

Created & Presented by



FOR:
Policy Makers
Elected
Officers

SPOKESPERSON WORKSHOP

PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK



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Course Agenda

THE MEDIA -- PERCEPTION AND POWER	7
Pitfalls of Failure to Work Well with the Media	10
Benefits from Working with the Media	12
Who Are They and What Do They Want?	14
The Big 3 + 1: Print, Radio, Television and the Web	14
What Do Print News Organizations Want?	14
What Do Radio News Organizations Want?	15
What Do Television News Organizations Want?	16
What Do Web-Based News Organizations Want?	17
About Reporters	18
What Do They all Want?	18
What Else?	19
Understanding Deadlines	19
News Is a Business	20
MEDIA CRISIS COVERAGE	22
The Crisis Cycle	22
Information the Media Will Want During a Crisis	22
Following the Crisis	23
When Reporters Get It Wrong	23
NEW TECHNOLOGY EVOLUTION -- WHERE IS IT ALL GOING?	25
Technology and the Media – History of the Web	25
Technology and the Media – Newsgathering	26
Convergence	27
Technology and the Media – How the Public Wants Its News	28
News on Demand – The Result	28
Direct Information Management	28
TALK TO ME -- THE ART OF THE INTERVIEW	29
How to Say It	29
What Does the Public Want to Know?	31
Who is Your Audience?	31
Crisis Response Message Triangle	32
What Do the Media Want to Know?	32
DEVELOPING KEY MESSAGES	34
Who Has the Highest Credibility?	35
What Not to Wear and Fun Things to Do With Your Hands	36
What to Do	36
What to Say, When to Say It, and When to Shut Up	38
“No Comment” Alternatives	40
Responding with “I Don’t Know...”	41
It Ain’t Over Til...	41
The Politics of Dancing	41

WHAT IS THE LAW	41
Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)	41
Sunshine Laws	43
Libel and Slander	44
Surreptitious Recording	44
SARA Title III – Right to Know Act	44
Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)	45
Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)	45
Homeland Security Act – Protection of Critical Infrastructure Information	46
Temporary Flight Restrictions	46
Copyright Law	47
Fair Use	47
MEDIA ON THE SCENE	48
What Can You Do to Make It All Work?	49
What Is the Law?	49
PIO Needs on the Scene	49
Media Staging Areas	49
The Media Pool	52
NEWS CONFERENCES AND BRIEFINGS	54
When to Do It	54
Who Does What	54
Briefing Mechanics – How to Get It Done	55
Visuals and Handouts	57
How Do I Look?	59
Body Language	59
Policy/Decision Makers: Your Role in a Crisis	60
News Briefing Checklist	61
YOUR PIO/PAO -- WHAT HE/SHE SHOULD DO FOR YOU	64
Qualities of a Good PIO/PAO	64
PROACTIVE PUBLIC INFORMATION AND MEDIA RELATIONS	66
What Should the PIO/PAO do NOW... Before the Crisis?	66
Your PIO/PAO – What You Should Do for Him/Her	67

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course you should be able to:

- ✓ Understand the media
- ✓ Understand what information the public wants and needs
- ✓ Deliver your message with confidence
- ✓ Learn to create quotable sound bytes when you speak
- ✓ Take control of interviews
- ✓ Understand new communication technologies and how to use them
- ✓ Identify laws that govern public information
- ✓ Handle media at the scene and identify usable media staging areas
- ✓ Understand how to present and control a news briefing or conference
- ✓ Understand how a Public Information Officer or Public Affairs Officer (PIO/PAO) can assist your agency
- ✓ Know the attributes of a strong PIO/PAO



What are your expectations for the course?

How do they compare with the
course objectives?

THE MEDIA -- PERCEPTION AND POWER

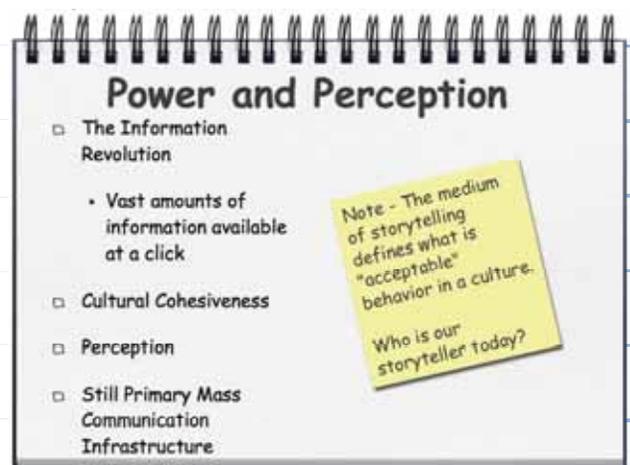
Today, media is a wholly integral part of Western culture. If the late 1800s were characterized as the Industrial Revolution, today is the Information Revolution. People today have unprecedented access to information – and can gain a tremendous amount of data at the click of a mouse. We can also convey our own thoughts, ideas, values, and versions of reality through the Internet to millions with the same ease. This super-empowerment of the individual, formerly only available to media elites, has diversified perception-shaping power, and placed that capability in the hands of many.

From blogs to Internet sites, to the rise of the entertainment media, the proliferation of cable and satellite television channels, the sophistication of marketing and influence efforts via the media, and the average person's increased access to information technology – the media are without question substantially more powerful today in shaping Western culture.

Some people argue that the media shape values and ideas in a negative manner by telling the wrong stories about culture and by reinforcing bad values. Everyday practices, ritual and institutional activities – such as family dinners and activities, children's interaction at school/sporting/social activities, television viewing, or simply reading the newspaper or watching television news – do shape people's views of culture. These views of culture are also interpreted through prisms such as gender, age, family, class, race, and ethnicity, which have been built over time and are also influenced by the media.

The power of the media in our daily lives cannot be ignored. News organizations are critical in that they provide us with information that is beneficial to our daily lives – from the automobile accident blocking traffic on our way to work in the morning to the change in educational policy in state schools or the impending tropical storm headed toward our region.

News media are also key conduits for transmitting your message to select audiences. That's because the media – television networks, radio stations, web sites, newspapers, magazines, and newsletters – are incredibly effective enablers for individuals and organizations to communicate their message to society.



