the moment they are needed most.

This year's report also highlights the growing influence of regulation as a driver of improvement. New requirements related to operational resilience and crisis management are prompting organizations to reassess how they prepare for, manage and communicate during disruption. Rather than being seen purely as a compliance exercise, these developments are increasingly acting as a catalyst for strengthening emergency communications capabilities and reinforcing good practice across organizations.

This document offers insight into how organizations are navigating these pressures, where they are succeeding and where challenges remain. I hope it provides a valuable reference for practitioners and leaders alike and encourages continued reflection on how organizations communicate when it matters most.



Maria Florencia Lombardero Garcia

Thought Leadership Manager
The BCI



Foreword

Globally, resilience has steadily moved from being a specialist discipline to a central leadership priority. It now sits squarely on the agenda of boards, regulators, and executive teams who recognize that disruption is no longer occasional — it is continuous.

From cyber incidents and infrastructure failures to severe weather and civil unrest, organizations are operating in an environment where events can escalate quickly and without warning. In those moments, the effectiveness of communication often determines how well an organization responds. The first few minutes matter, but so does what follows: clarity of information, alignment across teams, and confidence in decision-making.

This year's Emergency & Crisis Communications Report provides a thoughtful and realistic snapshot of where organizations stand today. There is clear evidence of progress. More teams regularly exercise their plans. Cloud-based solutions continue to gain ground. Collaboration with emergency services and industry peers remains strong. Crisis communication is firmly embedded in most resilience strategies across the region.

At the same time, the findings reveal a persistent gap between planning and execution. Many organizations have well-documented processes and defined escalation structures, yet challenges such as incomplete contact data, delayed responses, and uneven engagement still undermine performance. Technology plays an essential role, but it cannot fully compensate for fragmented systems or insufficient preparation.

Another theme that stands out is accountability. Leaders are increasingly expected to demonstrate that their communication processes are not only in place, but proven. Activation times need to be tested rather than assumed. Response rates must be measured rather than estimated. In a regulatory environment that continues to evolve, resilience has become something organizations must demonstrate, not simply describe.

In practical terms, that means building greater visibility into communication performance. This includes understanding how quickly messages reach intended audiences, how different channels perform under stress, and where bottlenecks consistently emerge. It also requires clarity around ownership – who makes decisions, who escalates, and who ensures that lessons learned are translated into meaningful improvements.

Effective crisis communication today is about more than sending alerts. It's about enabling informed decisions, connecting systems so that information flows reliably, and building trust at a time when uncertainty is high.

The report also reflects the early but growing use of artificial intelligence within crisis management and resilience programs. While adoption remains uneven, organizations are exploring AI to support tasks such as data processing, alert triage, early warning, and message drafting. Importantly, these tools are being positioned as decision-support capabilities, rather than replacements for human judgment. Used thoughtfully, they have the potential to enhance speed and situational awareness without compromising governance or accountability.

I encourage you to approach this report as an opportunity for reflection. Consider where your organization has strengthened its capabilities, and where further integration, testing, or cultural reinforcement may be required. Resilience is not achieved in a single initiative; it is built over time through consistent attention and continuous improvement.

Organizations that act on the recommendations in this report will not only be better prepared for disruption, but will also build a meaningful competitive advantage.

I hope the insights shared here support you in that ongoing effort.



Steven Fanale
Chief Revenue Officer
Everbridge

Executive Summary:



Emergency and crisis communications continue to be firmly anchored at senior leadership level.

In most organizations, responsibility for communicating during disruptive events sits with top management, supported by specialist functions such as communications, public relations and business continuity. This leadership-led model helps provide clarity, authority and reassurance at times of uncertainty, while ensuring that messages to internal and external audiences are aligned. Operational teams such as IT, security and human resources typically play a supporting role rather than leading communications activities.



Clear governance arrangements and formalised plans remain a cornerstone of effective emergency communications.

Most organizations have documented approaches that define roles, responsibilities and escalation pathways, enabling teams to respond quickly when incidents occur. These structures support rapid activation and timely engagement with senior decision-makers, which is critical in the early stages of an emergency when information is limited and pressure is high.



Technology plays an important enabling role in modern emergency communications.

Organizations make use of a range of digital tools to coordinate crisis teams and reach employees, with a preference for familiar and widely adopted platforms that support speed and collaboration. At the same time, reliance on technology brings its own challenges, reinforcing the need for reliable systems, accurate contact information and contingency arrangements when tools or devices are unavailable.



Human factors continue to be a source of vulnerability in emergency response.

Issues such as limited staff responsiveness, outdated contact details and difficulties coordinating across teams can undermine otherwise well-designed plans. These challenges underline that emergency communications is not only about systems and processes, but about people's behaviour under pressure.



Training and exercising remain critical to building confidence and capability.

Most organizations invest in regular programmes to test their plans and familiarise staff with their roles, often involving a broad cross-section of the workforce, including senior and middle management. These activities help teams identify weaknesses, reinforce good practice and improve their ability to translate plans into effective action during real events.



The frequency of disruptive incidents continues to test organizational preparedness.

More organizations have had to activate their emergency communications arrangements in the past year, commonly in response to weather-related events, technology failures or cyber incidents. In these situations, access to timely and reliable information, whether through accurate employee data, external alerts or coordination with emergency services, is essential to support sound decision-making.



Regulatory developments are increasingly shaping how organizations approach emergency and crisis communications.

Growing requirements around operational resilience and crisis management are prompting reviews of existing arrangements and encouraging greater investment in preparedness. Rather than being viewed solely as a compliance obligation, regulation is increasingly acting as a driver for strengthening emergency communications capabilities and embedding more consistent good practice.

About the BCI



Founded in 1994 with the aim of promoting a more resilient world, the BCI has established itself as the world's leading institute for business continuity and resilience. The BCI has become the membership and certifying organization of choice for business continuity and resilience professionals globally with over 10,000 members in more than 100 countries, working in an estimated 3,000 organizations in the private, public, and third sectors. The vast experience of the Institute's broad membership and partner network is built into its world class education, continuing professional development, and networking activities. Every year, more than 1,500 people choose BCI training, with options ranging from short awareness raising tools to a full academic qualification, available online and in a classroom. The Institute stands for excellence in the resilience profession and its globally recognised Certified grades provide assurance of technical and professional competency. The BCI offers a wide range of resources for professionals seeking to raise their organization's level of resilience and its extensive thought leadership and research programme helps drive the industry forward. With approximately 120 partners worldwide, the BCI Corporate Membership offers organizations the opportunity to work with the BCI in promoting best practice in business continuity and resilience.

The BCI welcomes everyone with an interest in building resilient organizations from newcomers, experienced professionals, and organizations. Further information about The BCI is available at www.thebci.org.

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About Everbridge



Everbridge is the global leader in Critical Event Management (CEM), helping organizations achieve a true business resilience advantage. With Everbridge High Velocity CEM, our customers accelerate response times, minimize disruption, and maintain operational control amid today's most complex threats. Using Purpose-built AI, decision-ready risk intelligence, and full lifecycle automation, Everbridge enables organizations to know earlier, respond faster, and improve continuously with confidence.

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