



# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

KATHERINE SALDIVAR, MARIA SPEARS AND AJA SANDERS

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## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Dear Executive Team and Employees,

At this time, I would like to communicate the importance of reading and understanding this crisis plan. I hold a sincere belief that the people we place are the foundation of our success. With shared values and an unwavering commitment to creating a culture of service, diversity and community, I believe Virgin America provides an exceptional work environment.

As you may know, Virgin America was born in 2007 out of frustration. As more airlines consolidated and grew larger and more focused on the bottom line, flying in the U.S. became an awful experience. So we began with the goal of making flying good again. Our vision for the future is not only to preserve the high level of customer service we have built, but to build upon this foundation over time. Our goal is to be the premier airline for people living anywhere on the West Coast. To do that, we must be prepared for any and all situations which come our way.

This document is intended to outline a generic crisis communications plan. Thoroughly reading this plan will provide you with the information necessary to effectively respond to crisis and maintain Virgin America's reputation as a leading airline. I believe how we perform in challenging times drives our success. By preparing for crisis, we are ensuring safety for our customers, employees and our organization.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Virgin America.

Sincerely,

David Cush  
President and CEO  
Virgin America Airlines



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To Employees of Virgin America Airlines,

Please note it is essential for each employee to read and study this plan in order for Virgin America operations to continue running smoothly. For this reason, please sign this acknowledgement sheet below after you have read over this plan meticulously. By signing this sheet, you will be acknowledging that you have read and understand the following crisis plan, that you plan to attend the rehearsal dates and that you plan to put this plan into action in the event of a crisis.

Please turn this sheet into your administrator as proof of completion by January 2, 2016. We will be practicing this crisis plan every six months. An email will be sent a week before rehearsals to make sure everyone knows they are only tests. Please do not hesitate to contact our Public Relations Team if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

David Cush  
President and CEO  
Virgin America Airlines

I have carefully read the following emergency plan and believe that I am able to handle the outlined crisis as best as possible.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

This crisis communication plan is intended to be applied to challenging situations you may face throughout your time working with Virgin America. You will need to adjust some things and add your own information, but it is a good document to consider if and when you are in the midst of a crisis and need help.

A crisis is any situation that threatens the integrity or reputation of the company, usually brought on by adverse or negative media attention. These situations can be any kind of legal dispute, theft, accident, fire, flood or manmade disaster that could be attributed to the company. It can also be a situation where in the eyes of the media or general public our company did not react to one of the above situations in an appropriate manner. This definition is not all encompassing, but is designed to give you an idea of the types of situations where you will need to follow this plan.

The objectives of our crisis communications plan are as follows:

- To minimize the impact of a crisis on operations and target audiences.
- To minimize the amount of time spent focused on the crisis, both internally and by our constituents.
- To regain control of the situation and the conversation as quickly as possible while remaining transparent and honest.

## PRODROMES

The Aviation Industry has been prominent for several decades and therefore has offered Virgin America Airlines several prodromes (warning signs).

- September 11, 2001 poses as the most important and memorable prodrome in the nation's history of hijacking.
- Although statistics prove that it is more likely for a frequent flyer to become president of the United States or to win the lottery, many plane crashes have occurred nationally and globally.
- The Southwest Airlines social media crisis, Summer 2016.
  - Major technology failure caused over 2,000 flight cancelations nationally. Also caused unprecedented customer dissatisfaction and social media uproar.

## THE CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

This is the list of the Crisis Team members that must be contacted immediately if a crisis occurs. The team consists of Virgin America's Executive Staff and Public Relations practitioners. David C. Cush should be the first one to be contacted via satellite phone. He is the President and CEO of the company and is in charge of calling the next person on the list of corporate officers. The list will go on in the order planned below.

- **David Cush, President and CEO**

Cell: 415-555-0912

Work: 877-359-8474 ext. 1120

Home: 628-555-0212

Email: [DCush@virginamerica.com](mailto:DCush@virginamerica.com)

Address: 398 Water Street San Francisco, CA 94108

- **Rachel Bell, VP & Controller**

Cell: 415-555-1236

Work: 877-359-8474 ext. 1121

Home: 628-555-0041

Email: [RBell@virginamerica.com](mailto:RBell@virginamerica.com)

Address: 4124 Hillview Drive San Francisco, CA 94103

- **Abby Lunardini, VP of Branding and Communications**

Cell: 415-555-0123

Work: 877-359-8474 ext. 1122

Home: 628-555-0724

Email: [ALunardini@virginamerica.com](mailto:ALunardini@virginamerica.com)

Address: 1212 Rardin Drive San Francisco, CA San Francisco, CA 94108

- **Christie O’Toole, Manager of Media Relations**

Cell: 415-555-2321

Work: 877-359-8474 ext. 1123

Home: 628-555-0139

Email: [COToole@virginamerica.com](mailto:COToole@virginamerica.com)

Address: 2354 Water Street San Francisco, CA 94105

- **Mark Bianchi, VP of Technical Operations (depending on crisis)**

Cell: 415-555-0256

Work: 877-359-8474 ext. 1124

Home: 628-555-2495

Email: [MBianchi@virginamerica.com](mailto:MBianchi@virginamerica.com)

Address: 2126 Locust View Drive San Francisco, CA 94103

- **Brad Thomann, VP of Flight Operations (depending on crisis)**

Cell: 415-555-2539

Work: 877-359-8474 ext. 1125

Home: 628-555-2141

Email: [BThomann@virginamerica.com](mailto:BThomann@virginamerica.com)

