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EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING IN AIRLINES

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Declaration by the Guide

This is to certify that Mr Vinod Gopalakrishnan Moovankara, a student of BBA – Aviation Operations, SAP ID 500065537 of UPES has successfully completed this dissertation report on "Emergency Response Planning in Airlines" under my supervision.

Further, I certify that the work is based on the investigation made, data collected and analysed by him and it has not been submitted in any other University or Institution for award of any degree. In my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and utility, as a dissertation towards partial fulfilment for the award of degree of BBA.

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VII Executive Summary/ Abstract

The most important thing for every airline is to be profitable. Any crisis that comes along may wipe out the wafer thin margins of profitability and maybe the airline as well. The regulations covering the requirements are all sketchy and based on the ICAO Doc 9859 on safety management. This research aims to understand the processes involved in developing an emergency response plan and the training and testing requirements.

VIII CHAPTERS

1. Chapter 1- Introduction

1.1 Overview

The goal of every airline in the world is to make profits - and if they carry on their operations safely, the more money they earn. In order to have a safe operation, the management has to tread a thin line between spending resources for improving safety or improving profitability. In such a scenario when the airline safety manager puts forth the requirement and reasoning for spending on Emergency Response for scenarios that may never occur in the airline, getting the buy in of the management may be an issue.

1.2 Background

The Indian Civil Aviation Regulator - DGCA, in the Civil Aviation Regulations has adopted the Safety Management System (SMS) as laid down by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). Taking this further to all the service providers, the DGCA has mandated that all airlines shall have an Emergency Response Plan as a part of the service provider's SMS. However, it doesn't describe how to go about developing the same. It is left to every service provider (Airline, Airport Operator, ATC etc) to develop their own Emergency Response plan. Further, every State's regulator has their own regulations regarding the requirement of Emergency Response and all airlines operating to the countries have to abide with them prior to operations to that country.

The airlines and the other service providers have to seek the services of specialists in the emergency/ disaster response who guide them with respect to requirements in all countries that they operate to, undertake training for the airline staff and write their Standard Operating Procedures with regard to Emergency Response.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The regulations and best practices for Emergency Response planning is scattered all over the place - each regulator has specific requirements in their state. Further airlines may not have in-house experience in handling an Emergency and

responding accordingly. Looking at the things that can go wrong in the operations of an airline both internal and external including even the things that are outside the control of an airline but at the same time affecting the operations/ image of the airlines viz., Floods in the city, a pandemic in the region where the airline operates, etc. Further, the things that an airline is expected to do after an event is not defined clearly and it is up to the airline to anticipate all the requirements and prepare for the same.

Once the Standard Operating Procedures are developed, the staff have to be trained in handling the emergency situations. They will have to be trained for their roles and responsibilities in case of an emergency/ crisis situation need to be explained to them. Once all the required personnel have been trained, then the testing of the plans are to be carried out to check if the plans stand up to the situation.

I intend to conduct this research to gather the global best practices that an airline can try to implement in case of both an internal or external Emergency situation. This research will also enable me in creating an Emergency Response Plan that can cater to most of the common situations that an airline may experience and be prepared to face them.

1.4 Objectives

The primary objectives are to :

1) Research the ERP requirements/ regulations of India and the countries into which Go Airlines (India) Ltd (GoAir) operates.
2) Identify the personnel requiring training
3) identify the level of training requirements
4) Identify the testing requirements and methodologies for the ERP
5) Identifying the emergency organisation of the company
6) Identifying the condition and process of return to normalcy

2. Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Corporate Information – Go Airlines (India) Ltd

Go Airlines (India) Ltd. is an aviation foray of the Wadia Group. It operates under the brand GoAir. In November 2005, GoAir launched its operations as a low-fare carrier to commoditise air travel and offer airline seats at a marginal premium to train fares across India. The airline currently operates over 330 daily flights across 36 destinations – 27 domestic and 9 international.

The GoAir route network spans across prominent business metros as well as key leisure destinations across the Indian subcontinent. GoAir currently renders its services at the airports in Ahmedabad, Aizawl, Bagdogra, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Delhi, Goa, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur, Jammu, Kochi, Kolkata, Kannur, Leh, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur, Patna, Port Blair, Pune, Ranchi, Varanasi, Singapore, Srinagar, Abu Dhabi, Bangkok, Dammam, Dubai, Kuwait, Malé, Muscat and Phuket. Through this route network GoAir ensures a smart value-for-money option for both business and leisure travellers, without compromising on either safety or service factors.

GoAir's distribution network has been well-researched. Following a thorough evaluation of the available mediums, the airline has introduced a gamut of options, specially designed to make tickets very accessible to its passengers. GoAir hosts convenient online booking options on its website **www.GoAir.in** wherein a passenger or his associate can book GoAir tickets anytime round the clock, 365 days a year from the comfort of their home. For those passengers who do not have a credit or a debit card or access to a web networked computer, tickets can be booked from other distribution mediums including Travel Agents or via GoAir's Call Centres. Tickets can also be booked from GoAir airport counters.

GoAir is positioned as 'the Smart People's Airline'. Its captivating theme, 'Fly Smart' is aimed at offering passengers a consistent, quality-assured, and time-efficient service through 'pocket-friendly' fares. The airline uses a state-of-the-art Airbus A320 aircraft fleet.

GoAir executes its business model on the basic three-tier principle - 'punctuality, affordability, and convenience'. The airline has recently partnered with Navitaire, a

leading technology provider of automated aviation and travel-related software solutions, for its Passenger Service System. By adopting such technology solutions, GoAir is equipped with superior process efficiency, thereby enabling its passengers to save great amount of time.

Adding a milestone to its journey, in October 2018, GoAir was re-certified by the International Air Transport Association's Operational Safety Audit (IOSA).

As part of its expansion plan, GoAir has placed a firm order of 144 Airbus A320 Neo aircraft. The delivery of the same has begun. GoAir has a fleet of 54 aircraft at present which includes both CEO and NEO aircraft.

The Wadia Group has been in the forefront of corporate India for over 250 years. Today, the Group is broadly diversified into several growth industries covering aviation, textiles, chemicals, petrochemicals, plantations, foods, electronics, light engineering, health, laminates, real estate and consultancy. The Wadia Group has consistently emerged as a market leader in every arena it had stepped in. Over the years, the Wadia Group has developed an enviable record of successfully managing diverse technologies. The Wadia Group has earned a reputation as a household brand through its businesses like Britannia and Bombay Dyeing.