Do you have any idea how many news organizations there are in the United States? If you were to add up all the media organizations that reach Americans, the total would exceed one million. The list includes:

- 750 television stations that broadcast local shows (plus hundreds of local cable outlets)
- 1,500 daily newspapers
- 1,500+ web sites maintained by news organizations
- 8,800 weekly newspapers
- 11,000 radio stations
- 11,000 business, trade, professional and consumer publications in the United States and Canada
- 1,000,000+ newsletters published by news organizations, corporations, trade associations, consultants and nonprofit groups

"Getting Your 18 Minutes of Fame and More"
by Edward Segal
published by John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
New York, 2003



Each news outlet has its own staff of editors, reporters, commentators, and columnists; a defined audience; a list of topics or subjects of interest to that audience; a specific definition of news; and schedules for producing and distributing the product to viewers, listeners or readers. The outlets also must fill a tremendous vacuum every year as employees work to find enough information to fill thousands of hours of airtime and millions of pages of print.

The rise in influence of nontraditional media – for example, entertainment cable outlets like Comedy Central – and the spread of personal web sites and blogs dictates that savvy communicators make use of these types of venues, as well.

Perception – Much of the power of the media is in media organizations' ability to shape the way the public views events. Regardless of how effective we are in our job, public perception of our success will be shaped by its portrayal in the media. In the world of 24/7 news media operation, perception is reality. Therefore, to some extent, the media sets part of the agenda for policy makers, dictates a sense of urgency, and shapes public perception through coverage.

Cultural cohesiveness – The most prominent method of disseminating information about ideas, values, and acceptable behavior within a culture is through the medium of storytelling. Generations ago, cultural information was

Pitfalls of Failure to Work Well with the Media

Misinformation – The news media will always seek out “someone” to talk to about the event. These other sources may be misinformed or hostile toward your organization. Additionally, being first to the chalkboard often results in the “first mover advantage” of being able to shape one’s argument first.

Political fallout – Coverage of the relationship between California Congressman Gary Condit and missing intern Chandra Levy started as a missing person story. With intense media focus and prying reporters, the nature of the relationship between them was revealed, and Representative Condit was eventually forced to give up his office. Months later, the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Police discovered Levy’s remains and determined she was a victim of a random act of violence; however, that side of the story remained in the background of the media’s coverage.



Negative image – Representative George Nethercutt from Washington State was a leader in the movement to limit congressional terms of service; he was elected on a promise that he would not serve more than three terms in the US House of Representatives. All of his public appearances and media campaigns stressed this assertion. Imagine everyone’s surprise when Nethercutt later reversed course, and in a limited press statement claimed he had made a mistake and that “thousands of people” had

urged him to run again! In response, supporters of term limits placed a full-page ad in the Spokane Spokesman-Review, defining “Nethercutt” as a verb meaning “to go back on one’s word”; “to say one thing in order to get elected to high political office, and then to do the opposite once elected”; and “to be swept off one’s feet by the perks and privileges of Washington, DC.” The ad went on to say that synonyms of “Nethercutt” included “hypocrite, opportunity, and dishonest.”

Overwhelming negative publicity – The old saying “A picture is worth a thousand words” is never more true than when it documents inappropriate behavior. The Abu Ghraib Prison scandal was a case where the impact of powerful images overcame the government’s robust efforts to tell its side of the story. Despite the fact that a military member reported the wrongdoing, and the chain-of-command initiated an immediate investigation and publicly disclosed

that investigation, the damning nature of the photographs, once leaked to investigative journalists, generated overwhelmingly negative media coverage.

The armed forces, politicians, and federal, state, and local government officials all understand the value of providing timely, accurate information to the public. Even when leaders do not like appearing before the press, most realize that providing information to the news media is a requirement of public service. In the Abu Ghraib Prison incident, commanders reacted swiftly to inappropriate behavior once it was discovered, but it is unlikely that any action – even proactively releasing the photographs – might have tempered the firestorm of negative coverage that ensued. The nature of the images ensured that the discussion of the behavior of a few, rather than the corrective actions taken by the organization, remained the key point of discussion.

The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina is another recent example of powerful and disturbing images dwarfing public relations efforts that came too little and too late. While some corporate PR professionals and communicators from other government agencies had practiced disaster response, their impact was barely felt in the midst of the overwhelming images and lack of inter-agency coordination. Lack of coordination by parish, city, state and federal officials and no formalized JIC/JIS operation made government appear sluggish and unable to respond. When officials did communicate with the public, they lacked basic facts like those found in well publicized reports, predicting potential outcomes if the levees were breached, and how easily New Orleans, most of which is below sea level, could be submerged. The ensuing perception created by this lack of awareness was that federal officials had been negligent, not paying attention to the numerous scientific experts – including the Army Corps of Engineers – who predicted a New Orleans disaster scenario. While lessons learned are still being compiled, it's clear that communications leadership was sorely missed until U.S. Army Lieutenant General Honore was deployed into the region and stepped in to fill an obvious gap regarding “who was in charge.”

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NOTES

The coal mining tragedy at West Virginia's Sago mine in early 2006 is another example of poorly handled communication efforts during crisis. The International Coal Group (ICG) initially miscommunicated the condition of the trapped miners to their families, indicating 11 of the 12 miners had survived. Three hours of celebration passed before the truth that 11 of 12 had died was conveyed to family members. Reports later surfaced that rescuers and ICG representatives knew of their mistaken communication 20 minutes after its utterance, but it took three hours to publicly correct the mistake. To make matters worse, the mine where the deaths occurred had 273 safety violations within the previous two years, including violations for inadequate safeguards against the collapse of the mine roof and inadequate ventilation to guard against toxic gas buildup. PR managers need to understand that in the time of crisis, absolute transparency is the best policy – and that releasing negative information that will likely become public knowledge is better done on your timetable than allowing opponent and detractors to control the release and framing of negative information.

Bad news seldom gets better with time; but adopting a policy of transparency shortens the life cycle of bad news, and adds to the credibility of the organization willing to address its problems up front. First to the chalkboard gets to shape the story, and what the public hears first is often what they believe and remember.

Benefits from Working with the Media

Develop an understanding of what local reporters are looking for – What types of stories do they usually cover (their “beat”)? Do they have an agenda? Are they fair?

Establishing a rapport with local reporters makes it difficult for them to view your organization as just another bureaucratic agency. The reporter now has a “face” to identify with and reporters tend to be more positive or at least more balanced when dealing with people they have built a positive relationship with. This results in a better opportunity to tell your side of the story.

By consistently providing requested information and/or story ideas to local reporters, they are more likely to cover the positive actions of your agency.



WHO ARE THEY AND WHAT DO THEY WANT?

