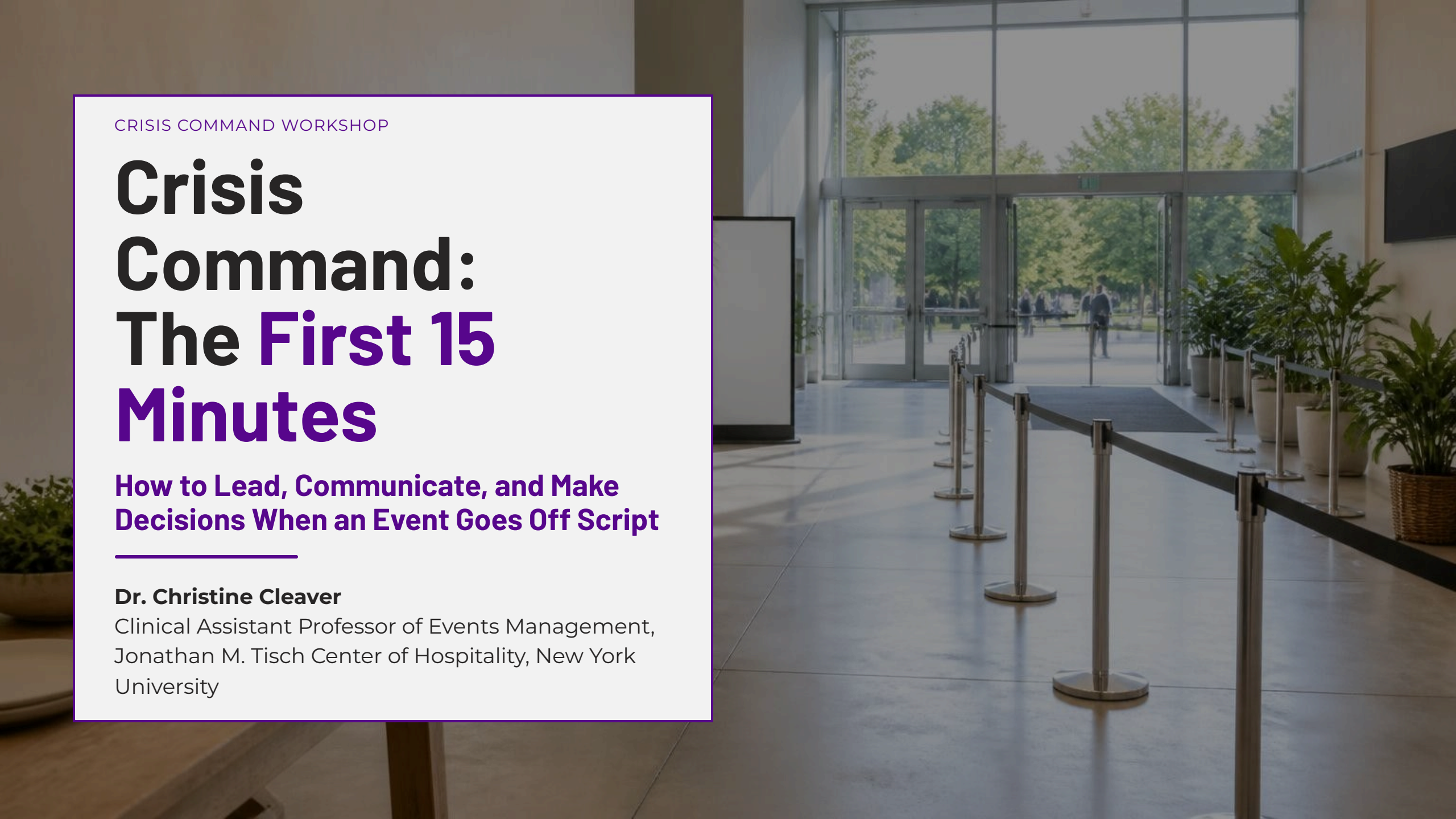
CRISIS COMMAND WORKSHOP

# Crisis Command: The First 15 Minutes

## How to Lead, Communicate, and Make Decisions When an Event Goes Off Script

**Dr. Christine Cleaver**
Clinical Assistant Professor of Events Management, Jonathan M. Tisch Center of Hospitality, New York University



THE COMMAND PROBLEM

# When an Event Goes Off Script

### High stakes, low certainty

Leaders rarely have complete facts, unlimited resources, or time to debate options.

