

As part of CPA's ongoing efforts to support you during the Covid-19 crisis, please find below suggestions for your approach to messaging to both staff and customers during this difficult time, as well as sample messages for each audience.

Communications strategy during this time of crisis

Principles

In crisis communications, adherence to certain principles yield the best results. In the current situation, the following principles should guide your messaging:

- Timeliness
- Honesty and transparency
- Consistency in messaging across platforms and audiences
- Putting victims first: Where appropriate, messaging needs to acknowledge the impact of the crisis on individuals and organizations.

Social media

Much of the current discussion and information sharing takes place through social media. On these platforms, be mindful to:

- Have a thorough review process in place for messaging
- Be empathetic
- Consider pausing regular social media plans (in a time of crisis, pre-scheduled/pre-planned messaging may not be appropriate)

Responding to individual posts: It will sometimes be necessary to respond to individual posts to your social media accounts in a time of crisis but be judicious. This engagement should be done selectively and **quickly redirect the concern to an offline conversation**. Be professional, but personable. For example:

"I'm sorry to hear this has been your experience (name). Please contact our (manager) at (email) or (phone) so we can learn more and resolve this situation."

Core team roles/responsibilities

Each member of your team should be aware of their roles and responsibilities in communicating with staff, customers and stakeholders. The competence and cohesion of your team will directly impact how smoothly a crisis is handled. Ensure all communicators/supervisors are equipped with approved messaging and other communication resources.

Messaging to staff

Internal communications are vital at this time. Staff will be worried about their safety and well-being, as well as that of their loved ones. They need to know that management has their interests top of mind. They also need to be well-informed and equipped to share consistent messaging with those they interact with every day – coworkers, customers and community members. Normally messaging will be delivered via email with direct conversations (i.e., by telephone) as needed to provide reassurance and support.

The following message example may be helpful in drafting your own email to staff. We encourage you to draw from this, adding details and information that is applicable and relevant to your particular business and community. Of note, if your company provides mental health support services to staff, please remind employees of that here.

Sample email message:

Dear Team Members:

You are the backbone of our business and at this time of unprecedented and unsettling challenges, please know that your interests are top of mind for us. We've had our obstacles to overcome together in the past year; team commitment and dedication helped us successfully get through them. That resilience will get us through this too.

In particular, we thank you for your care and professionalism in instituting the new procedures required to keep all staff and customers safe during this difficult situation.

We are committed to keeping you fully informed about our work in the days and weeks ahead to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our business and customers.

Once again, please accept our sincere thanks for your hard work and commitment to fueling the homes, farms, businesses and healthcare facilities that rely on us, as well as our heartfelt wishes for the wellbeing of you and your loved ones.

(name)

President

Messaging to customers

Informative and compassionate communications to customers is a top priority at this time. Anxieties are running high and customers need to be reassured about their fuel supply and safety in interacting with your team.

The following message example may be helpful in drafting your own email to customers. We encourage you to draw from this, adding details and information that is applicable and relevant in particular to your business and community.

Sample email message:

Dear (company) customer:

The past days and weeks have been truly unprecedented times and all of us at (company) hope you and yours are well and safe.

Our team has been working diligently to ensure the continuity and safety of propane supply to all our customers. Rest assured that propane is available and will continue to be delivered as needed.

Keeping our customers and staff safe during the spread of Covid-19 is our top priority. Please know that new protocols are in place to ensure this. In some cases, these measures will cause short delays in service. We thank you in advance for your patience.

New procedures apply at every point in our supply chain, transfer systems and customer interactions, including:

- Requiring electronic payments for all transactions
- Accepting orders only by phone or email
- Eliminating the requirement of signatures on devices
- Enhancing resources to enable more staff to work from home
- Requiring employees to self-report illness and work from home or self-isolate for a period of fourteen days if any symptoms are present

While it is not clear how the pandemic will continue to unfold, we all know there are tough times ahead. We are committed to keeping you fully informed of any additional changes as we navigate these challenges.

There is light at the end of the tunnel. Our business and the communities we serve have overcome hard times before and our resiliency will get us through this. We will emerge even more cohesive and stronger than before.

Our team is grateful for your continuing support and we are here to answer any questions you may have.

Please stay safe and continue to look out for each other.

(name)

President

(add the list of relevant company contacts here)