Address: 1504 Wolf Pen Road San Francisco, CA 94105



## CONTACT LOG (Crisis Communications Team)

NAME	TITLE	CELL PHONE	WORK PHONE	HOME PHONE	ADDRESS	EMAIL
David Cush	President, CEO	415-555-0912	877-359-8474 ext. 1120	628-555-0212	398 Water Street, San Francisco, CA 94108	dcush@virginamerica.com
Rachel Bell	VP & Controller	415-555-1236	877-359-8474 ext. 1121	628-555-0041	4124 Hillview Drive San Francisco, CA 94108	rbell@virginamerica.com
Abby Lunardini	VP Branding and Communications	415-555-0123	877-359-8474 ext. 1122	628-555-0724	1212 Rardin Drive San Francisco, CA 94108	alunardini@virginamerica.com
Christie O'Toole	Manager of Media Relations	415-555-2321	877-359-8474 ext. 1123	628-555-0139	2354 Water Street San Francisco, CA 94105	cotoole@virginamerica.com
Mark Bianchi	VP of Technical Operations	415-555-0256	877-359-8474 ext. 1124	628-555-2495	2126 Locust View Drive San Francisco, CA 94103	mbianchi@virginamerica.com
Brad Thomann	VP of Flight Operations	415-555-2539	877-359-8474 ext. 1125	628-555-2141	1504 Wolf Pen Road San Francisco, CA 94105	bthomann@virginamerica.com
Peter V. Neffenger	Transportation Security Administration, Administrator	866-555-3142	866-289-9673	866-555-9021	2097 Bay View Drive San Francisco, CA 94105	pneffenger@ths.dhs.gov
Jeh Johnson	U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Secretary	202-555-8971	202-282-8000	202-555-4582	8756 Coil Way San Francisco, CA 94108	jjohnson@dhs.gov
Michael Huerta	Federal Aviation Administration, Administrator	866-555-8457	866-835-5322	866-555-1304	9677 Golden Gate Circle San Francisco, CA 94108	mhuerta@faa.gov

## POSITIONING

Virgin America will always take full responsibility for all issues and crisis that are within our control. We'll make every effort to alleviate, mitigate and empathize with customers, investors and employees. Our mission to make the flying experience fun, innovative and adventurous. VA strives to maintain the integrity of its services and stakeholders.

Virgin America takes pride in maintaining an open and honest relationship with all stakeholders; especially our customers. VA will always be transparent about information and communications within our legal compass. We'll make every effort to maintain an open dialogue with stakeholders. We openly welcome constructive feedback on our services - it continues to challenge us and make the flying experience everything we strive it to be.

- Virgin America Airlines maintains this position in all crisis events.

## ORGANIZATION'S KEY MESSAGES

Key messages have to be brief, concise and detailed and have to show Virgin America's attitude regarding the crisis at hand. They must be repeated several times to key publics and must include the most important information.

- Safety: We must stress our commitment to the safety of our customers, colleagues and other stakeholders.
- Deep care for customers and employees: We must demonstrate a feeling of community when addressing crises dealing with customers and colleagues.
- Mortification: We must accept responsibility for our actions when we are wrong and ask for forgiveness.
- Compensation: We must reimburse victims of crises.
- Corrective action: We must repair damage caused by our actions and promise to prevent the recurrence of wrongful actions.

## SPOKESPERSON

In the event of a crisis, it is essential for our spokesperson to know about all factors that can affect the crisis. This person will be assisted by Abby Lunardini, VP of Branding and Communications, as well as Christie O'Toole, Manager of Media Relations. If expert opinion is needed these officials should call on professionals rather than trying to answer questions they do not know and potentially losing credibility. Abby Lunardini will be with spokespeople at all times to guarantee effective communication. Spokespeople should utilize appropriate language, display polite manners and wear professional attire.

- David C. Cush, President and CEO, is the official spokesperson for Virgin America Airlines

## SPOKESPEOPLE FOR RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

The following list contains spokespeople for related organizations. If a crisis occurs, they may be contacted.

- **Transportation Security Administration (TSA)**

Peter V. Neffenger, Administrator

Cell: 866-555-3142

Work: 866-289-9673

Home: 866-555-9021

Email: [PNeffenger@tsa.dhs.gov](mailto:PNeffenger@tsa.dhs.gov)

- **United States Department of Homeland Security**

Jeh Johnson, Secretary

Cell: 202-555-8971

Work: 202-282-8000

Home: 202-555-4582

Email: [JJohnson@dhs.gov](mailto:JJohnson@dhs.gov)

- **Federal Aviation Administration**

Michael Huerta, Administrator

Cell: 866-555-8457

Work: 866-835-5322

Home: 866-555-1304

Email: [MHuerta@faa.org](mailto:MHuerta@faa.org)

# LIST OF EMERGENCY PERSONNEL AND LOCAL OFFICIALS

The following list contains the Emergency personnel and political officials to be contacted in the event of a crisis. They are experts in management of real life crises:

- **New York Police Department**  
Carlos M. Gomez, Chief of Department  
Cell: 718-555-0098  
Work: 718-946-3311  
Home: 718-555-7890  
Email: [CGomez@NYPD.org](mailto:CGomez@NYPD.org)
- **New York Fire Department**  
James E. Leonard, Chief of Department  
Cell: 718-555-0067  
Work: 718-999-2000  
Home: 718-555-4356  
Email: [JLeonard@NYFD.org](mailto:JLeonard@NYFD.org)
- **Port Authority of New York and New Jersey**  
Patrick J. Foye, Executive Director  
Cell: 212-555-4546  
Work: 212-435-7000  
Home: 212-555-3242  
Email: [PFoye@NYNJPA.org](mailto:PFoye@NYNJPA.org)
- **Los Angeles Police Department**  
Charlie Beck, Chief of Department  
Cell: 310-555-9021

Work: 877-275-5273

Home: 310-555-0091

Email: [CBeck@LAPD.org](mailto:CBeck@LAPD.org)

- **Los Angeles Fire Department**

Ralph M. Terrazas, Chief of Department

Cell: 213-555-6789

Work: 213-978-3800

Home: 213-555-0054

Email: [RTerrazas@LAFD.org](mailto:RTerrazas@LAFD.org)

- **Los Angeles Port Authority**

Gene Seroka, Executive Director

Cell: 310-555-4543

Work: 310-732-3508

Home: 310-555-6092

Email: [GSeroka@LAPort.org](mailto:GSeroka@LAPort.org)

- **San Francisco Police Department**

Toney Chaplin, Chief of Department

Cell: 415-555-6902

Work: 415-553-0123

Home: 415-555-0082

Email: [TChaplin@SFPD.org](mailto:TChaplin@SFPD.org)

- **San Francisco Fire Department**

Joanne Hayes-White, Chief of Department

Cell: 415-555-0234

Work: 415-558-3200

Home: 415-555-1321

Email: [JWhite@SFFD.org](mailto:JWhite@SFFD.org)

- **San Francisco Port Authority**

Elaine Forbes, Executive Director

Cell: 415-555-2213

Work: 415-495-4911

Home: 415-555-7659

Email: [EForbes@SFPort.org](mailto:EForbes@SFPort.org)

## MEDIA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

During a crisis, it is important that media only contact one person. This will ensure messaging is consistent, reliable and factual. Depending on the magnitude of the crisis it is very likely that VA will then assign two POCs (Points of Contact). In that case, VA will not publish statements until the POCs establish a clear understanding of what the main message will be. This can only take place after a meeting either over the phone or in person. It is important this meeting happens swiftly, thoroughly and frequently - depending on the magnitude of the crisis.

