

Crisis Communications 101

Would you know what to do if a reporter and camera crew showed up on your construction site? That was one of the questions Maxine McBride, president of Clockwork Marketing in Jacksonville, Fla., posed while addressing the members of the Northeast Florida Builders Association's Sales and Marketing Council during a crisis communications workshop in June. "The key to good crisis communication is to have a written plan in place before

a crisis occurs," says McBride. Everyone in your organization — from the receptionist through your field superintendents — should know what the plan is and how to implement it, she adds. A crisis can be anything from an accident on site to a disgruntled buyer.

Designate three key people in your firm that employees should contact immediately in case of a crisis, she recommends, beginning with the most senior person in your local division. If

that person is not available, second in line is the marketing person in your company, and third is the senior contact person at your public relations agency. For each of these people, employees should have access to phone numbers for their offices, cell phones and home phones in order to reach them within 30 minutes in a time of crisis. "Remember that most crisis communication does not happen during regular working hours," McBride says.