The Big 3+1:

Print, Radio, Television, and the Web



What Do Print News Organizations Want?

They want details – Many times the print news media may not send someone to the scene of an incident, or they may not have images to go with their story. So they have to ask many detailed questions to get a sense of what the incident was like and then “paint a picture” in the reader’s mind with words.

Expect questions to be more detail oriented (e.g., What color was the car? Was there a name on the truck carrying hazmat? How high did the flames reach? How far did the winds carry it?).

Print reporters also make use of “background” information (history of an event, similar events in the past, history of individuals involved in the event, etc.). Print journalists often write comprehensive “sidebar” stories that may be an analysis of the event, profiles of individuals involved, or a chronology of proceedings leading up to, causing, and immediately following the event.



History of Print in the United States

Benjamin Harris published the first colonial newspaper, *Publick Occurrences*, in 1690. It was filled with slanderous material about the Puritans and sex scandals in the French Royal house. Not much has changed since then.

Wire services, such as the Associated Press, fall loosely under the banner of print media. Wire services provide news and photos to thousands of news outlets across the globe. Some of these services offer television and radio coverage, as well. Wire services have very large audiences – the Associated Press claims to be a source of news, photos, graphics, audio, and video for more than one billion

people a day. Wire services also provide “datebook” functions for many news outlets, giving them a schedule of upcoming news briefings and other events in their area.

What Do Radio News Organizations Want?

They want audio – Radio news wants short, concise information about an event, usually in the speaker’s own words. They like 3–5 second “sound bites” to use in their stories, and most often gather these via the phone.

News/talk stations often cover a wider range of stories in a bit more depth.



History of Radio News in the U.S.



Radio news preceded the formal establishment of radio stations. In 1916, Lee DeForest arranged with a New York newspaper to broadcast election returns from his private broadcast facility. Hundreds of people tuned in on home-built receivers to an experimental transmission to hear DeForest say, “Charles Evans Hughes will be the next president of the United States.”

The first radio news report was also the first radio news inaccuracy.

Music stations, if they offer news, usually cover only a few short, two- to three-sentence stories during a newscast. Often these stations get their news from networks (both local and national) that provide news for a large number of stations at the same time. Radio networks provide news services, including full newscasts and/or traffic reporting to multiple radio stations in one or more broadcast markets.

Public Radio stations tend to spend more time on a story and add more detail. They often use “natural sound,” or the background audio of an event during their stories (e.g., the sound of running water played under a story about flooding or the sound of wind under a story about a windstorm).

When working with radio stations, assume all telephone interviews are taped and may be played back on the air.

Non-English stations can play a key role in reaching audiences that might be missed by other media outlets. Don't forget to include them in any information you want to disseminate.

TELEVISION

✓ Local news programs

Spot news

Regular local news

Investigative reports

✓ Feature/entertainment programs

✓ National news

✓ National entertainment

✓ International news

What Do Television News Organizations Want?

They want pictures – Television is a visual medium. Often events that would not be considered for broadcast during the local news become stories when the station has video of the event (e.g., a simple car accident becomes a news story when the station photographer happened to capture it on tape). Stories of importance to many people will often go unreported because there are no exciting pictures to use (e.g., an important city meeting with people just sitting around a table and talking is not visually exciting – so the meeting may go uncovered).

NOTES



- ✓ Remember that television is an emotional medium. Viewers will remember how you looked and behaved more than the content of what you said.
- ✓ Make sure the background shots in a TV interview do not put you or your agency in a bad light.
- ✓ The microphone/camera is always on – if you can see it, it can record you.

What Do Web-Based News Organizations Want?

They want the same access that traditional media outlets have – During the 2002 Winter Olympic Games web-based reporting organizations were issued media credentials. This was the first time an international organization officially recognized solely web-based reporting as a legitimate news source.

Most web-based news organizations are attached to more traditional news outlets (daily newspaper, television stations and cable networks), but more web-only news outlets are appearing.

Blogs

A growing source of information online is the web log, or “blog.” A blog is simply a personal web site where people express their thoughts and opinions. Blogging is a rapidly growing phenomenon, with an estimated 4 million active blogs in existence as of November 2004 and an estimated 15,000 new blogs being added each day. Many bloggers consider themselves amateur journalists – often digging into stories and expressing opinions about current local, national, and worldwide events. In terms of viewership, the Pew Internet & American Life Project estimates about 11 percent (approximately 50 million) of Internet users are regular blog readers. Active bloggers, meanwhile, update their blogs regularly, to the tune of more than 275,000 posts daily, or about 11,000 updates an hour.

Blog traffic is known to spike sharply when certain web-communicable events occur. Vast increases in web traffic in 2004 were measured during the Iowa



caucuses in January when Howard Dean's infamous "scream" became a top download. Other top-blogged events in 2004 included the beheading of American civilian Nicholas Berg in May; the Democratic and Republican political conventions in July and August; and Election Day, November 2, when political blogs averaged roughly a 130-200 percent increase in traffic, according to data supplied by comScore.

"I think there's a world market for about five computers."

— Thomas J. Watson
Chairman of the Board, IBM, 1943

"Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons."
— Popular Mechanics Magazine
1949

About Reporters

Do reporters today have to work at "traditional" news outlets? Is someone a reporter if he or she:



CHP Drops Press Pass Program; Media Eye Alternatives

Posted on Friday, November 5, 2004

By Don Thompson, AP

Sacramento — The California Highway Patrol is dropping its decades-old practice of issuing media passes to reporters, citing the changing nature of journalism as well as security issues and the expense.

"Everyone with a video camera or Web site was requesting them," CHP spokesman Tom Marshall said Friday. "It just got so large, we couldn't support 7- to 10,000 of them."

- ✓ Posts news to a personal web site/blog?
- ✓ Prints news for a small, locally circulated flyer distributed to local businesses?
- ✓ Gathers video to sell to a television station or network?

What Do They All Want?

Most reporters feel that the number-one thing anyone can do is to reply quickly to their inquiries — even if

the reply doesn't contain the information the reporter is looking for. Rapid acknowledgement of the reporter's request for information goes far in developing a positive working relationship with the media. But prompt delivery of the requested information goes farther.

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What Else?