2.2 Concept of Crisis

The word crisis is derived from Greek *krisis*, which was a medical term meaning the turning point of a disease and from *krinein*, meaning to judge or decide.

A crisis usually commences with a triggering event and continues until there is some resolution, after which the organisation returns to normal operations.

Disasters do occur; preparedness is the key. However, the preparedness of a solitary organisation is most often is not adequate to face the unforeseen event. It is best that all stake holders and public/ state at large to have a coordinated approach to face such an eventuality.

As per Otto Lerbinger,(1997) there are seven types of sudden emergencies viz.

(i) Natural disasters: fires, explosions and bad weather

(ii) Technical disasters: spillages and faulty equipment

(iii) Crises of confrontation: industrial disputes or the development of opposition by single-issue external groups

(iv) Acts of malevolence: terrorism, sabotage and kidnapping

(v) Misplaced management values: strategic investment errors and ignoring investor concerns

(vi) Acts of deception: fraud, expenses scams and false invoicing

(vii) Management misconduct: harassment, bribery and corruption

Example of crisis that affects an airline could be an accident/ serious incident, an act of terror, natural calamities like storm, flood etc., public health emergencies, war/ civil disorder, afire or a merger, etc. In each of the case the airline may choose to launch its ERP to deal with the situation at hand.

Since aviation accidents are rare, only a few organisations are prepared for the aftermaths of such an eventuality. The first few hours and days following the accident/ crisis are the most critical for an organization and the actions that it takes therein lays the foundation for the company's future. An Emergency Response Plan (ERP) is the collection of the actions that need to be taken by individuals in the airline after an accident/ aviation crisis.

In every crisis we need not address all the areas. However, if you can respond and manage the range of consequences then you can manage the response, regardless of the size or type of event that caused the crisis.(Robert A Jensen, 12 Principles, 03 Jul 2014)

Organizational crisis is almost always the consequence of some unanticipated, complex, and long-term interaction(s) between social, psychological and cultural factors on one hand, and technical, structural and standardised elements on the other (Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer 2003, p4 quoting Perrow, 1999). Organisational crisis are coming to the fore as systems become more complex, increased scale of operations and technological advances.

Crisis suggests an unusual level of overwhelmingly negative significance that carries a high level of risk, harm and opportunity for further loss (Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer 2003, p4). For organisations, crisis often conveys a fundamental threat to system stability, a questioning of core assumptions and beliefs, and threats to high-priority

goals, including image, legitimacy, profitability and even survival (Seeger, Sellnow & Ulmer, 2003, p4). Crisis affects the core organisation; its employees; its stockholders; customers; suppliers; members of the community; and even its competitors. Primary victims (those affected directly) and secondary victims (their family, friends, and coworkers) may suffer immediate and long-term harm. Other stakeholders - hospitals, police and emergency agencies, the media, governmental agencies, communities, competitors, suppliers, customers, special interest groups and the courts - are also affected. (Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer 2003, p6).

"Disorganization is necessary to organization and the chaos of crisis in linked to the routines of business as usual" (Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer 2003, p7). Crisis purges elements in the organisation that are outdated or ineffective and creates opportunities for change and evolution leading to development.

By examining the various types of crisis, the organisation can develop contingency plans to deal with each of them. These plans can be developed with specific threats or stakeholders in consideration. Airlines have dedicated crisis management teams that develop and coordinate these plans in conjunction with all the stakeholders.

Another important aspect of a crisis is crisis communications that include the strategies used by an organisation following a crisis situation. Immediately following an organisational crisis, questions are asked about cause, blame, responsibility, remediation, scope, legal liability, and the need for new precautionary norms and rules (Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer 2003, p16) (Benoit, 1995a).

2.3 Regulations, Standards and Recommended Practices

2.3.1 ICAO (Annex 19 – Safety Management):

ICAO has issued ICAO Annex 19 – Safety Management wherein the only information provided is "The service provider shall ensure that an emergency response plan is properly coordinated with the emergency response plans of those organizations it must interface with during the provision of its products and services."

2.3.2 ICAO (DOC9859 – Safety Management Manual):

ICAO has issued DOC9859 – Safety Management Manual that contains ERP as element 1.4 and further states that the purpose of an ERP is to ensure that there is an

orderly and efficient transition from normal to emergency operations, including assignment of emergency responsibilities and delegation of authority. Authorization for action by key personnel is also contained in the plan, as well as the means to coordinate efforts necessary to cope with the emergency. The overall objective is to save lives, the safe continuation of operations and the return to normal operations as soon as possible.

As per this manual, successful response to an emergency begins with effective planning. An ERP provides the basis for a systematic approach to managing the organization's affairs in the aftermath of a significant unplanned event — in the worst case, a major accident.

The purpose of an emergency response plan is to ensure:

a) delegation of emergency authority;

b) assignment of emergency responsibilities;

c) documentation of emergency procedures and processes;

d) coordination of emergency efforts internally and with external parties;

e) safe continuation of essential operations while the crisis is being managed;

f) proactive identification of all possible emergency events/scenarios and their corresponding mitigation actions, etc.

2.3.3 DGCA India:

DGCA India has issued an Air Safety Circular No.2 of 1988 with subject "Contingency plans to deal with Aircraft Accidents" on 25th FEB 1988. As per Para 10, the Air Operator has the following responsibilities-

1. Provide technical expertise and salvage equipment at the disposal of the command post.
2. Provide medical personnel and facilities available in their organisation
3. Provide security personnel available with them to augment police force employees in guarding wreckage etc.
4. Provide transport
5. Provide information to the command post/ ATC etc., regarding total number of passengers on board, nature of dangerous cargo on board, total number of crew members on board etc.
6. Associate in the removal of the injured to hospitals and keep records for future reference.
7. Establish information centre to give details about passenger queries etc.
8. Provide photographer at the dispersal of the command post.
9. Organise transportation of the crew members, if alive, for immediate blood and urine collection.
10. Segregate and sealing of all documents pertaining to the involved flight crew and aircraft.
11. Any other assistance required for handling the emergency.

Further, in DGCA CAR Section 1, Series C, Part I on Safety Management System, it states that the service provider shall establish and maintain Emergency Response Plan (ERP) for aircraft accidents and incidents and other aviation related emergencies. It shall be ensured that the ERP is properly coordinated with ERPs of those organisations it must interface with during the provision of its products and services. The ERP shall suit the scope and complexity of the service provider.

