

Chapter Communications Handbook



Reaching your Members and your Community

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I. Introduction

Good communication skills are critical to enhancing and strengthening your chapter. Modern technology has made it very easy for chapter officers to communicate with their members. RIMS has developed this handbook to relate the best ways to communicate with your chapter's contacts, as well as how to present a consistent brand image in the marketplace. This handbook contains standards that RIMS encourages each chapter to use for locally produced marketing and communication materials.

Your chapter's success depends on superior communication, which is essential to chapter programming, membership retention, and recruitment. It is important that everyone on your board and committees is well informed about projects, meetings, and goals. Of course, your chapter relies on effective communication systems to manage volunteers. Non-members become aware of RIMS, its mission and the risk management profession through your chapter messages. This handbook outlines the variety of tools and resources that RIMS provides to help your chapter communicate often and in a variety of ways with members and non-members.

II. Communicating your Chapter's Message

Make your members and chapter contacts feel connected to RIMS and the local chapter by communicating on a regular basis. E-mail allows you to get information to your members and chapter contacts quickly and cost effectively. However, e-mail communication should not be your only means of connecting with your members. Make sure to mix things up by communicating by phone, face-to-face, and snail mail when appropriate. Although these other types of communication are more time consuming, they often reap the biggest rewards. An occasional phone call by a board member can make members feel connected to their local chapter and welcome at the next meeting. Personal phone calls or visits can provide great opportunities to discuss member needs, membership status and future plans with RIMS.

When communicating with your members consider the following:

- Download fresh lists from RIMS.org. Add chapter contacts through RIMS [Contact Manager](#) before downloading fresh lists from E-mail Manager before every e-mail. Contact RIMS at chapterservices@RIMS.org for a tutorial.
- Use RIMS [E-Mail Manager](#) and [Membership Reports](#) to download current member lists and ensure you are sending your chapter meeting notices and marketing materials to the most current list.

- Use RIMS [E-mail Templates](#) to create a professional meeting notice template and other chapter communications that can be sent to your chapter's contacts electronically.
- Use e-mail for routine updates, meeting reminders, and event registrations. (You may want to hold your chapter elections online as well, but this is prohibited by law for some chapters. Contact your secretary of state's office or provincial equivalent for information on laws governing your chapter.)
- Follow e-mail with snail mail and phone calls when appropriate and when cost allows. E-mail should supplement, not replace, other communication methods
- Keep RIMS informed – we may be able to help you with marketing. Send your chapter's board minutes, event flyers, and other pertinent information to RIMS. Information regarding chapter activities should be sent to RIMS at chapterservices@RIMS.org.
- Keep e-mail addresses and other membership data private. When mailing to a list, use the bcc field to ensure that e-mail addresses are not shared; this also prevents someone from replying to all.
- Enactment of federal and state anti-spam laws makes it vital you respect the wishes of those you e-mail. Inform RIMS immediately when members request to opt out of chapter e-mails.
- Have a system and schedule for e-mail. Send out monthly meeting notices and newsletters on the same day of the month.
- Over-mailing will lead to messages being deleted without being read. Save information for monthly updates.

III. Standard RIMS Overview

Many chapter promotional materials will be read by non-members. All promotional materials should include an overview of RIMS and its mission. Below is a generic description of RIMS that may be used in marketing materials and in your contact with the press. Please note that our membership statistics are always changing. To confirm that you have the most current information, please contact RIMS at chapterservices@RIMS.org.

[The Risk and Insurance Management Society, Inc. \(RIMS\)](#) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing the practice of risk management, a professional discipline that protects physical, financial and human resources. Founded in 1950, RIMS represents over 3,800 industrial, service, nonprofit, charitable, and governmental entities. The Society serves 9,400 risk management professionals around the world.



IV. RIMS Logo Usage

Logos, used to maintain and reinforce a recognizable identity, are a vital element of standard branding strategies. The RIMS logo must be displayed consistently by all chapters and RIMS organizations. The RIMS Corporate Logo consists of two elements:

- The RIMS unicorn, which represents the burgeoning strength of the Society. The unicorn appears to the left of the stacked words of the corporate name as illustrated below.
- The words “Risk and Insurance Management Society, Inc. ®. (Note: Do not forget the registration mark, “®”, which indicates that our name is a registered trademark.) The correct letter style, or font, used for the words “Risk and Insurance Management Society, Inc. ®” is Helvetica Black.



