



Messaging Manual for Camps: Responding to Tragedy Thoughtfully and Reassuringly

Guidance from the American Camp Association on How to Think About Response to Tragedies

Before You Message: Understand the Facts

- Gather accurate, confirmed information about the scope of the event. Avoid speculation, estimates, or projections about the event and who it may affect.
- Determine whether your camp is directly impacted.
- Determine whether camps in your area are directly affected, as this may help shape your response to a shared community.
- This is *not* a crisis for your camp if there is no immediate risk to campers, staff, or your facilities, so avoid alarmist language or implications.
- Stay updated from reliable sources, including state and local emergency agencies.

Acknowledge a Broader Emotional Impact

- Even if your camp is not affected, families may still feel anxious or confused.
- Acknowledge that tragedies anywhere can ripple everywhere, especially in a tight-knit camp community.
- Offer compassion and reassurance: lead with heart and empathy.

Reinforce Focus on Safety and Preparedness

- Reassure families that safety is your highest priority.
- Encourage families to ask questions in a way that affirms your camp's transparency, availability, and values-based approach to trust and safety.
- Highlight any steps you're taking to assess and reassess extreme weather protocols, in-depth staff training, and/or communication systems, as these proactive measures can build confidence.
- *Do not* over-message. One thoughtful, proactive update will often go further than several disjointed reactive notes.
- If your camp is ACA-accredited, emphasize that your safety and emergency preparedness plans are nationally recognized, regularly reviewed, and locally informed.



Reaffirm the Power of Camp

- In difficult times, remind families that camp is a place of connection and resilience.
- Camp provides stability with friendship and emotional growth, where these qualities matter even more in moments of uncertainty.
- Closing statements should contain equal optimism and gratitude for the community you serve.
 - **Example:** *"While our camp has not been impacted by the flooding in Texas, we know events like this can raise concerns for families everywhere. We want to reassure you that your child's safety is, and always will be, our top priority. Our emergency protocols are current and informed by local conditions. We remain committed to honest communication, careful preparation, and creating a safe, enriching environment for every camper."*