2.4 Definitions

NOTE: The term emergency is used interchangeably with crisis in this report.

Accident: means an occurrence associated with the operation of an aircraft which,-- (i) in the case of a manned aircraft, takes place between the time any person boards the aircraft with the intention of flight until such time as all such persons have disembarked; or (ii) in the case of an unmanned aircraft, takes place between the time the aircraft is ready to move with the purpose of flight until such time as it comes to rest at the end of the flight and the primary propulsion system is shut down, in which—

(a) a person is fatally or seriously injured as a result of –

(i) being in the aircraft; or

(ii) direct contact with any part of the aircraft, including parts which have become

detached from the aircraft; or

(iii) direct exposure to jet blast, Except when the injuries are from natural causes, self-

inflicted or inflicted by other persons, or when the injuries are to stowaways hiding

outside the areas normally available to the passengers and crew; or

(b) the aircraft sustains damage or structural failure which –

(i) adversely affects the structural strength, performance or flight characteristics of the aircraft; and

(ii) would normally require major repair or replacement of the affected component, except for engine failure or damage, when the damage is limited to a single engine, (including its cowlings or accessories), to propellers, wingtips, antennas, probes, vanes, tires, brakes, wheels, fairings, panels, landing gear doors, wind screens, the aircraft skin (such as small dents or puncture holes), or for minor damages to main rotor blades, tail rotor blades, landing gear, and those resulting from hail or bird strike (including holes in the radome); or

(c) the aircraft is missing or is completely inaccessible.

Note1.—For the purposes of this clause, the guidance for the determination of aircraft damage is at Schedule B.
Note2.—For the purposes of this clause, only unmanned aircraft which have design or operational approval given by a State to be considered. -*Aircraft (Investigation of Accidents and Incidents) Rules, 2017*

Crisis

A crisis is any incident or situation, whether real, rumored or alleged, that can focus negative attention on a company or organization internally, in the media or before key audiences. - Ruff, Peter. and Aziz, Khalid. (*Managing Communication in a Crisis*)
NOTE: In this report, emergency is used synonymously with Crisis in this report.

Emergency Response Plan

The aim of this Emergency Response Plan (ERP) is to provide corporate guidelines for the initial response and management of an emergency and the continuation of business with the minimum of disruption. It begins with transition from normal to emergency operations and ends with a return to normal operations.

Crisis Communication

Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (2003) sum up crisis communication by stating that, "communication is an ongoing process that enables organizations to monitor their environments before and during a crisis, to understand and respond appropriately, to construct a consistent interpretation, and to resolve the crisis and re-establish order" (p. 65)

Family assistance

Family assistance is the provision of services and information to address the concerns and the needs of the aircraft accident victims and their families. (ICAO DOC 9998, 2013)

3. Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Exploratory Research

The three main classifications of research are exploratory, descriptive and explanatory or predictive (Saunders et al, 2009). An explanatory study is useful to clarify the understanding of a problem, for example if the nature of the problem is unsure (Saunders et al, 2009). An exploratory study has three principal methods: First, literature review. Second, interviewing 'subject matter experts' and lastly, conducting focus group interviews.

In the course of this dissertation I will be reviewing literature from various sources and using questionnaire to get qualitative data regarding ERP which will help me to answer the questions laid down in the objectives.

3.2 Interview Procedures

Since this research is doing a study on the best practices with regard to ERP in an airline, I have used structured questionnaires as the route to collect data from the respondents. An interview is most often conducted at one-to-one basis, between the researcher and the respondent (Saunders et al., 2009). Interviews as such are most commonly constructed by meeting the respondent 'face to face' (Saunders et al., 2009). However, with modern technologies, such interviews can also be conducted via telephone, Internet or an organization's intranet (Saunders et al., 2009).

The structured interview consisting of standardised questions that all the respondents must answer, ensures uniformity and no room for the respondent to hijack the conversation. The purpose of a qualitative interview is not to get yes or no answers (Stake, 1995) but with open ended questions probe the responded for further qualitative data. An open question is likely to start with the following words: 'what', 'how" or 'why' (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.3 Crisis Model

There are various experts who have theorized about the model of a crisis. The one that I have used for this report is given by Ruff, Peter and Aziz, Khalid (2004). As per them there are four aspects that need to be dealt with successfully for a crisis plan to work.

a) **Emergency preparedness**

This is highly dependent on the sector one operates. One has to meet all the regulations/ legislations enforced by government agencies. In large companies, it is not uncommon for each operating division to have its own plan, but this will have to dovetail with those of corporate headquarters.

b) **Emergency notification**

This deals with who should be informed and how in case of an unfortunate event. There are two parts to this – what an organisation is required to do as per law and what it should do for its own good.

c) **Crisis communication**

This is slightly different from the emergency notification above. This involves understanding who your internal and external audience is and what information they would need or want to know. You would want the information to be controlled at this stage. Usually airlines have holding templates ready, which can be released with a few items filled in.

d) **Crisis recovery**

This is the phase every organisation looks to reach after a crisis. After a crisis hits an organisation, there are usually two organisations that come up – one is the emergency organisation and the other is business continuity.

The various aspects of the ERP is given in more detail in ICAO DOC 9859. As per ICAO DOC 9859, to be effective, an ERP should:

a) *be appropriate to the size, nature and complexity of the organization;*

The ERP of a domestic airline will be simpler compared to the ERP of an international airline. In the second case, the airline will have to comply with the legal and regulatory requirements of all the countries into which it operates. Further the type of operations it carries out viz., passenger, cargo, mixed, charter etc. would also affect the ERP.

b) *be readily accessible to all relevant personnel and other organizations where applicable;*

Making an ERP and not giving access to the same to all the frontline staff serves no purpose. In most cases, the frontline staff is outsourced and therefore they need to be told what to do in an emergency. Thus copies of the ERP needs to provided to all the relevant stake holders including airport authorities.