Access to the scene (crime scene, fire scene, disaster scene, etc.) --

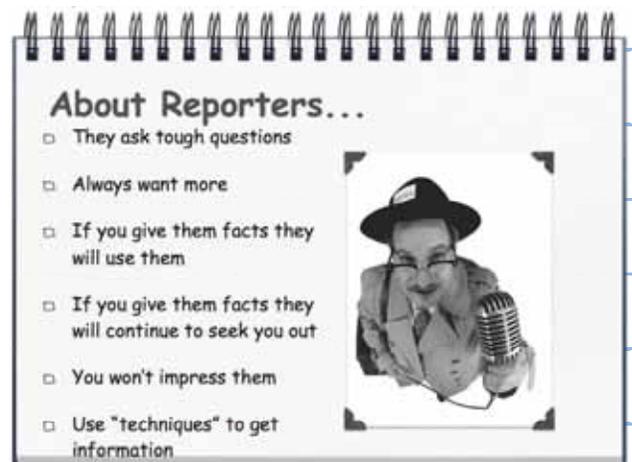
- ✓ If there is a reason that the media cannot be allowed access to the scene, consider using a media pool (a small group of media representatives) to restrict access while allowing the media to get the images and interviews they desire.
- ✓ If a media pool is not an option, consider providing professional-quality images to the media in the form of video and stills.
- ✓ Example: At Ground Zero of the 9/11 attacks, FEMA photographers were allowed in to gather images. The images were then screened and supplied to the media.

Interviews with policy makers, response workers, victims, and survivors –

The media will seek these people out to interview them. The Public Information Officer or Public Affairs Officer (PIO/PAO) should act as a facilitator for these interviews, informing you of opportunities to get your message out and selecting staff who are knowledgeable, who present themselves well, and who will provide positive interviews. For victims/survivors and their families, your PIO/PAO can act as an adviser, aiding them

in dealing with the often-confusing aspect of working with the media during and after a crisis. The PIO/PAO can help prepare them for interviews and can act as an intermediary and shield between the media and victims/survivors,

protecting them from the sometimes insensitive demands of the media. The media want informed, cooperative sources and accurate information.



Understanding Deadlines

Deadlines are important to members of the news media. It is the point at which the story must be filed or it will not make it out to the public. Daily newspapers generally have one deadline a day. Television stations may have

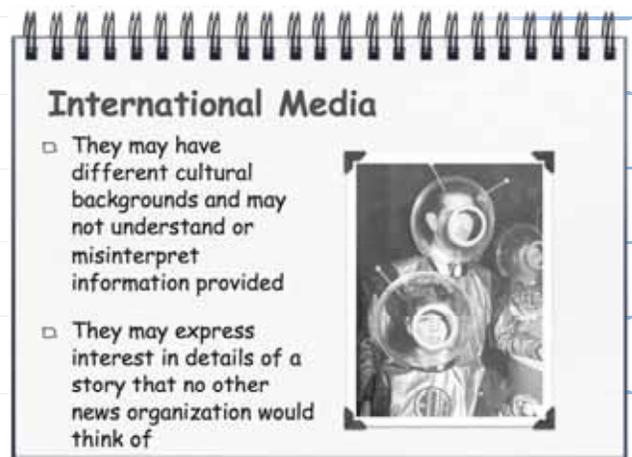
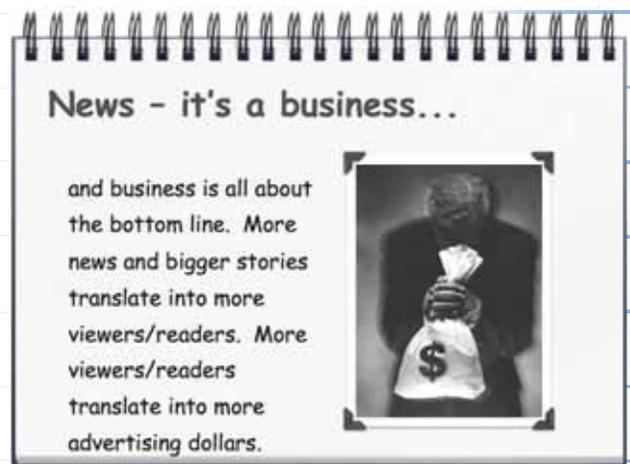
several, and radio stations may have hourly deadlines. Learn the deadlines of your local media – and ask the reporters when their deadline is when they call. Be aware that in the changing climate of news and the rapid adoption of new technologies, including online news dissemination by traditional media outlets, deadlines are becoming less of an issue. All news outlets can post their breaking news to their corresponding web outlet. Additionally, advances in video technology allow television news crews to gather, edit, and file their stories from the field with greater ease. This same technology has simplified “live-at-the-scene” story filing.

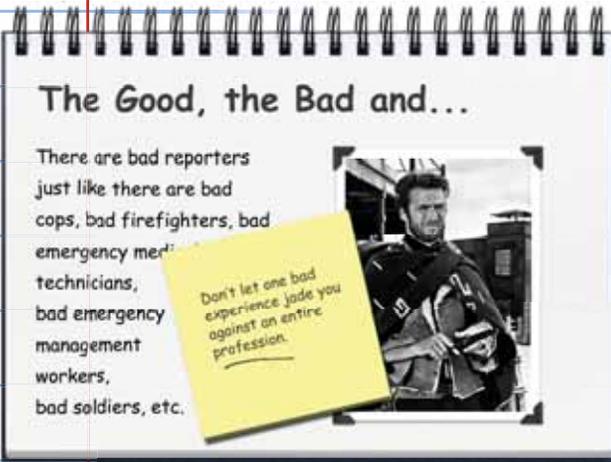
The News Is a Business...

And business is all about the bottom line. More news and bigger stories translate into more viewers/readers. More viewers/readers translate into more advertising dollars.

Remember...

Working with national and international news organizations is different than working with local news outlets. Local reporters have stronger ties to the community, whereas national and international news organizations are only there to cover the story and then leave. International reporters may come from different cultures. They may be interested in different facets of the story or interpret information differently. The best policy is to treat everyone the same, fairly and helpfully. But remember, the local media will be there long after other news media leave town.





The Good, the Bad, and...

In any profession there are people who do a good job and people who don't. This is true in the news business – there are good reporters and there are bad reporters. Don't let a bad experience jade you against all news outlets or reporters.



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MEDIA CRISIS COVERAGE

The Crisis Cycle

Most crises tend to follow a cycle. Media coverage will mirror this cycle in the form of news content and issues covered. Know these phases and anticipate the questions/stories the media will pursue.