### Decisive window

The first 15 minutes determine whether an incident is contained or rapidly escalates.

### Interactive simulation lab

Step into an unfolding scenario, assume critical roles, and test real-time judgment under pressure.



# Learning Objectives



## Apply SCOPE

Assess emerging incidents and establish immediate 15-minute priorities.



## Establish Command

Assign roles, authority, and communication paths with incomplete data.



## Draft Clear Messaging

Build concise internal, attendee, and public updates without sparking panic.



## Evaluate Event Trajectory

Determine whether to continue, pause, modify, or cancel.



## Strengthen Readiness

Identify at least one concrete improvement for your organization's crisis plan.

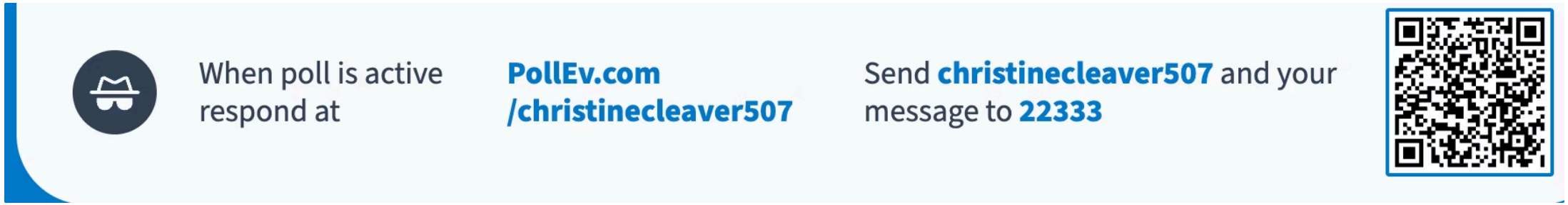
OPENING PULSE

# Your Immediate Instinct

## What would you do first after an incident is reported?

**Share your immediate first move as the situation breaks.**

Observe where group instinct aligns and where gaps appear before protocol kicks in.



THE DECISIVE WINDOW

# The Crucial First 15 Minutes

01

## Safety first

Protect lives before gathering comprehensive reports.

02

## Facts over rumors

Anchor your response only in confirmed ground realities.

03

## Command authority

Designate clear leads so directives do not conflict.

04

## Targeted communication

Inform immediate stakeholders without triggering broader panic.

05

## Iterative reassessment

Re-evaluate decisions as new intelligence emerges.

# Five Core Command Priorities

Tasks overlap in dynamic situations; this sequence guides thinking but does not replace venue emergency procedures.

## Safety

Address life safety and activate venue emergency measures immediately.

## Facts

Separate verified data from speculation, bystander reports, and assumptions.

## Authority

Establish unified command and clear operational ownership.

## Communication

Direct urgent instructions to those affected now; prepare updates for others.

## Reassessment

Set strict recurring intervals to revisit choices and operational posture.

COMMAND MODEL

# The SCOPE Framework

01

## Secure People

Address immediate danger and activate emergency or venue protocols.

02

## Confirm Facts

Separate verified information from reports, assumptions, and unknowns.

03

## Organize Response

Name an incident lead, assign operational owners, and establish decision authority.

04

## Prepare Communications

Identify who needs action instructions now vs. who receives updates later.

05

## Evaluate & Reassess

Decide whether to continue, pause, modify, or cancel, with set review windows.

# Simulation Setup: Team Roles & Rules

Assign critical functions using your Crisis Command Team Overview Sheet:

| ROLE | COMMAND RESPONSIBILITY |
|---|---|
| **Incident Commander** | Holds ultimate decision authority and operational tempo. |
| **Operations & Venue Liaison** | Manages physical space, security staff, and crowd movement. |
| **Communications Lead** | Drafts verified internal, attendee, and public statements. |
| **Guest & Client Services** | Tracks attendee welfare, executive stakeholders, and sponsor concerns. |
| **Information / Log Keeper** | Records timeline, verified facts, and pending verification requests. |

**Assign functions before the first scenario release.**



LIVE EXERCISE

# Simulation In Progress

Make decisions as facts, operational constraints, and communication pressure evolve.

SCENARIO RELEASE 1

# Incident at the Entrance

**A loud noise and apparent injury near the exhibition hall entrance. Cause unknown; attendees are moving away.**

## Immediate protective action

How do you control the perimeter and crowd flow?

## Command ownership

Who is dispatched to the scene versus holding the command desk?