c) *include checklists and procedures relevant to specific emergency* situations;
Since everyone in the organisation responding to the major event (crisis) may be suffering from some degree of disorientation, it is standard practice to have the checklists. It is best practice to prepare a checklist covering all aspects and departments. This ensures that in a crisis situation, by choosing the appropriate checklist, one can act fast as no time is lost in thinking "what do I do now"

d) *have quick-reference contact details of relevant personnel;*
Another factor that comes into forefront during a crisis is having the contact details of all the persons, external agencies and the like. There are a number of centres that get activated during a crisis like, CMC[1], FFRC[2], CSC[3], etc. The CMC is the nodal agency for responding to a crisis and it needs to keep in touch with all the stakeholders on a real-time basis. Ideally the contact details of the required personnel and external agencies are collected station wise and kept at each station and a copy provided to the CMC. The Emergency Director (ED) keeps the list updated.

e) *be regularly tested through exercises;*
An ERP is just a written down SOP. Unless tested, its efficacy cannot be ascertained. By carrying out a table-top exercise, the Emergency Director, can ascertain the shortcoming in the ERP and put improvements in place. Conduction of mock-drill once a year is also a good way to test the preparedness of the people and the efficacy of the checklists and training imparted on ERP.

f) *be periodically reviewed and updated when details change, etc.*

[1] CMC – Crisis Management Centre
[2] FFRC – Friends and Family Reception Centre
[3] CSC – Crash Site Centre

Like any other manual, the ERP also needs a review once in a year or as and when any new regulation comes into existence, or when an airline starts to operate differently (new aircraft type, new operation maybe cargo, flying to a new country, etc). This review needs to be thorough and inputs from all the departments help in the same.

4. Chapter 4 - Data

4.1 Emergency Response Plan

ICAO DOC 9859, also states that the ERP manual should take the following into consideration:

a) *Governing policies*

The ERP should have its SOPs based on the existing laws & regulations of the countries to which it operates. It should include accident investigation, family assistance etc.

b) *Organization (Emergency)*

In times of a crisis/ emergency, two organisations are formed – one is the emergency response organisation which comes up called the Crisis Management Centre. The person who leads this nodal agency is the Emergency Director (ED). The details of those people who are required to be in the CMC needs to be documented. The other is the Operations Control Centre which is functional otherwise too. In case of an emergency/ crisis the OCC handles the crisis till the CMC is active and functional.

The details of the teams that may set in motion like the GoTeam, Aircraft Recovery Team, Investigation team etc, also needs to be documented along with their leadership, responsibilities and accountabilities. It should also list the company spokesperson(s) and the liaison officer who interfaces with the regulators/ investigators

In all of this, the lines of responsibility must be clearly laid down.

c) Notifications

The most critical part of the initial response is notification of the same to the concerned persons/ parties. Usually the OCC[4] will receive the information from the station and then make the initial notification as per the protocol. The external notifications to be made and the responsibility of the same are to be laid down in the plan.

It should cover the notifications to:

- management,
- state authorities, (regulators, accident investigation bureau, search and rescue etc.)
- local emergency response services. (fire fighters, police, aerodrome authorities, ambulance, hospitals, etc.)
- friends and families of victims (in most countries, the same is handled by the local police)
- company staff
- media
- insurers, OEMs[5] etc

d) Initial response

Depending on the incident, a Go-team may be dispatched to the site to augment the local presence and assist the authorities. The leadership and composition of the team along with the Go-Kit needs to be thought of and documented.

e) Additional assistance

Later on during the handling of the crisis situation, the CMC may augment the initial Go-teams with additional trained staff for dealing with friends and families (next of kin) of the affected persons or dealing with the authorities.

f) Emergency management centre

[4] OCC - Operations Control Centre – nodal centre controlling daily operations

[5] OEM – Original Equipment Manufacturer viz., Airbus, Boeing, GE, Pratt & Whitney etc.

The Emergency Management Centre or Crisis Management Centre is usually located at the head quarters of the airline in a standby mode. The same is activated on the command of the Emergency Director and once activated may require to be functional round the clock for a few days, and needs special connectivity and other provisions. Therefore the CMC is fully kitted with communication equipment (phones, internet, fax etc), specialised software to keep log of the activities and required documentation like ERP manual, emergency response checklists, copies off all company manuals, aerodrome emergency plans and kept ready to be activated at any time.

Certain airlines subcontract the above to specialist emergency service providers and in case of a crisis company personnel would rush to the emergency service provider's CMC to assist them in handling the crisis.

g) Records

In the case of an emergency, and when investigation is launched, the airline will have to impound and collect all documentation/ records pertaining to the concerned flight(s) and preserve the same until asked for by the investigator in charge. Examples are aircraft load and trim sheet, flight manifest, aircraft technical log books, staff training records, copies of statements collected, Flight Data Recorder and Cockpit Voice Recorders, any relevant photographs etc.

h) Accident site

In case of an aircraft accident, there are various stakeholders who will be present at the accident site and who have a role to play e.g. local police, fire fighters, medics, coroner (in case of casuality), accident investigators, media, and NGOs providing support and relief.

In the initial part following the accident the local police/ aerodrome authorities may take over the site and not allow anyone access to the site. The ERP of the airline should specify

(i) the senior airline representative who will be present at the accident site after considering that it may be at a local station or international station.

(ii) how the survivors will be taken care of and how their needs managed

(iii) how the security of the accident site will be handled by the airline once the site is handed over to the airline

(iv) how the mortal remains of the deceased and their personal property is handled

(v) how the evidence is preserved and handled till handed over to the investigators

(vi) what assistance is to be provided to the investigators an how.

(vii) How after the approval to move the wreckage is received, the same is removed and disposed-off appropriately.

Most airlines subcontract items (iii), (iv), (v) and (vii) to emergency service providers who have specialists amongst them and can get this done efficiently.

i) News media

The airline always gets the media attention. The crisis response team of the airline is in charge of handling the media. In the pre-social media era, crisis communication was still rooted in the concept of the "golden-hour" – the notional period in which the airline crisis management team would have time to activate, meet, confirm information and determine the initial priorities and action steps and issue a brief "holding statement" to the medial via FAX or PR Newswire. However, now since social media has made everyone a "citizen journalist", an organisation needs to be ready for all eventualities. The same is illustrated in the pictures given below (Courtesy Eric MacInnes, Kenyon International, Crisis Communication Workshop 2019, GoAir)