- ✓ **Breaking phase** – Media arrives on scene requiring access and information. Basic coverage of who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- ✓ **Sustaining phase** – Media attention grows. Use of subject matter experts to fill immediate information void.
- ✓ **Recovery phase** – The crisis is defined. Questions on cause, problems, and blame surface. A reduction in media interest may occur.
- ✓ **Anniversary phase** – Spike in interest. Questions on current status or lessons learned.

Information the Media Will Want During a Crisis

The cause – The why, which is usually the last of the W's (who, what, when, where, why) to become known, but the first question asked. Do not speculate, but provide as much accurate information you can at the time.

Eyewitnesses or first responders to the scene – Eyewitness reports add color and first-hand knowledge to an event. It makes everyday people into heroes and on-the-scene observers. Other questions the media will ask may include:

- ✓ Who called the alarm
- ✓ How many injured/killed
- ✓ Nature of injuries, where injured are receiving care, where the dead are being taken
- ✓ If anyone of prominence is among the dead or injured
- ✓ Circumstances surrounding the escape of survivors or why the dead could not escape
- ✓ How many affected
- ✓ How many response workers
- ✓ What agencies are involved
- ✓ Who's in charge

- ✓ Extent of event
- ✓ Who first arrived to help
- ✓ What the first responders saw on arrival
- ✓ Any indication/warning/advance notice that the emergency was about to happen
- ✓ Could this have been prevented

Extent of response to the incident --

- ✓ How many persons, pieces of equipment, and departments responded
- ✓ How the situation is handled
- ✓ Assistance by any prominent persons
- ✓ Acts of heroism
- ✓ What is being done to safeguard the community from a recurrence
- ✓ Who is paying for what
- ✓ Statistics to identify the scope of the crisis or event

Following the Crisis

Encourage media outlets to continue to send out the recovery message after an event:

- ✓ To direct citizens to assistance, basic necessities, and comfort after an emergency.
- ✓ To help maintain calm, stability, and community cohesiveness.

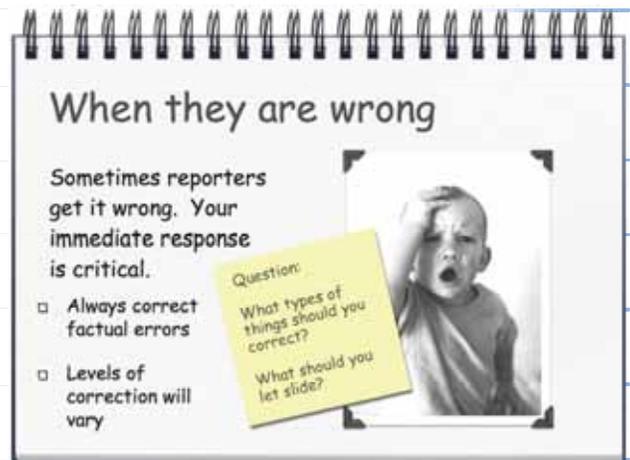
When Reporters Get It Wrong

Sometimes, in spite of the best efforts to put accurate information into their hands, reporters goof. They get it wrong.

Your immediate response is critical.

Always correct factual errors

– Reporters will use old stories as a reference for current stories, and if a factual error went unchecked in an old story it will be repeated. The print media will file old stories in their “morgue” and have a system for flagging and correcting stories to prevent errors from running again – but only if you alert them.



The easiest way to correct a factual error is to call the reporter. If you do not get satisfaction, you can “go up the chain” to the editor and beyond.

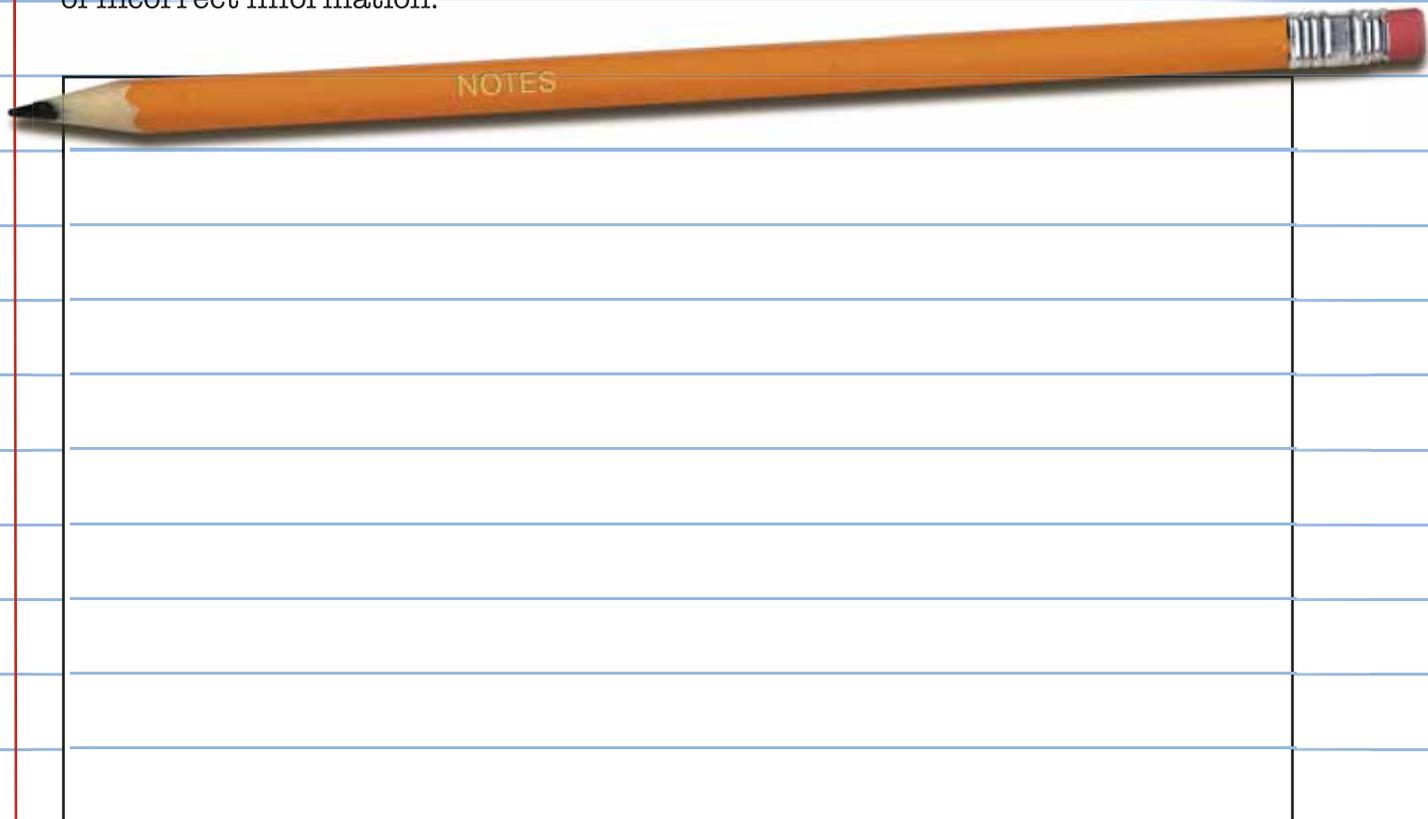
Levels of correction will vary – A simple factual error may only require correcting the morgue copy to prevent the error from being repeated.