The complete RIMS Logo should not be created manually nor altered in any way. Furthermore, it can only be used in three colors:

- Pantone Matching System color number 329 (also referred to as PMS 329)
- Solid Black
- White (used as a “knock-out” on a colored page)

Please contact chapterservices@rims.org or call 212-655-6031 if you wish to insert or otherwise apply the logo to new materials. You are free to use and distribute RIMS approved materials featuring the logo, but approval for new uses is required.

V. RIMS Style Guidelines

Below is a guide for commonly used in chapter communications pieces. RIMS and recommends that all chapters follow the outlined style standards to present a consistent message.

General Rules (may occasionally contradict Standard English usage):

- 1) Do not capitalize “chapter” unless the specific chapter is cited, or it is used as part of an officer’s title.



- 2) Capitalize officer titles whenever RIMS, the chapter name, or the name of the officer is cited.
- 3) Capitalize “board of directors” or “board” only when appearing with a citation to a specific chapter or RIMS as an organization.

Unidentified Chapter:

- Correct: Contact the *chapter* closest to you.
Incorrect: Contact the *Chapter* closest to you.
Correct: Contact the *RIMS chapter* closest to you.
Incorrect: Contact the *RIMS Chapter* closest to you.

Identified Chapter:

- Correct: Contact the RIMS New York *Chapter*.
Incorrect: Contact the RIMS New York *chapter*.

Unidentified Title, RIMS Cited:

- Correct: RIMS *Chapter Presidents* are a diverse group.
Incorrect: RIMS *Chapter presidents* are a diverse group.
Incorrect: RIMS *chapter presidents* are a diverse group.

Unidentified Title:

- Correct: The *chapter president* will contact you.
Incorrect: The *chapter President* will contact you.
Incorrect: The *Chapter President* will contact you.

Title Associated with Chapter:

- Correct: The New York *Chapter President* will contact you.
Incorrect: The New York *Chapter president* will contact you.
Incorrect: The New York *chapter president* will contact you.

Officer with Title, Identified with Specific Chapter:

- Correct: Mr. Ramone, *President* of the New York Chapter, will contact you.
Incorrect: Mr. Ramone, *president* of the New York Chapter, will contact you.

Officer with Title, No Identified Chapter:

- Correct: Of course, *Chapter President* Mr. Ramone will contact you.
Incorrect: Of course, *chapter president* Mr. Ramone will contact you.
Correct: Of course, Mr. Ramone, *Chapter President*, will contact you.
Incorrect: Of course, Mr. Ramone, *chapter president*, will contact you.

Board of Directors, No Identified Chapter or “RIMS” Cited

- Correct: The *board of directors* is meeting tomorrow.
Incorrect: The *Board of Directors* is meeting tomorrow.

Board Cited with Identified Chapter

Correct: The New York Chapter *Board* is meeting tomorrow.

Incorrect: The New York Chapter *board* is meeting tomorrow.

Board Cited with RIMS

Correct: RIMS *Board of Directors* is meeting tomorrow.

Incorrect: RIMS *board of directors* is meeting tomorrow.

Commonly Misused Terms:

“RIMS National”

RIMS is an international society and should be referred to simply as “RIMS.”

“RIMS national” is always incorrect.

“Website” and “Webpage”

The terms “Web site” and “Web page” each consist of two words. “Web” is always capitalized. Your Chapter Web site consists of different Web pages.

“On-Line” and “On Line”

“Online” is the correct usage; as in “This handbook is available online.”

VI. Create a Chapter Calendar

RIMS chapters that plan their calendar early and communicate it effectively have better meeting attendance and more volunteer involvement.

Once you have set dates for your chapter meetings and events, consider the following promotional methods to use your calendar most effectively:

1. Post your events on the RIMS Online Calendar to use the online registration feature and Meeting Reports tool.
2. Communicate your calendar in chapter mailings, newsletters, your Web site, and in e-mail blasts. Put a link to the registration Web page in event announcement e-mail and in Web site promotions.
3. Publicize your events calendar at every chapter event.

VII. Create a Chapter Newsletter

As an important member benefit, chapter newsletters help communicate your chapter’s message, as well as promote upcoming events. To assist your chapter in creating its newsletter, RIMS has created newsletter [templates](#) that you can download from RIMS Web site, available at www.RIMS.org/chapterstationery.

Most newsletters are now sent out electronically and/or posted on the chapter's Web site. If you would like the assistance of RIMS Creative Department to develop an electronic newsletter template for your use, please contact RIMS at chapterservices@RIMS.org or 212.655.6041.