- POC #1 - Abby Lunardini, VP of Branding and Communications
- POC #2 - Christie O'Toole, Manager of Media Relations

POCs will be responsive to media inquiries. Information that is either unknown or unavailable will be followed up in a timely manner.

- “No Comment” is *absolutely* not an acceptable response to media inquiries from any Virgin America Representative.

All spokespersons will undergo media training on a quarterly basis.

- Depending on the crisis, designated spokesperson(s) will media train a minimum of 24 hours prior to airing a statement via press conference and/or broadcasted interview.

A media trained communications professional (i.e. Abby Lunardini and/or Christie O'Toole) will be physically present at all media events.



## LIST OF KEY MEDIA

- Major Media Outlets
  - New York Times
  - LA Times
  - Wall Street Journal
  - Daily Mail
- Local Media (Depending on Crisis)
  - San Francisco Chronicle
  - San Francisco Examiner
  -
- All major broadcasters
  - ABC
  - NBC
  - CNN

## HANDLING MEDIA INTERVIEWS

It is crucial to keep in mind that the media sometimes ask trick questions in order to reduce the credibility of the organization. In order to successfully answer these kinds of questions it is important to be aware and prepared for them. Only spokespeople designated in this plan should address the media. For these people, it is important to remember to be prepared and stay calm. When addressing the media, you should never lie, speculate about the crisis or become defensive. These samples provide effective answers to possible trick questions.

**Q: What will be the cost of implementing an extra step in the company's safety procedures?**

A: At this time, we do not have the exact number figure of the cost for extra safety procedures, however we here at Virgin America will spare no expense when it comes to the safety of all our valued and loyal customers and staff who we view as part of our Virgin America family.

**Q: How did the crisis start? What exactly was the mistake?**

A: (Insert Crisis) occurred at/when (insert date or time of occurrence)

**Q: Can you disclose the names of workers involved in the cause of the crisis?**

A: Due to the sensitivity of this issue, we are respecting the privacy of our valued employees who are a part of the Virgin America family, and their families by not disclosing the names of those involved in this incident.

**Q: Are you going to cover customers' medical expenses?**

A: Yes, we are absolutely going to cover the cost of these customers' medical expenses, we at Virgin America take responsibility for this incident and would like in any way possible to help those affected in this hard time.

**Q: How did the crisis affect your relationship with stakeholders?**

A: Case by case basis

## Key Publics

- Virgin America Customers
- Virgin America Employees
- Executive Team
- Board of Directors
- Corporate Officers
- Shareholders
- Media
- Competitors
- Government Officials
- Public Officials
- Surrounding Communities
- Community Leaders
- Financial Partners
- Legal Representatives
- Union Officials

# Notifying Publics

## Website

All information about the crisis will be posted and constantly updated on Virgin America's News and Updates website. The link to the website is available below:

- [www.virginamerica.com/cms/news](http://www.virginamerica.com/cms/news)

## Blogs and social media

Virgin America's blog and social media platforms are great outlets for communicating with our key publics. The links and handles for the company blog and social media sites are as follows:

- Virgin America Blog  
[Blog.virginamerica.com](http://Blog.virginamerica.com)
- Facebook  
[www.facebook.com/VirginAmerica](http://www.facebook.com/VirginAmerica)
- Twitter  
@VirginAmerica
- Instagram  
@VirginAmerica

## List of related Internet URLs

Information about the crisis may also be posted on the websites of related organizations. Some organizations to consider are listed below:

- Transportation Services Authority

[www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)

- United States Department of Homeland Security

[www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov)

- Federal Aviation Administration

[www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov)

## Crisis Training & Dates

This crisis communication plan will be practiced every six months. The dates for the next five years are recorded below. Since this plan will be reevaluated in 5 years, the dates only include the next five years.

### **2017**

- Tuesday, February 7
- Tuesday, August 1

### **2018**

- Tuesday, February 6
- Tuesday, August 7

### **2019**

- Tuesday, February 5
- Tuesday, August 6

### **2020**

- Tuesday, February 4
- Tuesday, August 4

### **2021**

- Tuesday, February 2
- Tuesday, August 3

# BASIS EMERGENCY PLAN

## Crisis Communications Control Center

- In the event that a crisis should dismantle administrative buildings and there needs to be centralized, in-person meetings, the Crisis Communications Team shall meet at the Virgin America OCC, the Operations Control Center in Burlingame, CA. All established crisis responders have a key to this building and have permission to use the facilities as necessary.
  - 555 Airport Blvd #500, Burlingame, CA 94010
  - (650) 762-7000
- Please contact the Director of Virgin America OCC, Steve Forte for more information:



Email: [steve.forte@virginamerica.com](mailto:steve.forte@virginamerica.com)

Phone: 650-555-1234

## Equipment and Supplies

All equipment and supplies required during a crisis scenario are stored in OCC's storages and closets. The list of pre-gathered materials which can be found is provided below.

- Satellite Phones
- Walkie Talkies
- Mobile hot spots
- Aviation evacuation equipment
  - parachutes
  - life jackets
  - other flotation devices
  - inflatable life boat
  - ejection seats
- Fire Distinguisher
- First Aid Kit
- Fire proof blankets
- Podium
- Microphone
- AV Equipment
- Television
- Radio
- Printer
- Fax Machine
- Portable Tables and Chairs



