



# **Burger King denies calling Impossible Whoppers a “vegan-suitable” Option**

## **The Crisis**

- Burger King launched an ad campaign in January 2020 for Burger King’s first plant-based burger, claiming the product was vegetarian and vegan-friendly
- The Advertising Standards Authority received several complaints and banned the ads for misleading consumers, since the product was cooked alongside meat products and also included egg mayonnaise

## **Threats**

- Crisis type: technical error/product harm
- Burger King is responsible for this crisis. The company should have known that an egg-based mayonnaise is not considered vegan and been transparent with customers about their product being cooked next to meat products. Information was in fine print but is still misleading to consumers when the product is marketed as vegetarian or vegan.
- Burger King has had a history of other marketing issues, but has never had problems with misleading customers about the contents of their products besides this issue
- Damage to the company’s reputation was moderate- this incident made customers more likely to question the contents of Burger King products, but this would not sway loyal customers or those not seeking vegetarian options

## **Primary Publics**

- Burger King customers, Burger King stakeholders, vegetarian and/or vegan customers specifically

## **Media Response**

- The story was covered by media outlets such as The New York Post, The Guardian, and other publications
- Based on Twitter conversations, some consumers were outraged at first, but now a year later it didn’t seem to affect loyal consumers- even strict vegetarians/vegans

## **Organization Response**

- Burger King explained that there was small print and asterisks explaining that the product was cooked alongside meat and that the vegetarian butcher logo was not used in TV advertising
- Burger King also insisted customers could simply ask for the burger without mayonnaise
- Primary strategy: Excusing and Justification
- Burger King's primary tactics were to defend themselves by pointing out the fine print and saying that their target audience was "flexitarians", who are people simply trying to reduce their meat intake and aren't strictly vegetarian

### **Evaluation**

- The situation caused issues with the vegan/vegetarian target audience but ultimately didn't seem to affect Burger King's usual customers
- On Twitter, the product is still getting great reviews and most seem to have forgotten the incident
- Key lesson: Always be transparent with what is included in your product or do not advertise it as something it is not- this causes mistrust in customers and other stakeholders
- I think that Burger King didn't handle it as effectively as they could but it ended up working out in the end.
- If I were in charge of this crisis, I would have apologized and been open and honest instead of making excuses and pointing out the fine print

### **Appendix**

#### **References**

You asked and we listened. Introducing the Rebel Whopper, our first plant-based burger!

 Pick up yours exclusively with the app on the 6th and 7th and then available as usual from the 8th. T&Cs apply. [pic.twitter.com/uXaOFdZ5BX](https://pic.twitter.com/uXaOFdZ5BX)

— Burger King (@BurgerKingUK) January 6, 2020

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/apr/15/whopper-watchdog-bans-ads-burger-king-vegan>

<https://nypost.com/2020/02/03/burger-king-says-it-never-promised-impossible-whoppers-were-vegan-in-lawsuit-response/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/jan/06/burger-kings-new-plant-based-burger-is-not-suitable-for-vegans>

# **New York City Homeless Shelter Involved in Massive Fraud**

## **The Crisis**

- In January 2020, New York City filed a law suit against nonprofit Childrens Community Services (CCS) and other subcontractors for breach of contract and fraud
- Authorities believe CCS defrauded New York City through at least six subcontractors including SASY Enterprises and AZ Security Services who did not provide supplies as listed on invoices
- This issue was referred to the Department of Investigation in May 2018

## **Threats**

- Crisis type: Crisis of management misconduct, deception
- CCS is responsible for this crisis since they were aware of the fraud and took money for questionable reasons. The six subcontractors also must accept responsibility for their actions of thousands of dollars of invoices not intended for the nonprofits actual use.
- The CCS is relatively new (2014) and had a good reputation prior to this incident
- This crisis's severity is extreme as it involves multiple subcontractors and effects New York City and their homeless population. The nonprofit will be replaced by others since it can no longer be trusted.

