



David A. Ericksen

David Ericksen, graduate of the Law School at University of CA, Berkeley is a trusted resource and advocate to the design and construction professional service community and passionately committed to collaboration in their long-term strategic success. He has repeatedly and successfully represented design professionals in jury trial, bench trial, single arbitrator arbitration, and panel arbitration as well as mediation and other forms of alternative dispute resolution in state and federal courts. He is a trusted resource and counselor on the risk management strategies to avoid disputes through strategic planning and management. In that capacity, he focuses on contractual, risk management and litigation issues affecting the design, construction, environmental, real estate, and insurance professional community. He does so both as outside general counsel to many firms as well as short term interventions in pursuit of strategic solutions and remedies. He is also a frequent speaker before construction professional organizations such as the AIA, SEA, ACEC, NSPE, SDA, and CSI. Mr. Ericksen is also an Associate Member of a/e ProNet.

David A. Ericksen
Attorney at Law
Collins + Collins LLP
Email: dericksen@ccllp.law
Phone: (510) 844-5100
Mobile: (415) 652-4031
ccllp.law



Eric A. Moore, CIC, LIC
Moore Insurance Services
www.mooreinsuranceservices.com
emoore@mooreinsuranceservices.com

Crisis Response: An A/E Action Plan

By David A. Ericksen, Attorney at Law, Collins + Collins LLP

The recent and tragic Miami condo collapse has provoked numerous inquiries what should any design professional do in the event of such a tragedy. Although dramatic, it was not the first such incident and unfortunately it will not be the last. The following is a five-step plan for consideration by any design professional individual or firm before, during, and after such an event.

1. Prepare. For any crisis, there should be a pre-established set of crisis contacts inside and outside the firm. That contact group should be notified and consulted immediately and should include:
 - a. Management with a core management group to be contacted and they should have standing contacts for the other communications.
 - b. Counsel to establish confidentiality and privilege around the communications as well as to provide their own critical counsel and support.
 - c. Insurance to trigger and coordinate potential coverage as well as to take advantage of resources and advice.
2. Information Control.
 - a. Internal. All in the firm should be notified immediately, assured the firm is responding and investigating, and directed not to discuss the event or project internally or externally except as requested or directed by management.
 - b. External. A single point of contact should be identified for all outside communications or inquiries with a corresponding internal direction to direct all contacts or questions to that point of contact.
3. Client Contact. Reach out to the client to establish communication. In doing so, seek to be a supportive listener. Avoid analysis, apologies, and admissions in favor of offers to support and investigate.

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As it relates to the pandemic-generated behavior we've collectively adopted over the past 14 months, it appears our mask-wearing/social-distancing/eating-outside ways may be coming to an end. Other Covid-era changes, however, just might be here to stay, especially those related to depositions. It is important to be aware of the processes clients and insureds will undergo related to depositions in 2021, and this article will discuss them. [Read More](#)



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Lynda Colucci, Executive Director

info@aepronet.org
aepronet.org

4. Reconnaissance.

- a. Identify, locate, and contact present and past staff and design team members involved in the project.
- b. Secure the applicable project records in electronic or hard copy format with particular focus on contracts, final invoices, and final plans and specifications as well as any as-built records.
- c. If feasible without impairing safety or recovery efforts, promptly visit the site to observe and document the conditions.

5. Evaluate. With the foregoing in hand and in collaboration with the team identified above, evaluate the situation and plan the next steps. As a guide to such evaluation, consider the acronym IROPE for Issue-identification, Review, Options, Plan, and Execute.

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