## TOP THREE RISKS IDENTIFIED

### Hijacking: probability 3, damage 4½

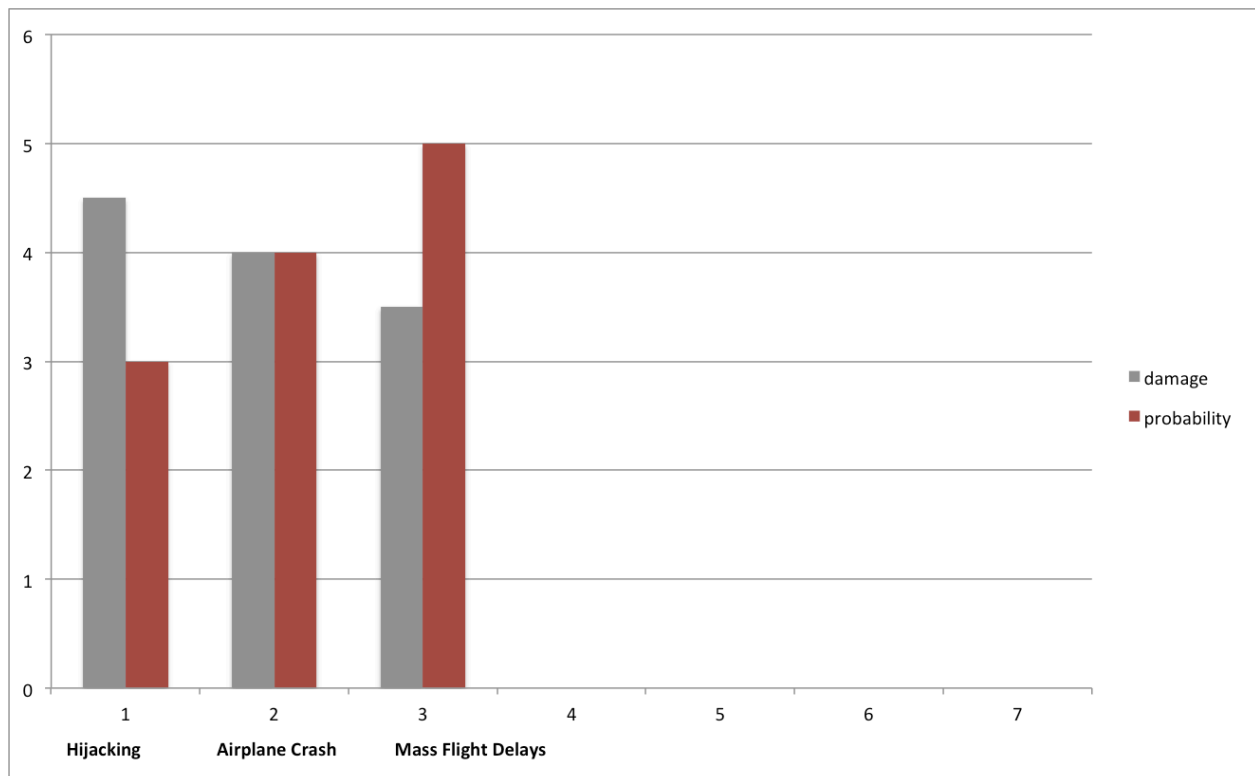
- Hijacking dates back as early as the 1930's in countries like Brazil, Romania and Cuba. The risk of casualties outweighs any other risk the airline could ever face.

### Mass Flight Delays: probability 5, damage 4

- Flight cancelations are a large threat due to the potential revenue loss, trust in the company and future customers.

### Airplane Crash: probability 4, damage 4

- Casualties are also the largest threat here to the airline, even though they are less common. Although, a crash is a rare occurrence - and most often in smaller private planes - it does happen often enough to where there should be a thorough crisis plan in the case it happens.



## ACTION STEPS IN DEALING WITH A CRISIS

The following is an action plan for a crisis— a series of steps that will help you mobilize and respond to difficult situations. It breaks the crisis scenario down into a general list of action steps and a specific set of steps to take in the event of our top three crises identified.

### **During any crisis scenario:**

1. Make sure the PR manager is aware of the crisis.
2. Notify the crisis team.
3. Activate the crisis communications control center if needed.
4. Create a holding statement.
5. Gather as many facts as possible about the crisis.
6. Create a media statement and news release as soon as you have available and accurate facts.
7. Communicate with audiences through social media.
8. Provide regular updates to target audiences.
9. Media train the spokesperson to ensure he or she is prepared to speak to the public.
10. Determine if a press conference is necessary.

### **In the event of an aircraft hijacking:**

1. Maintain communication with flight staff and pilots if possible.
2. Make sure local authorities are notified and have begun to assist in the situation.
3. Provide constant updates on social media.
4. Establish a toll free line for families and friends of possible passengers to call for further information.
5. Develop a Q & A for a press conference.
6. Hold press conference.

**In the event of mass flight cancellations:**

1. Reach out to impacted customers to let them know what resources are available.
  - a. Call center's number so travelers can manually access their flight reservation.
  - b. Full refund for canceled flights.
  - c. No-cost reservation change.
  - d. Hotel accommodations for extended delays.
  - e. \$250 voucher for future reservation.
2. Prepare a media statement that explains what happened, who's responsible and a sincere apology to customers and crewmembers.
3. Answer any media inquiries with thorough and accurate information.
4. Post all communications on Virgin America website.
  - a. Include full press release, links to resources and media contact information.

**In the event of an airplane crash:**

1. Make sure local authorities are notified and have begun to assist in the situation.
2. Keep all affected publics up-to-date on information.
3. Release a statement sympathizing with families and friends of passengers.
4. Establish a toll free line for families and friends of possible passengers to call for further information.
5. Develop a Q & A for a press conference.
6. Hold press conference.

# AIRCRAFT HIJACKING

## Holding Statement and Media Statement Templates



### **Holding statement template**

On (insert date), a Virgin America official declared that flight (###) heading from (Destination 1) to (Destination 2) was hijacked by a passenger on board. The situation is ongoing and we do not have any more information at this time.

We will update you with any news as it becomes available. For more information, please visit [www.virginamerica.com](http://www.virginamerica.com) or our twitter @VirginAmerica.

### **Media statement template**

We regret to inform you that on (insert date), Virgin America flight (###) heading from (Destination 1) to (Destination 2) was hijacked. At approximately (XXX), a passenger onboard the flight rose from (his/her) seat and said (he/she) was taking control of the aircraft. The aircraft had (###) passengers onboard, in addition to (###) crew members. The hijacker claimed to have a (name device) on board and demanded to be flown to (Destination) before cabin crew members and other passengers attempted to subdue (him/her). The pilots communicated the situation to air traffic control and proceeded to land at (Destination) at approximately (XXX). Authorities were awaiting the aircraft's landing and the hijacker was arrested. Unfortunately, both passengers and crew members were reported injured, but we do not have any more details regarding the extent of injuries at this time. A federal investigation is underway and Virgin America is fully cooperating with authorities to figure out how this took place. We assure you our airline is doing everything possible to ensure the safety of our staff and passengers.

More information can be found by visiting our website at [www.virginamerica.com](http://www.virginamerica.com) or calling our customer service number at [1 \(877\) 359-8474](tel:18773598474). We thank you for your patience and cooperation throughout this time.

# AIRCRAFT HIJACKING

## Press Release Template



**Press release template:**

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Christie O'toole  
Phone: (650) 219 - 5159  
Email: [christie.otoole@virginamerica.com](mailto:christie.otoole@virginamerica.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Virgin America flight (###)**

Virgin America can now provide further details on the hijacking incident involving flight (###) traveling from (Destination 1) to (Destination 2) (earlier today/yesterday). The incident occurred at (XXX) while the aircraft was (phase of flight). The aircraft was a (aircraft type).