A critical error that needs follow up could require:

- ✓ A printed correction that will run in small print in a pre-set area of the paper the next day.
- ✓ A printed correction AND a new story (in roughly the same location of the paper as the incorrect story) to reinforce the accurate information.
- ✓ A full retraction running in the same location as the incorrect story.

The reporter and media outlet should be advised of mistakes each and every time. Your demand for further coverage of the correction should be used somewhat sparingly and weighed against the impact of the error.

Technology allows us to post the correct information – If a reporter gets it wrong access to agency web sites, text messages and faxes allow us to post corrections and remedy misinformation rapidly. These corrections can then be disseminated to all news outlets within minutes helping to minimize the impact of incorrect information.



NEW TECHNOLOGY EVOLUTION -- WHERE IS IT ALL GOING?

Advances in communication technology, from the World Wide Web to global cellular service to enhanced handheld multimedia communication devices, will have significant and far-reaching effects on the world we live in. We cannot even begin to guess at how our society will be shaped by these advances in communication, but in order to compete and excel, we must embrace these changes and utilize them to accomplish our goals.

Example: The invention of the printing press with movable type – a new form of communication technology in the 15th century – heralded a massive change in world culture and economics.

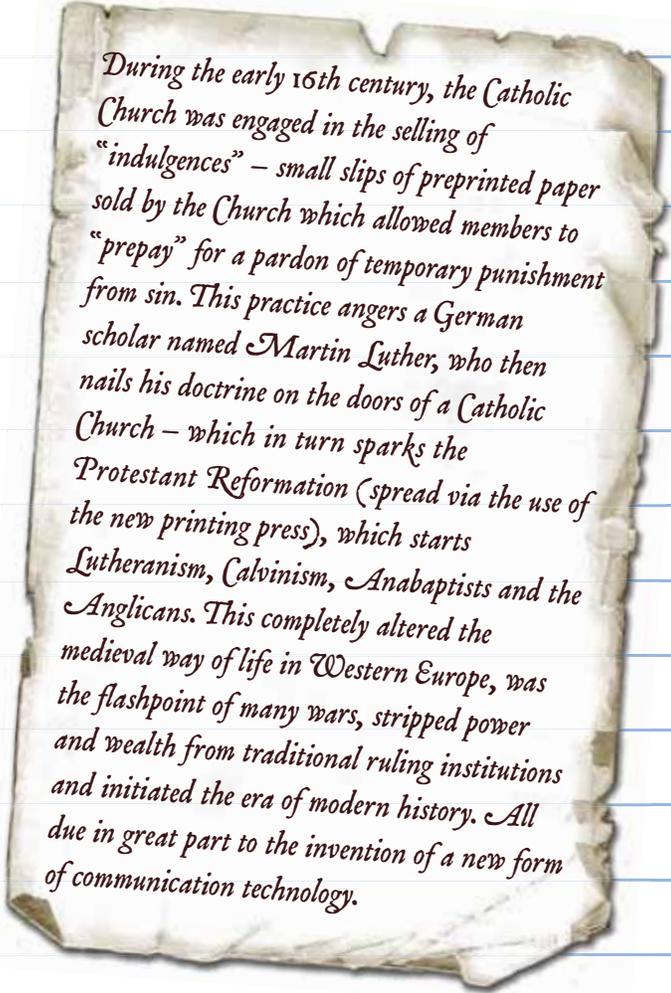
Technology and the Media -- History of the Web

1835 – The “analytical engine” is first conceptualized by inventor Charles Babbage: this hand-cranked calculator was the first general-purpose computer ever conceived.

1858 – The Atlantic cable is established to carry instantaneous communications across the ocean for the first time.

1945 – President Roosevelt’s science adviser during World War II, Dr. Vannevar Bush, outlines an idea for a machine that can store textual and graphical information so that any piece of information can be linked to any other piece.

1957 – While responding to the threat of the Soviets (Sputnik, in particular) President Eisenhower creates both the interstate highway system and the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA).



During the early 16th century, the Catholic Church was engaged in the selling of “indulgences” – small slips of preprinted paper sold by the Church which allowed members to “prepay” for a pardon of temporary punishment from sin. This practice angers a German scholar named Martin Luther, who then nails his doctrine on the doors of a Catholic Church – which in turn sparks the Protestant Reformation (spread via the use of the new printing press), which starts Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anabaptists and the Anglicans. This completely altered the medieval way of life in Western Europe, was the flashpoint of many wars, stripped power and wealth from traditional ruling institutions and initiated the era of modern history. All due in great part to the invention of a new form of communication technology.

1965 – Researchers at ARPA connect the TX-2 computer in Massachusetts to the Q-32 in California with a low-speed dial-up telephone line, creating the first wide-area computer network. The word “hypertext” is coined.

1972 – Initial “hot” application, electronic mail, is introduced.

1990 – Work begins on a hypertext GUI browser+editor. The name for this project is “WorldWideWeb.” ARPANET ceases to exist. “World.std.com” becomes the first commercial provider of Internet dial-up access.

2004 – The number of minutes adults spend simultaneously surfing the web and watching TV has increased a dramatic 72 percent, from an average of 174 minutes per week in 2001 to 300 minutes per week in 2004.