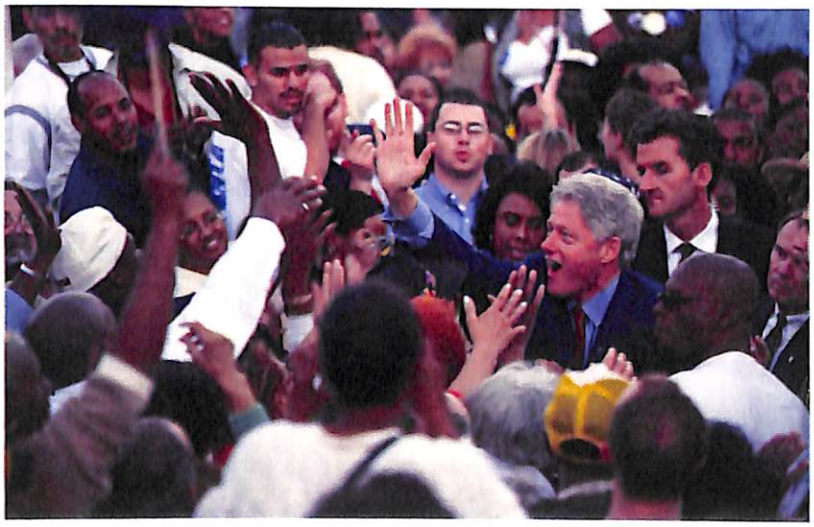

Figure 1 - Pre-social media era

Figure 2 - Current situation with citizen journalists

j) Formal investigations

After an accident, there may be a formal investigation that is conducted by the aircraft accident investigation board of the country where the accident has occurred. The ERP should list the personnel who will interface with the investigator and the responsbilities of the staff.

Further, the airline may order an internal safety investigation in parallel to the formal investigation.

k) Family assistance

The ERP should include guidance on how the airline will assist the crisis victims or organisations and may include:

- The law and regulations of the country with regard to provision of assistance
- Travel and accommodation for next of kin to visit the crisis site and the care and welfare centre (CWC)
- Designate a person as the coordinator and others as the point of contacts for the families.
- Method of provision of updated information to the next of kin/ survivors prior to release of information to the media
- Provisions of temporary assistance to the victims or customers.

l) Post occurrence review

The ERP must also include responsibilities and methods laid down for key personnel, who will record all lessons learnt and carry out a debrief. The same becomes a learning to the crisis management planning team who can improve the ERP with these inputs.

Finally, an ERP is just intent and may never be actually put into use under actual conditions. Therefore training and regular drill are advised to find deficiencies and correct them prior to an actual event.

4.2 Country Specific Requirements for ERP

A) United Arab Emirates

The UAE GCAA[6] (www.gcaa.gov.ae) in its CAR Part X – on safety management system, in para 2.1.4 and further in Appendix 5 covers the state requirements of the ERP. The requirements are the same as in the ICAO DOC9859.

B) Oman

The PACA[7] (https://www.paca.gov.om/) in its CAR 100 effective 20th Feb 2020 – on safety management system, in para 100.125 and further in Appendix 4 covers the state requirements of the ERP. The requirements are the same as in the ICAO DOC 9859.

C) KUWAIT

The DGCA (https://www.dgca.gov.kw/) in its KCAR Issue 4, Rev 3 effective 20th Feb 2020 – on safety management system, in para 1.4 covers the state requirements of the ERP. The requirements are the same as in the ICAO Doc 9859.

D) Thailand

The CAAT[8] (https://www.caat.or.th/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/09_GM_SMS-CAAT.pdf) in its SMS guidance material Rev 1 effective 19th Sep 2016 – on safety management system, in page 16 and 62 covers the state requirements of the ERP. The requirements are the same as in the ICAO Doc 9859.

[6] General Civil Aviation Authority
[7] Public Authority for Civil Aviation
[8] Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand

E) Maldives

The DGCA (https://www.caa.gov.mv) in its CAR Part 21 refers to Air Safety Circular ASC-002 03rd Dec 2009 – on safety management system, in para 6.4 covers the state requirements of the ERP. The requirements are the same as in the ICAO Doc 9859.

4.3 Results of questionnaire

There were two responses received (Indigo and GoAir) out of the three that were sent out. The sample questionnaire used is attached as Appendix

Both the organisations have an ERP in place and functions under the Flight Safety team. On the question of how does one prepare for crisis situations, the common answer was continuous training and practice via mock exercises. In the words of the DGM ERP in GoAir – Ms Monica Shetty "preparation is the key".

When the question of challenges within ERP came up, the response from GoAir was "optimism bias" – where stakeholders believe that accidents don't happen to us. Whereas as per Col. Shivaji Ghosh, Head of ERP at Indigo, it was coordination with different organisations and the lack of preparedness in many airports. Another issue pointed out by the DGM ERP at GoAir, was considering emergency response akin to insurance, something that you would never use but still require a dedicated team like a premium.

The next important question was related to trainings staff on ERP. It emerged that there were many different types of trainings, which are focussed on the individual's role in the time of a crisis. The frontline staff at the station get the airport response training, the management staff get the crisis communications training and the crisis management centre training. Then the staff, who is part of the go-team get training on their roles in the team and the family assistance or care team volunteers get training on handling friends, relatives and survivors.

Regarding testing of emergency plans, Indigo tests it using bi-annual exercises and audits. Whereas in GoAir a quarterly table top and an annual mock exercise. Both airlines confirmed that they had an emergency crisis plan.

On the question of when is a crisis really over, as per Col. Ghosh certain parts of the crisis can carry on for months or years, particularly those regarding the payment of compensation and litigation. And one can say that the crisis is over when operations are back to normal or near normal, when the FAC[9] has closed down, the affected station has re-commenced functioning again and when the media interest has subsided. Ms Monica adds that when passengers come back to you showing the trust and the negative publicity has turned positive you are on your phase to recovery.

4.4 Information from Kenyon International

In order to get more insight into the emergency organisation at times of crisis, I referred the website of Kenyon International (https://www.kenyoninternational.com/). Kenyon International Emergency Services (Kenyon) is the world's leading full-service disaster management company. Since 1906, Kenyon has provided the private and public sector with specialized support during incidents. Kenyon is not restricted by geography or scale and will work in any international environment for as long as required.