We regret to inform there are a number of injuries and fatalities among passengers and crew members on board, but we do not yet have further details. An investigation is currently underway to examine the hijacker's motives.

Virgin America Chief Executive XXX said: "All of us at Virgin America are shocked and saddened by the news of this tragic event. Our thoughts and prayers remain with the families and friends of our passengers and colleagues on flight (###)."

The hijacker, XXX, is now in custody. Virgin America and federal authorities have established a toll-free number for those who may have been on board the aircraft and have information regarding details of the hijacking. The number is (###-###-####).

Updated information can be found on Virgin America's website, [www.virginamerica.com](http://www.virginamerica.com) and on twitter @VirginAmerica.

###

### **About Virgin America Airlines:**

*Virgin America is a U.S. owned, controlled and operated airline. It is an entirely separate company from Virgin Atlantic. Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Group is a minority share investor in Virgin America. Launched in August 2007, Virgin America employs over 1,600 people. The airline's base of operations is San Francisco International Airport. Known for its mood-lit cabins, three beautifully designed classes of service and innovative fleetwide amenities — like touch-screen personal entertainment, WiFi and power outlets at every seat, Virgin America has built a loyal following of flyers and earned a host of awards since launching.*

# AIRCRAFT HIJACKING

## Social Media Post Templates



### **Facebook posting**

On (insert date) Virgin America flight (###) flying from (Destination 1) to (Destination 2) was hijacked by a passenger onboard. About (XXX) after the incident commenced, the aircraft landed at (Airport), where the hijacker was arrested. Authorities are investigating the situation to examine (his/her) motives. We are deeply saddened by the news of this incident and our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of our passengers and colleagues. We are working with federal authorities to do everything possible to ensure the safety of our staff and passengers. Thank you for your patience and support during this time. For more information, please visit [www.virginamerica.com](http://www.virginamerica.com).

### **Tweet**

Virgin America has received news of a hijacked aircraft flying from (Destination 1) to (Destination 2). More information will be released as it becomes available.

# AIRCRAFT HIJACKING

## Sample Q & A



### Q&A for press conference

- 1. What are the physical and psychological conditions of the hostages?**
  - a. Virgin America provided medical attention and counseling at the time of the aircraft's landing. Thankfully, most of the passengers on board the aircraft are now back home with friends and family.
- 2. How many casualties were there?**
  - a. We are currently not releasing information on casualties until we have identified all victims and have gotten in contact with their friends and families.
- 3. Is it certain there was only one hijacker on board the aircraft?**
  - a. As of right now, we only know of one hijacker on board the flight. Federal authorities are currently investigating the incident, and anyone with information regarding the hijacker is encouraged to call our toll-free number at (###-###-####).
- 4. What were the hijacker's motives?**
  - a. We do not currently have information on the hijacker's motives. We will release information as it becomes available on our website [www.virginamerica.com](http://www.virginamerica.com).
- 5. How did the airline fail to prevent something like this from happening?**
  - a. It is difficult to see situations like these coming. We, along with airport officials and TSA, do our part to ensure the safety of our passengers and colleagues. These incidents are very rare and unexpected.
- 6. What is the condition of the aircraft?**
  - a. There was no damage done to the aircraft. The pilot and co-pilot were able to land safely at (Destination).
- 7. How long was the aircraft under the hijacker's control?**
  - a. The hijacker had control of the aircraft for approximately (XXX).
- 8. Were there any explosives found on board the aircraft?**
  - a. No, explosives were not found on the aircraft. We do not know if the hijacker said this as a way of scaring passengers and crew, but authorities are looking into the situation and details.



**9. How will these affect flight sales for the airline?**

- a. Our utmost priority at this time is to cooperate with federal authorities on the investigation and to ensure the safety of our passengers and colleagues, not our bottom line.

**10. What does the airline plan to do now?**

- a. Again, we are focusing on the investigation and the safety of our passengers and colleagues at this time. We are working to make sure another incident like this never happens again.



# AIRCRAFT HIJACKING

## Sample Press Conference Script

Thank you all for coming. I am David C. Cush, President and CEO of Virgin America Airlines. With me today are Mr. Brad Thomann, Vice President of Flight Operations and Mr. Peter V. Neffenger, Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration.

Our purpose in holding this briefing today is to provide an update on the incident regarding the hijacking of Virgin America flight (###) on (insert date) and to release safety recommendations for both passengers and colleagues boarding future flights.

The Transportation Security Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board are working together to investigate the series of events that took place on flight (###). The primary goal of this investigation, as should be the case in every investigation, is to determine the cause of the accident and prevent its reoccurrence.

(### days, weeks or months) ago, (###) people lost their lives when flight (###), a (aircraft type), was hijacked by a passenger on board the aircraft. Passengers witnessing the incident said the (man or woman) rose from (his or her) seat and declared (he or she) was taking control of the aircraft. (He or she) claimed to have an explosive on board and demanded to be flown to (destination). Passengers and crew members were able to subdue the hijacker and flight (###) landed safely at (destination) after pilots communicated the situation to air traffic control.

Unfortunately, (###) injuries and (###) fatalities resulted from passengers and crew members taking control of the situation and subduing the hijacker. The hijacker's motives for taking control of flight (###) are still not known, but (he or she) is currently in custody.

Let me tell you briefly where we are in the investigation. We are in the midst of a very disciplined and thorough investigative process:

- Video footage from (airport name) is currently being examined to determine how the passenger was able to get through security without any issue.
- Video footage obtained from passengers on board flight (###) is currently being examined to better understand the events that took place on the aircraft.
- We sent investigators to talk to the family and friends of the hijacker in order to determine (his or her) possible motives.
- We are examining the airline's training practices and will be conducting ground tests of safety situations and flight controls.

We are continuing to investigate incidents reported to Virgin America, the TSA, the NTSB and other organizations that might provide additional information for this investigation. For example, several TSA employees reported witnessing colleagues' poor work habits on the clock. We have examined over 24 hours of video footage to assess problems with airport security. I mention this because it is important the traveling public knows how thoroughly we are looking into this incident and the measures we will be taking to prevent something like this from happening again.

Now let's turn to the safety issue at hand.

