

CASE STUDY

Managing a Power Outage Crisis in a Fully Booked Hotel



OVERVIEW

In this case study, participants will explore a real-world crisis management scenario. The focus is on how hotel leaders and staff respond effectively to unexpected disruptions while maintaining guest safety and service quality.

SCENARIO

A sudden power outage hits a fully booked city hotel on a busy weekend evening. The elevators stop working, the electronic door key system fails, and the front desk starts receiving a surge of guest complaints. Families with children are stranded in hallways, and some guests need assistance reaching upper floors. The local utility company estimates that power may not be restored for several hours.

Hotel management must act swiftly to:

- Ensure the immediate safety and comfort of guests and staff.
- Communicate clearly and calmly to prevent panic.
- Coordinate internal teams and external partners.
- Protect the hotel's reputation during and after the crisis.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Initial Assessment

- What are the first three steps management should take immediately following the power outage?
- Which departments must be contacted right away, and why?

2. Communication and Guest Relations

- How should staff communicate updates to anxious or angry guests?
- What tone and approach would be most effective in calming concerns?
- How can the hotel maintain its brand image and reputation during the crisis?

3. Staff Coordination

- What roles should key departments (front desk, housekeeping, engineering, security, food & beverage) play in crisis management?
- How can managers keep staff motivated and focused under stress?

4. Contingency Planning

- How could the hotel prepare in advance to handle similar crises in the future?
- What long-term improvements (technology, training, infrastructure) would reduce vulnerability?



ACTION PLAN

SCENARIO: MANAGING A POWER OUTAGE CRISIS IN A FULLY BOOKED HOTEL	
TEAM ROLE/DEPARTMENT:	DATE:
MEMBERS:	

NO.	ACTION STEPS	DESCRIPTION
1	Situation Overview: Brief Description of the Crisis	
	Immediate Risks / Concerns Identified (Select all that apply.)	☐ Guest safety and comfort ☐ Communication failure ☐ Food preservation ☐ Security risks ☐ Operational disruption ☐ Brand image and reputation
2	Initial Assessment: First Three Steps After the Outage	
3	Immediate Actions: Departments to Contact Immediately	Purpose
	• Engineering	
	• Front Desk	
	• Security	
	• Food & Beverage	
	• Housekeeping:	
	• Guest Relations / Communications	

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NO.	ACTION STEPS	DESCRIPTION
4	Communication and Guest Relations (How will you inform guests, what tone will you use, what solutions will you offer?)	Key Messages to Guests:
	• Initial announcement message:	
	• Follow-up updates:	
	• Estimated restoration time	
	• Reassurance statement:	
	Tone and Approach (Select approach.)	☐ Calm and empathetic ☐ Transparent and factual ☐ Reassuring and solution-focused
	Guest Support Measures:	Describe approach
	• Alternative lighting / safety provisions:	
	• Meal or service adjustments:	
	• Compensation or goodwill offers:	
5	Staff Coordination and Roles	Key Department Responsibilities:
	• Front Desk	
	• Housekeeping	
	• Engineering	
	• Security	

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TEAM ROLE/DEPARTMENT:	DATE:
MEMBERS:	

NO.	ACTION STEPS	DESCRIPTION
	• Food & Beverage	
	• Management / GM	
6	Coordination Plan	Cross-Department Communication
	• Communication method: (radio, phone, in-person meeting):	
	• Frequency of status updates:	Every _____ minutes
	• Meeting location (command hub):	
	Information Flow: (List who reports to whom and how information is shared.)	
7	Contingency and Recovery Planning	Preparations for Similar Future Crises:
	• Technology upgrades:	
	• Staff training / drills:	
	• Backup generator testing schedule:	
	• Guest communication protocols	
	Long-Term Improvement Opportunities:	
8	Key Decisions in the First 60 Minutes (Time in Minutes)	Action/Decision
	0-15	
	15-30	

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TEAM ROLE/DEPARTMENT:	DATE:
MEMBERS:	

NO.	ACTION STEPS	DESCRIPTION
	30-45	
	45-60	
9	Evaluation and Debrief	Success Indicators (KPIs): (Tick if achieved)
	Guest satisfaction levels post-crisis	
	Response time for power restoration	
	Staff coordination effectiveness	
	Incident report completeness	
	Lessons Learned:	
	Next Steps / Improvement Actions:	