Recommended Content for Chapter Newsletters Includes:

- A RIMS Update.
- An opening statement from the chapter president.
- Your calendar of events.
- A listing of your chapter officers.
- A listing of your chapter's new RIMS members.
- Chapter stories and/or recaps of recent chapter events.
- Recognition of volunteers and or a volunteer profile.
- Information on how to join RIMS.
- An invitation to become involved in the local chapter (could include a posting and description of an open position on your chapter's board.)

VIII. Create a Chapter Marketing Brochure

A [chapter marketing brochure](#) should be used to communicate what your chapter is all about. A template is available on the RIMS Web site at www.RIMS.org/chapterstationery, which can be customized at the local level. Once downloaded from RIMS Web site, the template can be customized to suit your chapter's needs. Your chapter marketing brochure is a pocket-size resource to help you sell your chapter to potential members and to keep current members informed chapter activities.

A marketing brochure for your RIMS chapter should include:

- A mission statement for your RIMS chapter.
- A list of your Chapter's Board Members.
- Chapter Calendar of Events.
- Your chapter's Web site address
- RIMS Web site address: www.RIMS.org.

Some Opportunities for Using your Chapter Marketing Brochure:

- As a handout at chapter meetings.
- As a member recruitment tool. A marketing brochure can act as your chapter's value statement. Enclose a membership application inside.
- As a mailer to all new members.
- For anyone who wants to know about RIMS and your chapter.
- As part of your letters of recognition to CEOs and others on behalf of your board members.

- Within your own company to promote the chapter's events and to acquaint people with RIMS.

IX. Create Effective Chapter Meeting Notices

As your chapter meeting approaches, you will send an announcement and registration form out to your contact list for the event. The following are some tips on how to make the most of your next meeting notice:

- Catch Their Attention! Use a catchy title to highlight what your event is covering. Highlight big-name speakers and include as much pertinent information as possible.
- Include the date, time, and location for the event.
- Include information regarding the topic and the speaker(s).
- Make sure that you have included member and non-member pricing information for the event.
- Include contact information, such as a board member's name, phone number, and/or e-mail address on the announcement, so that participants can ask questions, register, etc.
- Include registrant information, such as a space for the registrant's name, company, title, address, phone, fax, and e-mail, so that you can collect the most up to date contact information for your attendees.
- Include the method of payment & registration. Explain how individuals can pay for the event (check or credit card), as well as how they can register for the event (fax, online, e-mail, etc.). Consider collecting money at time of registration to avoid people registering and then not showing up.
- Create your meeting notices well in advance.
- Include event information on your chapter's Web site.
- Prepare your meeting notice well in advance. Ample notice is key to attendance. Follow up closer to the event.
- If possible, distribute your chapter's next meeting notice at your current chapter meeting.
- Mail to your entire mailing list, including non-members
- Mail program announcements with newsletters -- use e-mail judiciously
- Put reminders in other chapter communications.

X. Conduct a Chapter Member Needs Survey

Looking to your chapter's members and contacts to ascertain their needs and interests is extremely helpful in hosting successful events for your chapter. You can use RIMS [Chapter Survey Template](#) as a model.

Tips on Conducting a Chapter Survey:

- Complete your chapter's survey prior to your planning meeting/retreat. Feedback from your members can provide an excellent starting point for you to plan your upcoming year.
- Include a note from the chapter president with the survey. The president should stress the importance of the survey feedback.
- Provide incentives for people to respond to your survey. Hold a drawing for all those who participate in the survey. Offer a prize or perhaps a free registration for your next chapter meeting.
- Ask chapter meeting attendees to fill out your survey on site.
- Place your survey on your chapter's Web site to generate additional results. An online survey tool is available through the RIMS based chapter Web site software. See the [Webmaster's Handbook](#) for more information.
- Ask your members for topic suggestions as well as for the best times for meetings, and locations.
- Follow up on your survey. After participants take the time to fill out your survey it is important to thank them and to let them know what is being done as a result of their responses.

XI. Create and Maintain your Chapter's Web Site

Your chapter's Web site gives you the opportunity to communicate with your current members and to attract new members. However, your chapter's Web site should highlight, not replace, existing methods of communication amongst chapter members and leadership. It should be used as a reference for chapter members and a recruiting tool for interested non-members. Keep in mind that not all members will have regular access to the Web or an e-mail account.

RIMS offers chapters free hosting of a Web site using an easy to use template. The template allows your chapter to build and maintain its Web site through the RIMS Web site. Before developing and updating your chapter's Web site, review RIMS [Webmaster Handbook](#) for guidelines and suggestions on what to include on your chapter's site. Some examples include:

1. A summarized history of your chapter.
2. A list of upcoming local events, including general membership meetings and networking events.
3. A list of upcoming educational events in the area, including the RIMS professional development courses.
4. Any special regional conferences and RIMS Annual Conference.
5. Golf outings and/or other events.