During the course of any investigation, the NTSB issues interim safety recommendations when it finds a matter of concern that needs immediate attention, whether or not the investigation itself is complete. Many times, interim safety recommendations address matters that are later

found not to have caused or contributed to the accident. Nevertheless, they often identify safety problems that could cause incidents in the future.

Today, we are issuing two interim safety recommendations. We at Virgin America have worked with the TSA's administrator, Mr. Peter V. Neffenger, to take action regarding these recommendations. First off, our work during the flight (###) investigation has revealed technical problems with security devices at (airport name). We have found faults with the x-ray scanners on the machinery at (airport name), but also at the following airports: (airport names). Our concern is not limited to one location, but is industry wide. We are in the process of contacting manufacturers as we speak.

Second, based on interviews with the pilot community, it appears many pilots do not feel adequately prepared to handle hijacking incidents. After talking to other staff on board flights, we have found they feel the same.

We are asking the Federal Aviation Administration to require pilot and staff training programs that better prepare employees for highly stressful situations. Due to our reliance on strict security regulation and other factors, we have come to believe aircraft hijacking is not very likely. However, the events on (insert date) have proved us wrong.

Pilot education and training is even more critical in light of America's post-September 11th focus on security. Before September 11th, pilots were instructed to comply with terrorist's demands. Now, pilots may have to resort to extreme aircraft movements to disable terrorists. It is important that both pilots and other staff on board our aircrafts feel confident in dealing with these scenarios.

Our recommendations today are not meant to blame any organization or group of people for the incident regarding flight (###), but rather to highlight issues and concerns within our system

and work towards prevention. We all clearly understand these recommendations are about technical troubleshooting and employee education and training- not a question of human error.

To address any concern among the flying public, let me point out once again that we are not leaving any stone unturned throughout the course of this investigation. Our purpose is not to create more concern and stress, but rather to notify our employees, the public and other individuals about what we have learned so far. Safety is our greatest concern when it comes to dealing with this situation. These issues require immediate awareness and attention to ultimately prevent another incident like this from happening.

I will now ask Brad Thomann to discuss some of the more technical aspects of the NTSB's recommendations today, and then we will take a few questions. We have copies of our statements regarding the incident, our press release and other company information here in the room, as well as on our website. Thank you.

# MASS FLIGHT CANCELLATIONS

## Holding Statement and Media Statement Templates



### **Holding statement template**

Due to severe weather conditions in (city, state), Virgin America has canceled (###, number of flights) flights. We are doing everything we can to appropriately accommodate our customers. We will update the media when we have more information.

### **Media statement template**

On (insert date) Virgin America canceled (###) flights due to severe weather conditions in (city, state). We apologize for any inconvenience that might have caused to traveling customers. However, due to the severity of the weather, we believe this is the safest option. Virgin America's mission is to make flying good again. We are upholding that mission by refunding and providing hotel accommodations to all affected customers. Thank you for your patience while we work through this challenge. For information about flights and more, visit [VirginAmerica.com](http://VirginAmerica.com).

# MASS FLIGHT CANCELLATIONS

## Press Release Template



**Press release template:**

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Abby Lunardini

Phone: (650) 533-7576

Email: [abby.lunardini@virginamerica.com](mailto:abby.lunardini@virginamerica.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Virgin America Airlines**

On (insert date) Virgin America canceled (###) flights due to severe weather conditions in (city, state). There was a major (insert weather condition) that prevented VA from operating in its full capacity.

David Cush, CEO said, "We sincerely apologize for the inconvenience, however, we believe it is the best decision for safety reasons."

Virgin America's first priority is to provide safe and reliable travel options for our customers. We will not jeopardize that nor take any risks by making any flights airborne in (insert city, state). The length of delays has not yet been determined. However, we are doing everything we can to combat and alleviate any further inconvenience for impacted customers.

Our mission is to make flying good again. We uphold that mission by providing a full refund for canceled flights and hotel accommodations for customers with extended delays. In addition, to ensure customer satisfaction, we are also providing a \$250 voucher toward impacted customers' next reservation

"The right thing to do is make sure we take care of our customers," Rachel Bell, VP and Controller said. Impacted customers have been contacted via the information given during their flight reservation.

If you have not yet been contacted regarding your canceled flight, please call (### - ### - ####). Other cities that have been affected by canceled connected flights include: (insert cities and states).

For more information about flights and Virgin America, please visit, [VirginAmerica.com](http://VirginAmerica.com).

###

#### **About Virgin America Airlines:**

*Virgin America is a U.S. owned, controlled and operated airline. It is an entirely separate company from Virgin Atlantic. Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Group is a minority share investor in Virgin America. Launched in August 2007, Virgin America employs over 1,600 people. The airline's base of operations is San Francisco International Airport. Known for its mood-lit cabins, three beautifully designed classes of service and innovative fleetwide amenities — like touch-screen personal entertainment, WiFi and power outlets at every seat, Virgin America has built a loyal following of flyers and earned a host of awards since launching.*

# MASS FLIGHT CANCELLATIONS

## Social Media Post Templates



### **Facebook Posting**

Today, Virgin America has experienced major delays and cancellations due to severe weather conditions. There have been cancellations in: (insert cities). Our main concern is the safety of our travelers and staff. Virgin America strives to make flying good again, we will continue that effort by appropriately accommodating customers who were impacted. We are very sorry and are working hard to alleviate the problem. Please visit [Virginamerica.com](http://Virginamerica.com) for more information.

### **Tweet**

Today, Virgin America has experienced major delays and cancellations due to severe weather conditions. We are very sorry and are working hard to alleviate the problem. [Virginamerica.com](http://Virginamerica.com).