The crisis management centre function as given by them is reproduced below:

[9] Family Assistance Centre

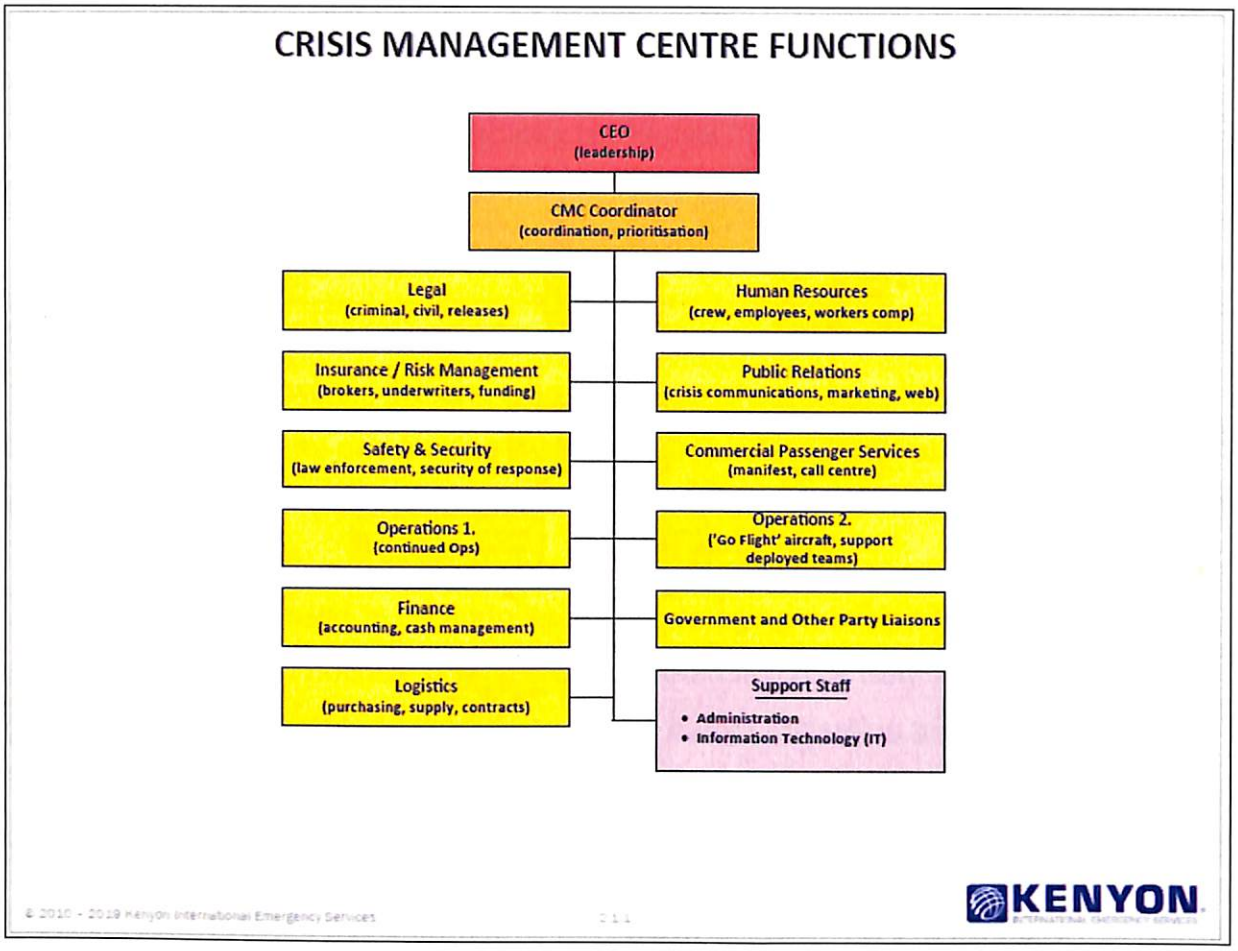

Figure 3: Crisis Management Centre - Kenyon

The crisis is controlled from the CMC. The other centres that come up include the CWC, LICC, FRRC etc.

Data from GoAir indicates that the following teams come/ set up in a crisis:

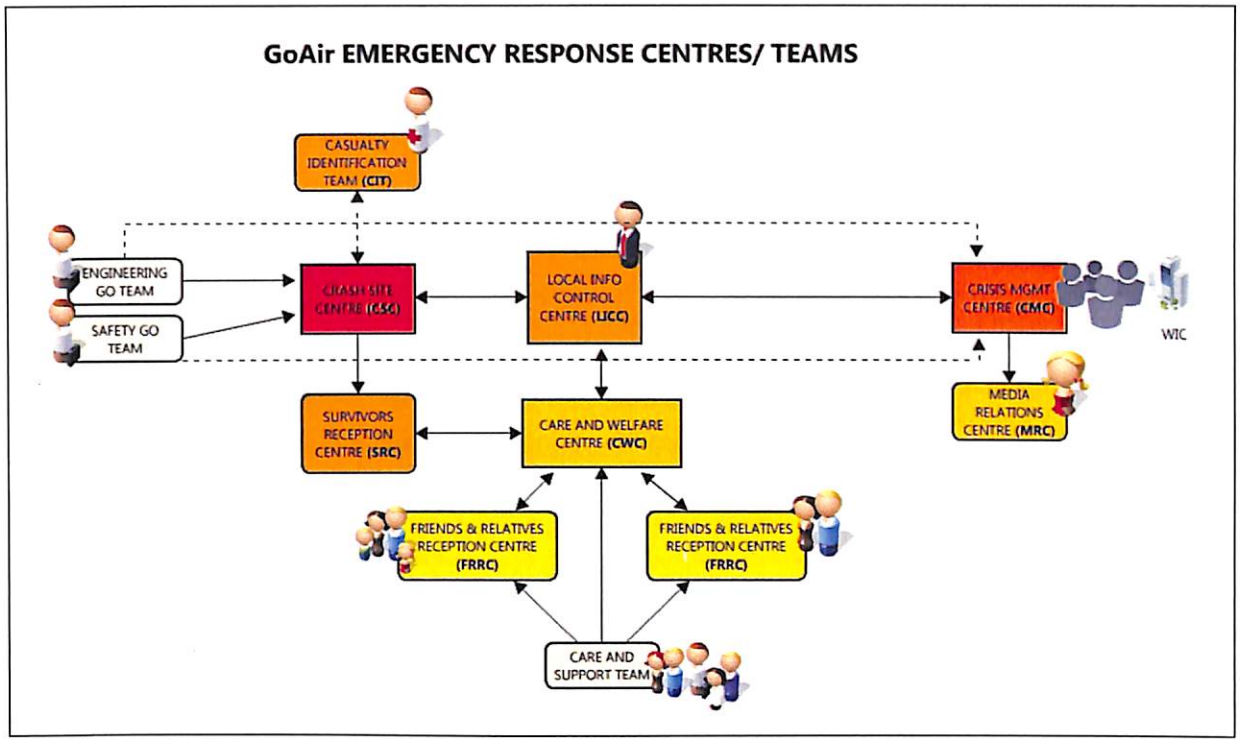

Figure 4: Emergency Centres that are set up

The above diagram is the same as per other airlines and Kenyon standards. The individual teams has further breakdowns in terms of members and duties, but the same is outside the scope of this dissertation.