6. A listing of all chapter officers and board members, complete with their contact information, if possible. If you are using the RIMS Chapter Web site software this page will update automatically through RIMS Web site if we have your roster on file.
7. A copy of your most current newsletter.

As with any publication, the timeliness of the material on your Web site is essential. Chapter leadership should consider the Web site as part of the overall communication system set up within the chapter. Consider how frequently your site should be updated, how information will be submitted to your chapter Webmaster, and whether electronic materials will be posted at the same time as the printed version or if there will be a delay.

To make an appointment for a Web site tutorial, please contact RIMS at chapterservices@RIMS.org or 212.655.6041.

XII. Use of Press Releases and Public Relations

The purpose of public relations is to influence and provide information to key target audiences. Effective public relations can help increase your chapter's visibility, increase participation in your meetings, enhance programming, and increase understanding of the risk managers' role in the corporate environment. Often a good public relations resource is your company's own public relations or corporate communications department. They routinely respond to media requests daily and can help you by giving the company's perspective on issues and by providing a valuable resource for lists of editors and journalists.

A press release is the best way to alert your local media and receive newspaper coverage of your chapter and its events. Releases should be directed to the appropriate editor, such as the business or insurance editor for a meeting with a keynote speaker or to announce a new slate of officers, or the lifestyles editor for a golf outing or fund-raising event. A press release should be sent out three weeks in advance. For assistance drafting a press release, please contact RIMS Public Relations Associate at pr@RIMS.org or 212.655.6059.

An effective public outreach strategy will result in increased media attention and coverage of chapter events. The Chapter Programming Handbook gives full details on how to work with the media and meet their needs. If you have any questions, contact the RIMS Public Relations Associate in New York at pr@RIMS.org or 212.655.6059.

XIII. Recognition

Recognizing the achievements of your local chapter members is a key strategy in making and keeping active members. The contributions of your chapter officers, board, and committee members are so important that it's hard to believe recognizing them is often overlooked! Public recognition for people who are doing a great job communicates the value of involvement on many levels:

- As a thank you to the individual performing the service.
- As a way to recognize performance in front of peers, bosses, and chapter members.
- As an inducement to others to become involved in an organization that recognizes performance and achievement.

Where to Recognize Volunteers:

- At public events: People like to be recognized in front of peers at general membership meetings, conferences, lending schools. Before each meeting, consider who should be recognized. Was there someone who worked particularly hard on organizing this event?
- Within their own companies: Let the managers of recognition-worthy RIMS volunteers know of their achievements. Make sure the companies that sponsor RIMS officers know of their ability to achieve results. Consider inviting the award-winner's superior to a recognition event (check with the volunteer beforehand.).
- In your newsletter and on your chapter's Web site.

RIMS resources for Volunteer Recognition:

- [RIMSTORE \(www.RIMS.org/rimstore\)](http://www.RIMS.org/rimstore) – The RIMSTORE is an excellent resource for RIMS logo wear and gifts that are available for purchase to recognize speakers and volunteers for their efforts.
- Former President Plaque – Available at no cost to the chapter, RIMS will provide your chapter with plaque that can be engraved locally and presented to your outgoing chapter president. Contact RIMS at chapterservices@RIMS.org or 212.655.6041 to request a plaque for an outgoing or former president.
- [Certificate Templates](#) – RIMS has developed certificate templates that you can use to thank a volunteer for the job they did on a specific meeting or task. These templates are available online on the RIMS Web site at www.RIMS.org/chapterstationery.



XIV. Make the Most of Your General Membership Meetings

Your chapter meetings are the perfect opportunity to encourage networking, promote your upcoming events, and provide recognition for your volunteers. At the beginning of each chapter event, take a few minutes to promote your chapter and the Society. You can also promote RIMS by:

- Ordering RIMS marketing materials to display at your events. To order contact RIMS at chapterservices@RIMS.org.
- Having RIMS membership materials on hand.
- Telling people how they can become more involved in your local chapter. Invite them to join you!
- Providing attendees with an upcoming meeting notice, calendar of events, or chapter marketing brochure.
- Announcing upcoming programs and events from the podium.

Chapter meetings are also the best opportunity for RIMS members to network with one another. Promote networking at your meetings by:

- Using nametags for all registrants.
- Attaching badge ribbons to chapter board members name badges to make them easy to identify for participants.
- Identifying new attendees and non-members on their badges so that your board members can welcome them to the meeting more easily.
- Encouraging your audience to sit with new people.
- Asking your board to mingle and get to know people.
- Introducing VIPs to your audience.
- Allowing people to network during the meal or reception; don't start your speaker until the drinks/dinner period is completed.