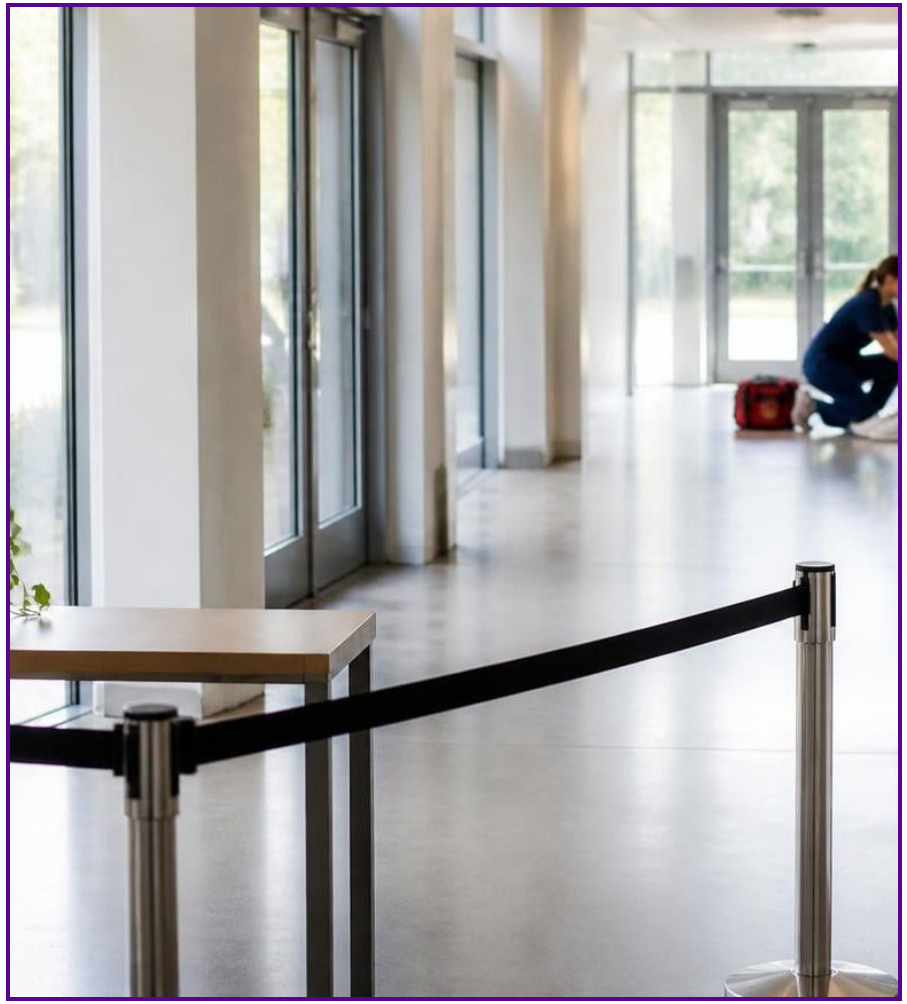
## Verification priority

What exact fact must be confirmed before communicating?



SCENARIO RELEASE 2

# Developing Ground Reality



CONFIRMED

## Security confirms one person is receiving medical attention; entrance is closed.

Update fact log: Record confirmed medical response; isolate vendor speculation as unverified.

Operational containment: Reroute pedestrian traffic away from the closed threshold.

UNVERIFIED

## A vendor suspects a display shifted (unconfirmed).

Role check: Rebalance team assignments as vendor and security reports multiply.

SCENARIO RELEASE 3

# The Digital Dilemma

**An inaccurate photo claim circulates online. Hall opening is five minutes away.**

CRITICAL DECISION

## Continue, pause, modify, or cancel?

Determine whether doors open as scheduled or hold in place.



### Rumor vs. Truth

Address misinformation without amplifying falsehoods.



### Clock pressure

Hall opening is five minutes away.



### Operational posture

Determine whether doors open as scheduled or hold in place.

# Communication Challenge

**Draft your two essential crisis messages under time constraints:**

30-SECOND INTERNAL BRIEFING

## Staff, security, and executives

Direct, factual directives for staff, security, and executives.

WHAT IS VERIFIED | WHAT TO DO NOW

SHORT ATTENDEE NOTIFICATION

## Attendees on site

Calm, actionable instructions for attendees on site.