5 Chapter 5 – Analysis

5.1 Crisis

Organizations often face periods of crises, some of which can be very severe and devastating, a crisis may appear suddenly or through a series of small steps that contribute to it. But when it occurs it has to be handled very carefully. Ironically, crises are generally handled highly inappropriately, and the real issues underlying them and their causal roots often do not come to the fore (Peter Ruff and Khalid Aziz 2003).

Charles Hermann (1963) argues that crisis includes three fundamental conditions: (1) Threatens high priority values of the organization goals (2) presents a restricted amount of time in which a decision can be made, and (3) is unexpected or unanticipated by the organisation (p64).

The response to the crisis situation needs to be immediate and effective, any delays in the response would accelerate harm to the organisation. Organisational crisis

brings to the fore various changes and instability in the system. During a crisis, it has been noted that manager's ability to gather and process data is hampered and the chances of making well-reasoned choices is reduced. Therefore crisis leadership plays an important role in a crisis situation.

5.2 Crisis Management

Managing the crisis is easier said than done. The companies that have handled their crisis situation well is the one who have flourished even after the crisis. An organisation if seen as one lacking leadership or plans and not able to rise to the occasion is not one where people would like to fly with or let their family fly.

Some aspects that need to be addressed for managing a crisis are:

a) Identification and notification – a crisis or potential crisis may arise from anywhere and its prompt identification and early notification to the respective channels is of paramount importance.
b) Preliminary assessment – the officer receiving the notification should check the same for authenticity and make the preliminary asessment and carry out steps as in the ERP
c) Leadership – all the duties, responsibilities and accountabilities of the personnel should be laid down along with the structure of the new 'crisis organisation' and chain of command.

5.3 Developing an emergency response plan

The earliest reference to an emergency plan can be found in the bible "*make for yourself an ark out of wood of a resinous tree. You will make compartments in the ark and you must cover it inside with tar*"

Genesis 16: 14

In this times of instant gratification, driven by technological advances, people expect to have things delivered instantly to them. Within moments of a disaster, the news hungry journalists swing into action, supported by a corporation that needs "breaking news". To take this a step ahead, the social media 'citizen journalist' wants to capture everything first and post it rather than try and help someone – as numerous examples have been seen. Thus with changing times the airline emergency response plan needs to cover all bases in the planning

stage, have strategic training for staff and exercises to keep them ready and on their toes at all times.

An aircraft accident is very rare and only a handful of safety personnel have had the experience of being a part of one. Also, in the unlikely event of an emergency, just having the emergency response manual is not enough, everyone needs to know what's their role is. Therefore, familiarisation with the issues that come after an accident is a good idea and thus table-top drills and exercises are good means for the same. Without the training it won't take much time for the crisis to become a catastrophe.

The emergency response plan should contain the steps to deal with the aftermath of a crisis especially –

i) Establishing facts
ii) Setting up communication channels
iii) Management of the casualties/ survivors/ fatalities and relatives/ next-of-kin
iv) Handling media
v) Information flow internal and external
vi) Aircraft retrieval
vii) Normal Flight operations
viii) Legal & Insurance issues
ix) Dealing with regulators and investigators
x) Financial issues
xi) Return to normalcy

In emergency response planning, there is no one size that fits all, therefore every airline will have to take the main points and make it suit them as per their structure and operations. The same is the reason, ICAO in its DOC9859 lays down the framework for the ERP and each regulator has the similar requirement. This just gives pointers and the airline is expected to have SOPs in place to adhere to each point therein.

6 Chapter 6 – Interpretation of Results

6.1 Interpretation of Results

In the end this comes down to all airline taking the ICAO framework and adapting it to their style of operations. Sharing of lessons learnt by an airline during its exercises is a great way to check the plan for any gaps and fill it in. Also, the learnings from any real incident when shared by the concerned airline is also a great learning experience. Case in point is the ERP Seminar conducted by Jet Airways in 2018 wherein presenters from various airlines like Jet Airways, Air India Express and Malaysian Airlines spoke of their crisis situations and how they came out of it and what were the challenges that they faced and what were the learning that came out of it. It is though forums like that that safety cases can be shared for the greater good.

6.2 Meeting our objectives

We had started out with six prime objectives that we needed to answer. We will attempt to answer each of them now:

1 Research the ERP requirements/ regulations of India and the countries into which Go Airlines (India) Ltd (GoAir) operates.

It was seen that the regulations of India and the countries that it operates to are primarily the same and as per ICAO DOC9859. This just gives us the framework and each airline is expected to cover all the points as best suited to their operations

2 Identify the personnel requiring training

After discussion with the DGM ERP of GoAir and with inputs from the in-charge of ERP at Indigo, the main people who need training are the frontline staff at the stations, followed by the Crisis Management Centre staff who are usually the management level. Other people include the goteam for aircraft recovery, media management and care givers for survivors/ next-of-kin etc.

3 identify the level of training requirements

The training that will be given will be based on the individual's role in the crisis situation. It may as basic as how to handle irate customer's to handling the families of the deceased crew/ passenger to handling the Crisis Management Centre. The training levels are decided by the emergency planner along with the emergency director on a yearly basis and budgets drawn out accordingly.

4 Identify the testing requirements and methodologies for the ERP

The best way to test an ERP is by conducting regular table-top drills and exercises to detect any gaps in the plan so that they can be fixed before the next drill. Each situation tests a different aspect of the plan thus ensuring that all areas are looked at in a cycle.