XV. Welcome New Members

You only have one chance to make a first impression with your new members. Typically, members who do not renew their membership are inactive members who have not attended local chapter meetings or been involved in RIMS Society events. It's easier to keep an existing member than it is to recruit a new one, and new members are potential new volunteers.

Tips on Welcoming New Members:

- Welcome new members with a letter from the chapter president. Include a welcome kit with a copy of your chapter's newsletter, your board member roster, marketing brochure, etc.
- Put each new member on your mailing list immediately.

- If a new member has just joined and your chapter is breaking for the summer, tell them! They will feel forgotten if you don't advise them that the next meeting won't be until September.
- Ask new members to get involved with the chapter. Make sure to mention volunteer opportunities.

XVI. RIMS Chapter Officer Tools and Resources

RIMS has developed a number of different tools to assist in your chapter's communications efforts that have been mentioned throughout this handbook. Below is a list of the RIMS chapter officer tools and resources that will help your chapter communicate its message most effectively.

- **E-mail Manager** (www.rims.org/emailchapter) RIMS Web based tool that allows you to search the RIMS database for individuals associated with your chapter. You can download the information into a spreadsheet and/or send a blast e-mail to the group.
- **E-mail Templates** (www.rims.org/emailtemplates) RIMS Web-based html templates allow you to enhance e-mail through graphics, pictures, and hyperlinks. Improve the look of your chapter e-mail, meeting notices and newsletters.
- **Contact Manager** (www.rims.org/contactmanager) RIMS Web based tool that allows your chapter to combine its contact list and member information with RIMS database. Use Contact Manager to ensure your chapter e-mail goes to new members and everyone you believe appropriate.
- **Chapter Membership Reports** (www.rims.org/memberreportschapters) A subset of the E-mail Manager, these easy three step reports allow your chapter to pull information on New and existing members, expiring members, expired members, and prospective members.
- **Chapter Officer Update Tool** (www.rims.org/manageofficers) RIMS Web based tool that allows your chapter to maintain its officer roster listing online. An up to date listing of your Board is extremely important because access to RIMS Web based chapter officer tools is directly connected to the roster we have on file for your chapter.
- **RIMS Chapter Web Sites** – Build and maintain your chapter's Web site for free.
- **RIMS Awards and Recognition Resources**
 - **RIMSTORE** (www.rims.org/rimstore) Your source for RIMS logo wear and gifts available for purchase.
 - **RIMS Former President Plaque** – Provided to each chapter at no cost each year, this is a great way to recognize your outgoing

- chapter president. To request, contact chapterservices@RIMS.org or 212.655.6041.
- Badge Ribbons – RIMS has a number of different ribbons in stock that can be attached to the name badges at your chapter meetings to identify Board Members, speakers, etc. Contact RIMS at chapterservices@RIMS.org for more information.
 - **[RIMS Online Calendar of Events](http://www.rims.org/calendarofevents)** (www.rims.org/calendarofevents) Post your upcoming chapter events on the RIMS Calendar for both local and international exposure. This tool also has an online registration option for chapter and regional events. Contact RIMS at chapterservices@RIMS.org for more information.
 - **[RIMS Templates](http://www.RIMS.org/chapterstationery)** - RIMS templates for communication are available on the RIMS Web site at www.RIMS.org/chapterstationery. They can be downloaded for immediate use.
 - [Chapter Stationery Template](#)
 - [Chapter Newsletter Templates](#)
 - [Chapter Marketing Brochure Template](#)
 - [Chapter Meeting Notice Template](#)
 - [Chapter Survey Template](#)
 - [Certificates of Recognition Templates](#)
 - **RIMS Marketing and Membership Materials** – RIMS will be happy to send your chapter membership applications and marketing brochures for RIMS products and events. Your chapter can display these items at your next chapter event to help show your members and potential members the value of RIMS. Contact RIMS at chapterservices@RIMS.org or 212.655.6041 to request these materials.

XVII. Conclusion

RIMS chapters each have their own unique story to tell, and getting the word out about chapter events and activities in a timely and effective manner is one of your chapter's most important functions. Even when your chapter is not meeting (summer and holidays) it is important to continue a dialogue with your contacts. This handbook addressed some best practices that your chapter should consider when communicating its message. It is important to remember to be proactive in your communication whenever possible.

If you have questions or need assistance with your chapter's communication efforts, please contact RIMS Membership and Chapter Services Department at chapterservices@RIMS.org or 212.655.6041.