# MASS FLIGHT CANCELLATIONS

## Sample Q & A



### Q&A for press conference

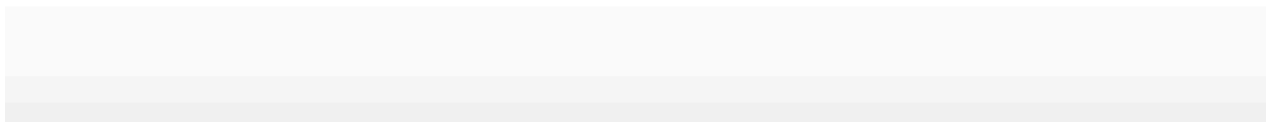
- 1. How long will this delay last?**
  - a. Unfortunately, we don't have control over severe weather conditions. But we're doing everything we can to mitigate. Our number one concern is the safety of our travelers and staff.
- 2. How many flights were canceled?**
  - a. So far we have canceled over (enter amount) flights.
- 3. Why was it necessary to cancel such an enormous amount of flights.**
  - a. The weather conditions caused a major computer system failure. Without access to flight information and/or schedules crew members don't know where they're supposed to be. In turn, flights were canceled because there was no one to operate the plane.
- 4. On average, how long will impacted travelers have to wait for another flight?**
  - a. Delays vary depending on the airport. However, we are offering hotel vouchers for customers with significant delays. In addition, we are providing \$250 vouchers toward impacted customers' next Virgin America reservation.
- 5. Will customers be refunded for canceled flights?**
  - a. Absolutely, impacted customers will receive a full refund for canceled flights as well as the the \$250 voucher.
- 6. What hotels are you teaming with for hotel accommodations?**
  - a. We've teamed up with Marriott and Hilton. They have been awesome, we can't thank them enough for working with us while we solve this problem.
- 7. Many customers must be worried that they will not arrive to their desired destination in time. How are you keeping in contact with these travelers?**
  - a. Our communications team is remaining active on our social media pages. That is the main source of two-way dialogue between our customers. In addition, we are utilizing all of our call centers nationwide for 24-hour support. Customers can call the 800 number listed on their reservation and there will be someone available to direct them to the correct information.





**8. What are you doing to make sure this never happens again?**

- a. Fortunately, Virgin America embraces mistakes - especially those that are unforeseen. It is how we grow and continue to challenge ourselves to be the best airline option for our customers. Severe weather conditions is an unforeseen circumstance that maybe out of our hands in the future. We will always do everything that we can to alleviate inconvenience for our customers.



# MASS FLIGHT CANCELLATIONS

## Sample Press Conference Script

Good morning everyone, my name is Abby Lunardini, I am the Vice President of Branding and Communications for Virgin American Airlines. First, I would like to thank you all for joining us today. Many of you have other duties to attend to so I want to make this as clear and concise as possible. If there are any questions, I will be happy to take them at the end. In addition, our Chief Operating Officer, Steve Forte, is here with me today to answer any questions that might be outside of my scope.

On (insert date) Virgin American Airlines experienced (insert incident) that led to massive and unforeseen delays and cancellations across the nation. We rely heavily on (insert resource) which allows us to operate efficiently and at full capacity for the pleasure of our customers. Our goal is to provide the best service and flight resources to our travelers. We believe the (insert resource) is the best quality and the most efficient resource to serve our customers. However, like many technology, the (insert resource) failed on (insert date) due to (insert cause).

On (insert date) our operations and technology team worked rigorously and tirelessly to revive the (insert resource). After many failed attempts we were able to reboot and successfully operate to our full potential. Since the incident first began on (insert date and time), we were forced to cancel (###) flights. In addition, customers experienced flight delays that extended for as long as (insert

hours and/or days). In response to the incident we have provided full refunds, reservation changes at no cost, hotel accommodations and reservation vouchers to impacted customers. These accommodations in no way replace the loss of time nor peace of mind of impacted travelers. However, we hope that it mitigates a small portion of the inconvenience this incident has caused.

In addition, we have utilized all of our call centers nationwide for 24-hour support to our customers. We realize the (insert incident) has jeopardized our online communication with customers but we want to make sure they can reach us at any time to get information. Customers who are still experiencing delays can reach our centralized call center at 1(800) 555 - 5555. Someone will be able to direct you to the correct information.

Virgin America has never experience delays of this magnitude. The result of this (insert incident) is unprecedented for our airline. We have a team of external investigators who are on staff to make sure this never happens again.

Finally, we accept all responsibility for this incident and we sincerely apologize for inconvenience and upset. We value our customers; please know that you are our number one priority. We will continue to work until every customer is completely satisfied and reaches their final destination.

Thank you again for your patience and continuing to believe and trust in Virgin American Airlines. At this time, I will take any questions you may have.

# AIRPLANE CRASH

## Holding Statement and Media Statement Templates



### Holding Statement Template

On (Insert Date Here), Virgin America Airlines regrets to confirm that flight (###) heading from (Departure City) in route to (Destination City) was involved in an accident at/near (Location of crash). This aircraft was a (model of airplane). At this time there are search and rescue operations underway. It is believed that there were (# of) passengers and (# of) flight crew on board the flight, details are currently being confirmed via passenger manifest. Virgin America Airlines has established/is working to establish a passenger information center, and a toll-free number will be available shortly for family and friends of those who may have been on board the aircraft. Updated information will also become available on the Virgin America Airlines website [www.virginamerica.com](http://www.virginamerica.com) and on Twitter at @VirginAmerica #(flight number). We thank you for your patience and cooperation at this time.

### Media Statement Template

On (insert date) Virgin America can now provide further details on the accident to flight (###) from (departure city) to (destination city) earlier today. The accident occurred at (location of crash) at (time) while the aircraft was (in what phase of flight). The aircraft (airplane type).

We deeply regret to confirm that there are (#) of fatalities among those who were on board. While we do not have further details search and rescue is still in progress and we will continue to release additional information as we receive it.

Virgin America Chief Executive Officer David Cush said: "Everyone here at Virgin America is deeply shocked and saddened by this tragic accident. Our thoughts go out to all of the families and friends of the passengers on board the flight (###)."

According to the passenger manifest there were (#) passengers and (#) crew on board the flight.

Virgin America has established a passenger information center, and a toll-free number that is available for family and friends of those who may have been on board the aircraft. The toll-free number is (###-###-####). For those calling from outside the United States, please call (international country code or alt. number). Updates will be posted on the Virgin America website [www.virginamerica.com](http://www.virginamerica.com) and on Twitter @VirginAmerica #(flight number). We thank you for your patience and cooperation at this time.

# AIRPLANE CRASH

## Press Release Template



**Press release template:**

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Christie O'toole

Phone: (650) 219 - 5159

Email: [christie.otoole@virginamerica.com](mailto:christie.otoole@virginamerica.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Virgin America Airlines

Issued at (insert time and date).

Virgin America can confirm that flight (####) from (departure city) to (destination city) was involved in an incident today at (location) when (nature of incident).

The aircraft was a (airplane type).

The crew of flight (#) (describe actions of crew), in accordance with standard operation procedures. The aircraft went down at/near (location of crash) and there were (# of injuries) to crew members, and (# of fatalities) to crew and passengers on board.

According to the passenger manifest Virgin America flight (####) was carrying (# of passengers) and (# of crew).

This incident will be investigated by (name investigating party) and Virgin America will cooperate fully with said investigation.