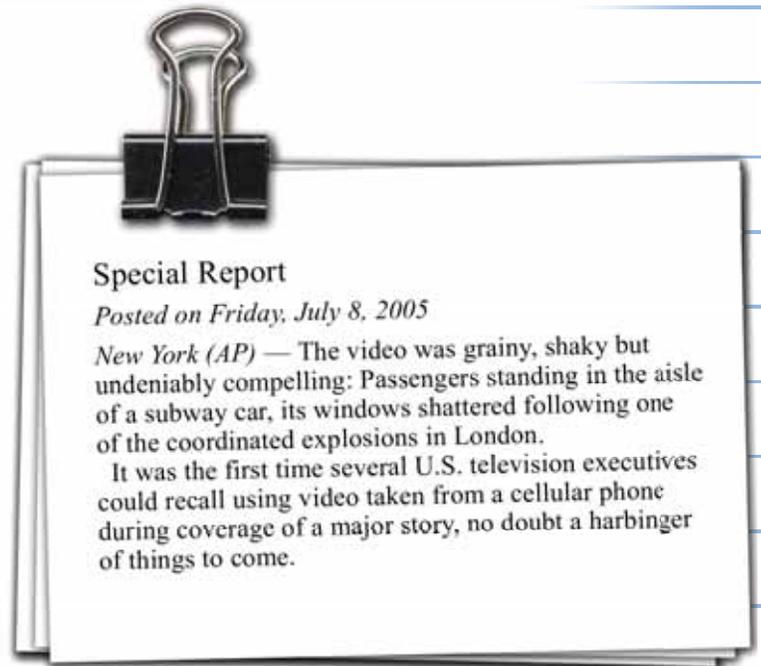
August 1, 2005 – Over 880 million people worldwide now have Internet access. The US now accounts for about 25 percent of global Internet access (68 percent, or about 204 million adults).

Technology and the Media -- Newsgathering

Advances in technology are allowing reporters to gather, edit, and file their stories in the field. This reduces the amount of time required to create a news “package.” Other areas in which technology is impacting the business of news gathering are:

- ✓ Web casting
- ✓ “Pod” casting
- ✓ Phone cameras
- ✓ Satellite/microwave links
- ✓ Amateur video
- ✓ Microcameras/microphones

Cellular phones in Singapore (where they are usually about 2 years ahead of the US in introducing new cellular technology) can now record up to 60 minutes of video. That video can be transmitted anywhere to anyone.



TECHNOLOGY AND THE MEDIA -- HOW THE PUBLIC WANTS ITS NEWS

News on demand! Anytime, anyplace, anywhere – news will be available! With the advancement and subsequent proliferation of mobile communication devices, the public will expect to be able to access news and other information instantly from anywhere.

News On Demand -- The Result:

- ✓ Elimination of deadlines
- ✓ Increased competition between reporters
- ✓ Reduction of journalistic standards
- ✓ Increase in “niche” reporting

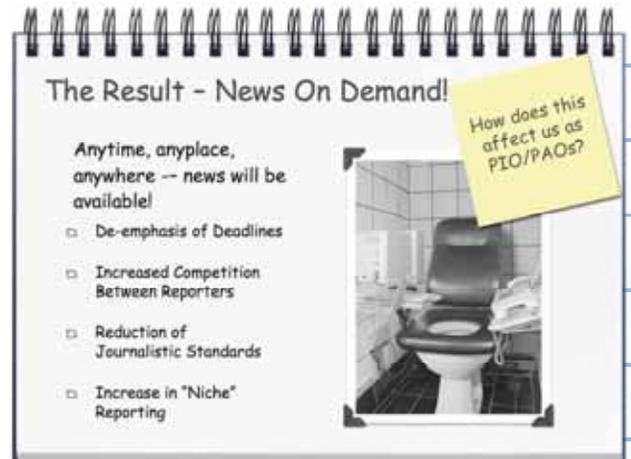
Direct Information Management

It is now possible to mass communicate to the public without going through news outlets. New technologies allow government agencies direct access to the public.

April 2005 – Vatican police send out text messages to all cell phones in Rome warning crowds to stay away. The Vatican also used text messages to notify the world’s media of Pope John Paul’s death.

May 2005 – Beijing police send text message to hundred of thousands of cell phones in the Beijing area urging them to avoid any “emotional or illegal gathering” over their national holiday.

Communication technologies are evolving rapidly, allowing government agencies to provide their messages unfiltered by the media – and sometimes correct media misinformation or biased reporting. Web sites, email, RSS (Really Simple Syndication), text messaging, streaming video, “pod” casting, and other tools let you get your message out directly to the public.



TALK TO ME -- THE ART OF THE INTERVIEW

Standing in front of a camera with lights glaring into your eyes while someone asks you questions is not a natural state for most of us. Being interviewed by the media can be an intimidating experience. But with forethought and practice you can give an effective and knowledgeable interview.

How to Say It

Know what information/messages you want to communicate. Also know what you do not want to say or what you cannot discuss.

- ✓ Be clear and concise – don't ramble. Keep your statements short. Phrase things so that a 12-year-old could understand.
- ✓ Stick to the facts and key messages.
- ✓ If you don't know say so. Never lie.
- ✓ Don't be afraid of bad news. In general, best to deal with it quickly and completely.
- ✓ Never speculate ("What if" questions). Speculation can lead to the perception that the crisis is much more severe than it is.
- ✓ Be first with the information – slow release of verified information will lead the media to other, possibly less credible, sources.
- ✓ Be empathic and reassuring – even a small crisis can be devastating to those involved.
- ✓ Stay positive yet realistic – public confidence in the response effort is critical.
- ✓ Communicate technical details clearly – avoid jargon and acronyms and have visuals such as maps or models available for enhanced explanations.
- ✓ Do not repeat negative words from questions.
- ✓ Speak only about your agency and what it is doing.
- ✓ Be careful not to "open a new can of worms" by bringing up unsolicited information.
- ✓ Off the record? No such thing.



In any interview situation it is important to remain calm and in control. Never lose your temper – if you do, your negative behavior will become the story and any positive actions by your agency will be lost. Remember, you are the official source of information and you are representing your organization or agency. Your job is to respond honestly and in a way that maintains a positive image of your organization.

Print journalists may use more time in an interview and require follow up. They need more background, more details and more analysis. Be prepared for this.

Broadcast journalists may try to position you so that the background is more visually interesting (smoke, fire, flashing lights in the background). They will also need accommodations for their equipment.

A basic interview will require the basic information: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Often this information is not available, but you need to give the media the facts as you know them at the moment.

Investigative reporters, however, are skillful “diggers of detail” and enter an interview already knowing a significant amount of background detail. They may ask a combination of open-ended, direct, pointed, and challenging questions to build their story.