WHERE TO GO | WHAT TO EXPECT

**Core Standard: Share only verified facts—prevent confusion, panic, and speculation.**

NEW VERIFIED FACT

# The Capacity Crunch

Venue confirmed a display structure shifted near the entrance. Affected zone remains closed. Remaining hall cleared via alternate entrance with capacity reduced to 800 people.

ATTENDEES

**1,200**

ALLOWABLE HALL CAPACITY

**800**

THE PRESSURE

## General session ends in 5 minutes.

Exhibitors demand opening status.

ACTION REQUIRED

Implement overflow holding, phased entry, or revised schedule.

DEBRIEF

# Competing Priorities Under Fire

## Operational friction

Balancing attendee safety, venue capacity, and exhibitor expectations.

## Decision audit

Review the key pivots your team made as conditions evolved.

## Systemic improvement

Identify at least one concrete procedure to update in your organization's crisis manual.

**What decision would you make differently with one more minute of preparation?**

# Session Resources & Next Steps

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## Access the toolkit

Scan the QR code to access simulation slides, role sheets, and the SCOPE toolkit.

## Audit your procedures

Take the SCOPE framework back to audit your team's on-site emergency procedures.

**Secure people. Confirm facts. Organize response. Prepare communications. Evaluate and reassess.**

Scan for the slides and sheets

# Crisis Command Team Overview

You are the response team for a professional conference. Your task is to protect people, make a defensible event decision, and communicate clearly as new information arrives. The facilitator will release facts in stages.

**Event setting**

A 1,200 person conference is underway in a convention center. A general session is about to end, and attendees will soon move into the exhibition hall. Your team has the event schedule and venue contact list, but no complete incident report. The exercise begins when the first report reaches you.

**Assign these roles**

| Role | Responsibility |
|---|---|
| Incident lead | Sets priorities, confirms decision authority, and calls for reassessment. |
| Safety liaison | Coordinates with venue security and medical responders; identifies protective actions. |
| Operations lead | Assesses attendee flow, entrances, program changes, and exhibitor effects. |
| Communications lead | Drafts internal and attendee instructions using confirmed information. |
| Decision recorder | Tracks facts, actions, owners, timestamps, decisions, and reasons. |
| Venue or vendor liaison | Optional sixth role; gathers operational updates from relevant partners. |

**Use SCOPE during the first 15 minutes**

**Secure** people: What needs to stop or change to prevent further harm?

**Confirm** facts: What is verified, reported, or unknown? Who will check?

**Organize** response: Who owns each action and who can decide event status?

**Prepare** communications: Who needs an instruction now, and what can you say accurately?

**Evaluate** and reassess: Continue, pause, modify, or cancel? What would change your call?

**Your deliverables**

- Complete the decision sheet as scenario updates arrive at minutes 0, 5, and 10.
- At the checkpoint, give a 60-second explanation of your event decision and what would change it.
- Write a 30-second internal briefing and a short attendee instruction.
- When new information arrives, revise your decision and messages and document why.
- Exercise ground rules

Act on immediate safety needs while facts are checked. Do not state an unverified cause or injury count as fact. Name an owner and a deadline for each urgent action. Follow venue and emergency authority where applicable. You may request information from the facilitator, who will tell you whether it is available or confirmed.

# Crisis Command Team Decision Sheet

Use this sheet throughout the simulation. Record decisions as information arrives; keep earlier entries visible so your team can explain what changed.

Team _____ Event _____ Incident lead _____ Decision recorder _____

**1 -Facts and immediate priorities**

| Scenario | Verified facts | Reported or unverified | Unknowns to check |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| New Fact | | | |

**Immediate safety action and person responsible**:

_____

**2 -Actions and authority**

| Action to take now | Owner | By when | Result or status |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

**Who can pause or change the event? _____**

**Who must be consulted? _____**

**3- Event decision**

At minute 15: ☐ Continue ☐ Pause ☐ Modify ☐ Cancel

Verified basis for this decision:

_____

What fact could change it? _____

Reassess at: _____

Owner: _____

**4 -Communications**

Internal briefing: What is confirmed, what staff should do, who owns the response, and when you will update them.

_____

_____

Attendee instruction: What attendees need to do now, where to go, and when to expect an update.

_____

_____

**5- New Fact**

New verified fact:

_____

Revised decision: ☐ Continue ☐ Pause ☐ Modify ☐ Cancel

Approver: _____

Who needs the revised instruction?

_____

Decision log: What changed, why, and when?

_____