Updated information will also be posted on the Virgin America website: [www.virginamerica.com](http://www.virginamerica.com) and on Twitter at [@VirginAmerica](https://twitter.com/VirginAmerica)  #(flight number).

###

### **About Virgin America Airlines:**

*Virgin America is a U.S. owned, controlled and operated airline. It is an entirely separate company from Virgin Atlantic. Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Group is a minority share investor in Virgin America. Launched in August 2007, Virgin America employs over 1,600 people. The airline's base of operations is San Francisco International Airport. Known for its mood-lit cabins, three beautifully designed classes of service and innovative fleetwide amenities — like touch-screen personal entertainment, WiFi and power outlets at every seat, Virgin America has built a loyal following of flyers and earned a host of awards since launching.*

# AIRPLANE CRASH

## Social Media Post Templates



### Facebook Posting

On (insert date) Virgin America flight (###) flying from (departure city) to (destination city) was involved in an accident at/near (location of crash). About (XXX) after the accident commenced, the flight crew followed all proper protocol and there is currently a incident investigation underway for more information regarding the aircraft crash. We are deeply saddened by the news of this incident and our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of our passengers and crew on board this flight. We are currently working will all proper authorities to ensure the safety of our passengers and crew members. Thank you for your patience and support during this time. For more information, please visit [www.virginamerica.com](http://www.virginamerica.com)

### Tweets

1. "@VirginAmerica: (#flight number) alert. We are currently investigating reports of an incident involving flight (###) (origin city) to (destination city). We will provide more information shortly."
2. "@VirginAmerica: (# flight number) alert. Virgin America confirms flight (###) (origin) to (destination) involved in an accident at (location). Response teams are being mobilized. More information to come."
3. "@VirginAmerica: (# flight number) alert. Media Statement - (flight number) accident. Released at (time and date). (Insert link to statement published on company website)"

# AIRPLANE CRASH

## Sample Q & A



### Q & A for press conference

**1. What caused the plane to crash?**

- a. We do not have this information at this time, it is still under investigation at this time as to what caused the plane crash, as soon as we know what caused the accident we will let you know.

**2. What's being done to make sure this doesn't happen again?**

- a. Here at Virgin America safety is always a top priority and we take accidents like these very seriously, pending investigation we will be looking into modifying some of our safety protocol and having all of our fleet retested before it's due to ensure it's up to date on all safety equipment.

**3. Where did the plane crash?**

- a. \*If the location of the crash is known
- b. After thorough investigation Virgin America flight ### was reported to have crashed near/around (location of crash)
- c. \*If location is not known
- d. At this time the accident involving Virgin America flight ### is still being investigated and we do not have the information on the location or whereabouts that the plane had the accident, as soon as this information is released to us we will update the public.

**4. How many people were on the plane?**

- a. At this time the passenger manifest is still under review, as soon as we have an accurate count of all passengers and crew members on board this flight the information will be released.

**5. Are you releasing names of those on board?**

- a. No, we will not be releasing that information at this time, due to the sensitivity of this subject, families of passengers and crew members will be notified, but names will not be released to the public in favor of privacy for families.

**6. Who is being held liable for this plane crash?**

# AIRPLANE CRASH

## Sample Press Conference Script

Thank you all for coming. I am David Cush, I am President and CEO of Virgin America Airlines. With me today I have Mr. Brad Thomann, Vice President of Flight Operations. Our purpose in this briefing today is to provide an update on the incident on (date of crash) involving the crash of Virgin America Airlines flight (####) and to release safety information that has come up at this early stage in the pending investigation.

The National Transportation Safety Board is currently lead in conducting the investigation into the crash of Virgin America Airlines flight (####). Our main goal in this investigation is to determine the cause of this accident and to work further to improve safety precautions to prevent events like these from happening again.

(# of days, weeks, or months) ago (# of) people lost their lives when flight (####) tragically (reason for crash) and crashed. The aircraft was a (type of plane) and it has been determined that the aircraft (was/was not) up to date on all safety equipment. While during the investigation it has been proven that flight crew followed all safety protocol that was required of them during this type of plane crash.

The exact cause of the crash of Virgin America Flight (####) is still yet to be determined while this case is still under investigation.



A brief explanation of why we are investigating is simply because we strive to put the safety first of not only our passengers but also our flight crew here in our Virgin America family. We are in the midst of a very thorough investigative process:

- Recording from the flight (####) is currently being reviewed for sound bites, as there may be a lead to what caused the plane crash.
- Video footage obtained from recovered footage from passengers onboard flight (####) is currently being explained to better understand why the plane crashed.
- We are reviewing the airline's safety training process and further testing and examination.

I would like to thank you all for coming here today for this press conference today. While this investigation is still underway will update all key publics on the information that we do have so far, this information will be released on our website which is provided on a safety handout you will all receive upon exiting this press conference, this handout also has media contacts for those media outlets who wish to set up further interviews.

# EVALUATION FORMS

## Crisis Plan Evaluation

The following is an evaluation form. Please fill this form out and return it to your administrator. This form will provide essential feedback regarding the efficiency of this crisis communication plan. Thank you for your collaboration and please know that Virgin America values our employees and realizes that we could not do it without you.

Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being very little and 5 being very much.

**1. I agree with the proposed bi-annual crisis rehearsal dates.**

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Comments:

**2. I understand my role in notifying the crisis communication team members.**

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Comments:

**3. My contact information provided in this crisis communication plan is accurate.**

Yes                      No

Comments:

**4. I understand the role and expectations of a media spokesperson.**

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Comments:

**5. As a whole, I think this crisis communication plan is effective and will be beneficial to Virgin America.**

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Comments:

## Post-Crisis Evaluation

Following a crisis, feedback will be gathered in the form of an individual interview for executives and management and a survey evaluation for all other employees. We will be gathering all information collected post-crisis and creating a single report. Some questions to consider during the evaluation phase of a crisis are:

- Were employees confused? Why or why not?
- Did employees know what they were supposed to do? Why or why not?
- Was the public updated in a timely manner?
- Was the media given accurate information?
- Was the crisis management team effective?
- Was the crisis management team assembled quickly and ready to take action?
- Were facts about the crisis gathered quickly and accurately?
- Were critical steps missing in the plan? If so, what steps?
- How could the company be better prepared for crisis in the future?
- Could the crisis have been avoided if certain actions had been taken? What actions?
- Was the spokesperson able to answer all media inquiries effectively? Why not?
- Was the spokesperson the best individual qualified to handle the crisis?
- What was the most difficult aspect of handling the crisis?
- What else do you think the company may be at risk for in the future?