5 Identifying the emergency organisation of the company

There are various centres that are established during a crisis situation viz-

a) CMC - The nerve-centre for the ERP in any organisation is the Crisis Management Centre. This is headed by the Emergency Director and all head of departments or their alternates are present in the CMC. This group gives strategic direction to handling the crisis to all the other centres that come up.

b) LICC – (Local Information Control Centre): The Local Incident Control Centre is the centre set up at the airline offices at all affected airports to co-ordinate the airlines emergency response for that airport. It will be the nerve centre for local emergency response. It will function in conjunction with the airport Crisis Management Centre but will be distinct from it.

c) FAC – (Family Assistance Cell): The purpose of the Airlines Family Assistance Centre (FAC) is to provide support to family members of accident victims that have decided to visit the accident site after having been in contact with the Passenger Information Centre.

d) SRC – (Survivors Reception Centre): All uninjured (or non-hospitalised) survivors (not including crew) will be transported from Triage (at the crash site) to an initial holding area within the airport (airside). This area is called Survivors Reception Centre. It provides accommodation and humanitarian support to uninjured (or non-hospitalised) survivors

e) CRC – (Crew Reception Centre) : All uninjured (or non-hospitalised) crew members will be transported from Triage (at the crash site) to an initial holding area within the airport (airside). This area is called Crew Reception Centre. It provides accommodation and emotional support to uninjured (or

non-hospitalised) crew, and up to such time as they feel comfortable about returning to their own homes.

f) FFRC – (Friends and Families Reception Centre): The FFRC area is to serve as a meeting area for persons awaiting the arrival or departure of a flight at the airport terminal to receive information about the flight and to receive support from the airline involved, after an aircraft accident.

g) MRC – (Media Reception Centre): The Media Centre is a suitable location where members of the media will be briefed by the authorities and from where media releases will be issued

The following image from the GoAir ERP Handbook makes the picture clearer:

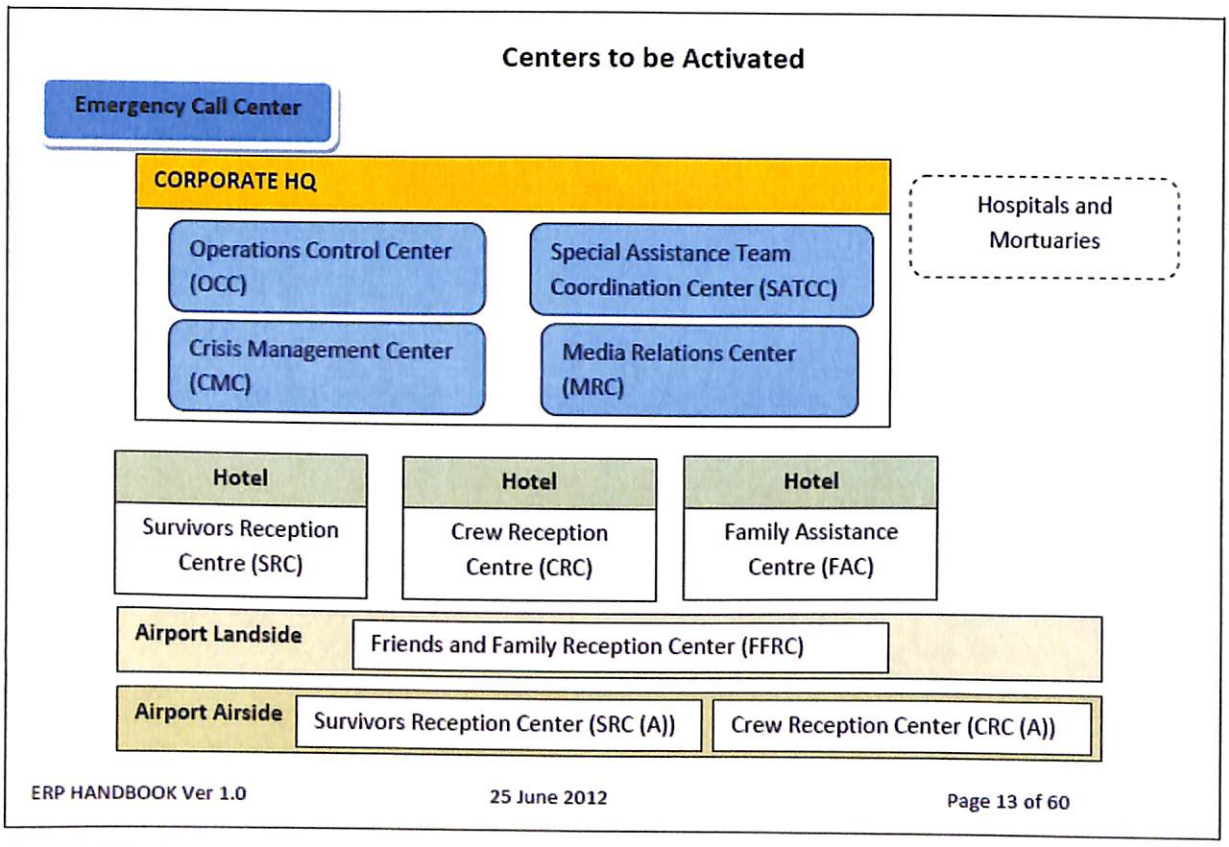

Figure 5: ERP Centres to be activated

6 Identifying the condition and process of return to normalcy

As per both the respondents, the crisis period may last long in case after an accident. The lawsuits, investigations and final settlements may last a while. Till all these have been taken care of and the media has completely stopped

covering the crisis, the crisis is not over. In the final steps the family assistance centre is closed down and the operation resumes as normal. The emergency planning team then reviews all that was done and updates the plan if needed.

7 Chapter 7 – Conclusion and Scope for Future Work

A crisis affects an airline adversely. The way an airline responds to the crisis decides the fate of the airline. This research has led me to believe that the regulator can only provide us a template, and every airline has to mould its emergency response plan around it. Important facets that need to be taken into consideration are early notification, promptly putting into action the well-tested emergency response plan to contain the crisis and resurrect the company working around the crisis and winning the confidence of the public and passengers. This takes hard work, planning and training of staff across the line including media management.

Sharing lessons learnt between airlines is the only way to progress in improving the emergency response plan of an organisation.

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Appendix A

Survey Questionnaire

1. What is your name?
2. Which organisation do you work for?
3. What's your experience in aviation and in ERP? (Years)
4. What's your organisation ER structure?
5. How do you prepare for the crisis situations?
6. Do you have a dedicated ER Team? Why/ why not?
7. What are the most challenging part(s) of the ERP? How do you deal with it/ them?
8. What are the various type of training that you impart to staff with regard to ERP? Who is your target audience?
9. How do you test your plans? How often?
10. Does your organisation have a crisis communication plan?
11. When as per you is a crisis really over and how does an airline move into the recovery stage?