## **Primary Publics**

- Homeless population of NYC, New York City as a whole, CCS stakeholders, the six subcontractors and their stakeholders

## **Media Response**

- The story was covered by multiple publications and online sources, including a website that updates followers on nonprofit news
- Not a large response on social media, most likely because of it being in the nonprofit sector

## **Organization Response**

- the organization wasn't given much of a chance to respond since legal action was taken almost immediately
- primary strategy: refused to speak on the matter

## **Evaluation**

- this incident effected the organization by no longer allowing it to run. The Department of Homeless Services put the organization and its 28 shelter locations into receivership and began looking for nonprofits to take over the buildings and continue service
- the organization's publics responded by shunning them and forcing legal action for their crimes
- key lesson: to be transparent with money and actions going into the organization and to have better management skills
- on the organization's side, the crisis was unethical and was not handled professionally
- New York City's law suit, however, was handled swiftly and carefully, allowing for as minimal damage to the city and its homeless population as possible

## **Appendix**

## **References**

<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/new-york-city-alleges-homeless-shelter-nonprofit-engaged-in-massive-fraud/>

<https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Homelessness-1.pdf>

<https://queenseagle.com/all/city-probes-jamaica-shelter-provider>



# **World Health Organization and its Reaction to COVID-19 Pandemic**

## **The Crisis**

- The World Health Organization works with 194 member countries across six regions to achieve better health for everyone, everywhere
- January 10-12, 2020: WHO published documents covering topics related to the management of an outbreak of a new disease
- January 30: Director-General declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a public health emergency of international concern (highest level)
- March 18: WHO and partners launched the solidarity trial in order to find the most effective treatments for COVID-19
- April 4: reported over 1 million cases of COVID-19 worldwide after one month

## **Threats**

- Crisis type: operational disruptions from disasters
- Crisis responsibility: WHO is not directly responsible since COVID-19 is a public health crisis. However, they are held responsible for the way they react and how quickly they are able to come up with resolutions. They have received mixed reviews for how they have handled the situation. Generally, more right-wing conservatives disapprove, while liberals approve how they have handled the outbreak. This goes for several countries, including the United States
- Crisis history: the WHO has dealt with other health crises, but this one is particularly serious and long-lasting. Also, in this time period its especially important that crises be handled effectively because of the prevalence of social media and the backlash that comes with it
- The crisis' severity is extreme since the pandemic has killed a record number of people worldwide and requires extensive research and procedures to help slow the spread

## **Primary Publics**

- WHO and the several committees and subcommittees involved in researching and communicating

- Politicians and government officials
- Doctors and patients effected by COVID-19
  - Doctors need information on how to better treat patients
  - Patients need new treatments and information on ways to stay safe
- The general public
  - Ways to slow the spread
  - Ways to avoid getting the virus

### **Media Response**

- Media attention has been extensive: COVID-19 is a constant topic in newspapers, websites, social media, news outlets, and virtually every other form of media since the pandemic began
- the coronavirus effects everyone's daily life by forcing people to change their routine, so media is important to give information on changes or ways to cope with the "new normal"

### **Organization Response**

- April 18: WHO and Global Citizen hosted the 'One World: Together at Home' concert to support frontline healthcare workers, raising a total of \$127.9 million
- April 30: Emergency committee on COVID-19 met and expanded membership as well as issuing a statement
- May 18-19: 73<sup>rd</sup> World Health Assembly, adopted a landmark resolution to fight the pandemic
- June 4: made funding commitments at the Global Vaccine Summit
- WHO took an advocating stance and a compensation strategy: the organization looked for solutions and actively searched for ways to fundraise for healthcare workers and vaccines

### **Evaluation**

- The public's response was divided. Some felt that information could have come out sooner or that the WHO had close ties with China and was not giving all the information needed. Others felt that WHO was doing everything it could for the health of all involved.
- The crisis impacted the organization by putting huge pressure on them to make a difference. However, the crisis affected everyone so the impact on the organization will likely not last after the pandemic is over.
- Key lessons: Be transparent and quick to release information because it is in everyone's best interest
- I think that for the most part, the crisis was handled effectively and ethically. The only difference I would have made was telling the public about the urgency of the situation sooner. I think that the WHO had access to

information sooner and did not act swiftly enough, as many americans were shocked when the pandemic hit so quick and intensely. I do think that a situation like this is difficult to know how to handle and the WHO did their best with what they had. They took/are still taking steps to raise money and research to find vaccines and ways to stay safe.

