**Appendix \_\_\_\_\_ – Crisis Communications Plan**

**Introduction**

The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance to Rotary leaders in the approach that should be taken in communications with the public and the media if an incident occurs within or involving Rotary activities of our district. No one can be prepared for how they will react if they find themselves in the midst of an embarrassing or tragic situation within a Rotary setting. The aim of this document is to provide guidance should such an event occur.

**General**

Rotarians become involved in a number of situations that might result in them becoming the center of public and media attention such as:

* Activities involving youth while under the supervision of Rotarians such as Rotary Youth Exchange Students, RYLA Students, and members of Rotaract and Interact clubs.
* Public fundraising events where alcohol is served that could result in over-consumption by a Rotarian or member of the public leading to a traffic infraction or accident.
* Use of inappropriate language in a public arena.

These three examples are not meant to be exclusive but are meant to give examples of situations that, if something were to go wrong, might bring unwelcome, negative, public attention to

Rotary and Rotarians.

**Channels of Communication**

Should an incident occur during a Rotary activity that focuses public attention on something that is seen to have gone wrong, the first point of contact will likely be the President of the Club involved. If the Club President is not available, then the point of contact will be the Immediate Past President or the President-Elect. It is important that the first point of Rotary contact provides a clear statement based on fact using discretion to protect the privacy of individuals. A “No Comment” will not do. Better to say: “The matter is under investigation and we’ll provide an accurate account once the facts are known”. The statement is positive and indicates a pro-active approach to getting to the bottom of the matter without appearing to hide behind a no comment. Every effort should be made for Club events’ Chairs to be aware of who should respond to a “crisis” if it were to happen at their event(s).

It is important that the DG be contacted as soon as practicable to make him/her aware of the details in order for the DG to advise and work with the Club President involved. If the DG is not available, then a member of the District Governance Team needs to be notified. The AG of the area where the Club is located should also be contacted. In addition, if the incident involves a Rotary Youth Exchange Student, then the District Youth Exchange Committee Chair should also be notified as soon as possible. A member of the District Governance Team or the AG will act as a liaison between the Club and the media if the DG is not available.

The spokesperson should avoid being trapped by leading questions from the media and instead tell the real story. Remain calm and do not assume or speculate what might have happened until all the facts are known.

All Rotary leaders should review and understand RI’s Media Crisis Handbook, 515-EN. Appendix: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_