## **Appendix**

## **References**

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/interactive-timeline>

<https://www.who.int/about>

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/12/how-people-around-the-world-see-the-world-health-organizations-initial-coronavirus-response/>



# FEMA Response to California Wildfires

## The Crisis

- Beginning in August 2020, a record-breaking wildfire season swept across the United States and Canada, particularly affecting California
- FEMA and other organizations took steps to offer aid to areas affected by the wildfires

## Threats

- Crisis type: operational disruptions from disasters
- Crisis responsibility: the organization is not at fault since it is a natural disaster, however they are responsible for the way they react and send aid to those in need
- Crisis history: there has been a history of wildfires in California, especially during the months of August-November. This year was record-setting, however, and especially destructive to communities during the pandemic
- Crisis severity: the organization did what it could for this disaster given the circumstances, so damage to FEMA's reputation was minimal

## Primary publics

- The key publics involved include citizens of the areas affected: California, Colorado, Oregon, etc.
- FEMA and CAL FIRE employees and stakeholders

## Media response

- Homeowners in the affected areas took to twitter and other social media platforms to document the disaster

## Organization response

- Organizational stance: accommodating
- Crisis strategy: compensation
  - Provided funds when needed
- Provided millions of dollars in assistance through 82 major disaster and fire management declarations
  - Major declarations/funding:
    - DR-4558
    - DR-4562
    - DR-4569

## Evaluation



- The primary publics responded with gratitude, however with a situation like this no amount of aid is ever enough
- I believe it was handled ethically and effectively, however there could have been a more hands-on approach instead of just sending money

## **Appendix**

## **References**

<https://www.fire.ca.gov/about-us/>

<https://disasterphilanthropy.org/disaster/2020-california-wildfires/>

<https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4558>



# Houston Astros' Cheating Scandal

## The Crisis

- In January 2020, the Houston Astros baseball team was caught in a scandal over cheating in their 2017 and 2018 seasons
- The Astros used technology to create a sign-stealing scheme

## Threats

- Crisis type: organizational misdeeds
- Crisis responsibility: The Houston Astros franchise, players, manager and general manager are all at fault in this situation since they were all either aware of the cheating or actively participated in it
- Crisis history: the Houston Astros have not been involved in a cheating scandal prior to this. However, this specific type of cheating by sign-stealing is not new to the MLB. It has been acknowledged before, but not punished as severely as this.
- Crisis severity: the severity of this crisis is fairly extreme considering the effect it has on primary publics and the Astros' reputation. Also, it causes publics to lose trust since the Astros went far in these two seasons. Fans are now likely to look back at those wins as tarnished by the scandal.

## Primary Publics

- The Houston Astros organization: players, managers, families and more
- Astros' fans, baseball fans
- The MLB as a whole and the other teams affected by the cheating

## Media Response

- Several publications picked up this story and used it as a way to bring attention to cheating in major league sports
- Baseball fans were appalled, and some called for the Astros to be stripped of their World Series title

## Organization Response

- the organization was mainly accommodative since they fired those involved and a few players apologized. However, they could have made a general apology and taken more steps to show their remorse
- crisis response: compensation and apology

- Astros players Alex Bregman and José Altuve directly apologized in a news conference
- After MLB suspended manager A.J. Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow, the Houston Astros fired them, saying “we need to move forward with a clean slate”

### **Evaluation**

- The organization’s primary publics responded by calling the Astros out for their poor management and from then on saw their reputation as tainted
- The crisis forced the Astros to essentially start over with new management. This can be seen as a positive since it starts over with a clean slate. However, fans and the general public will always remember the scandal
- The key lesson I took from this is that there are no secrets in sports. I also think that the organization can learn from this and know that they can’t get away with anything like this again or react the way that they did.
- I do not believe that this was handled ethically. If I were to have handled this case, I would have had the managers fired much sooner. I think that most of the actions that the Astros took only happened because they got caught or were forced into situations.
  - For example, the manager and general manager were only fired after they had been suspended. This, along with a sincere apology, should have happened before they even had the chance to suspend management
  - Only a few players came forward with apologies. I think that this is unacceptable and the organization should have made a bigger effort to make an apology

### **Appendix**

### **References**

<https://www.cbssports.com/mlb/news/why-the-post-scandal-astros-2020-offensive-struggles-might-not-be-a-coincidence/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2020/02/13/astros-apologize-sign-stealing-scandal/>

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