- ✓ **Choose your words carefully** – A wrong word can't be withdrawn. First impressions are lasting, later corrections often do not help or even air, and your remarks can be taken out of context. However, you can control the tone, pace, and direction of the interview by always stating the facts.
- ✓ **Stay calm** – Don't lose your composure if a reporter is "rough" on you, and don't take it personally. It will not, under any circumstances, look or sound good to lose your temper on TV or radio.
- ✓ **You don't have to rush your answers** – Interviewers use long pauses (pregnant pauses) to get you to open up and say more than you intended to. Don't fall into that trap.
- ✓ **Use careful thinking to turn the reporter's negative into a positive for your side** – For example, a question that begins with a "Isn't it true that..." can be responded to positively with "No, that's not true. In fact, the situation is much better..."
- ✓ **Make sure you understand the topic of the interview or the direct question** – Remember to listen to the entire question, then think about what is really being asked, and finally, formulate your answer. Ask the reporter to repeat the question or rephrase it. Don't be afraid to say: "I'm not sure I understand your question."
- ✓ **Keep your answers as short as possible while stating your point clearly and concisely** – Practice this on various subjects you must typically address. Don't speak in jargon or acronyms; use plain English.

WHAT DOES THE PUBLIC WANT TO KNOW?

Who Is Your Audience?

When dealing with the media during a crisis, it is often easy to forget that the people we are actually trying to reach are the members of the public. When developing statements about the crisis, remember who all of your audiences are:

- ✓ Community members directly affected
- ✓ Others interested in what is happening
- ✓ Special populations, such as non-English speaking or special needs
- ✓ Workers responding to the incident and their families
- ✓ Other stakeholders

Crisis Response Message Triangle

- ✓ **What happened?** These facts should be released as soon as the information is confirmed. Updates should be frequent and numerous.
- ✓ **What does it mean to me?** Place yourself in the public's shoes. Provide them with information to enhance their safety, and address potential concerns. Fear of the unknown is greater than fear of the facts.
- ✓ **What are you doing about it?** The public wants to get "back to normal" as soon as possible. Tell them what you are doing to control the situation and return order. Explain how the process will work, how long it could take, and what they can expect.



WHAT DO THE MEDIA WANT TO KNOW?

To understand what the media wants to know, it is important to understand what makes a news story – or what is “newsworthy.” Newsworthiness is a standard criteria or justification for information to become a news story.

The elements that make up a news story are:

- ✓ **Conflict** – Can range from two neighbors fighting to nations at war.
- ✓ **Controversy** – Usually having to do with people's core beliefs (e.g., abortion, use of public lands, flag burning).
- ✓ **Timeliness** – Happening now. If it happened yesterday it's not news, it's history.
- ✓ **Impact** – The number of people affected (e.g., the layoff of 20 people from a small business has little impact on the community, but the layoff of 2000 people from a major employer has a significant impact).
- ✓ **Proximity** – Nearness to us. A small earthquake that rattles windows in our home town is front-page news, whereas a large earthquake that kills 1500 people in China is page 3.

DEVELOPING KEY MESSAGES

Any statement you make should consist of no more than three or four key messages you want to convey to the public. In the initial stages of the crisis, information about health and safety issues should constitute the primary message. Other key messages should have information to calm the public, including: what is being done to respond and recover from the crisis, dedication to solving the problem, actions taken, levels of expertise, and statements of concern. Try to phrase your key messages in brief sound bites for ease of understanding.

Remember the Message Triangle (page 32) – What happened? What does it mean to me? What are you doing about it?

Additionally, Dr. Vince Covello from Columbia University has found that to effectively deliver information to the public during a crisis you must be perceived to be a trustworthy and credible source.

One of the most important things to remember is that perception equals reality. The following theories help to explain what happens to an individual's ability to assimilate information when he or she feels threatened.



RISK = HAZARD + OUTRAGE

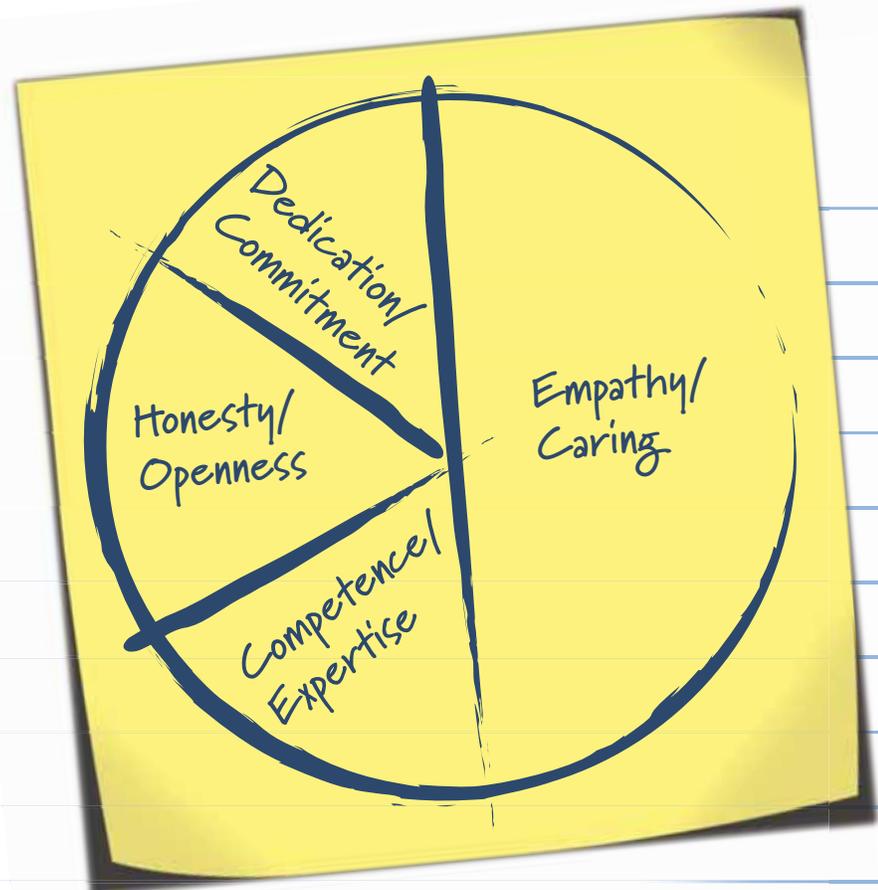
Trust Determination Theory – When people are upset they often distrust that others are listening, caring, empathetic, honest, open, competent, expert, dedicated, or committed.

NOTES

Factors that build trust are:

- ✓ Caring and empathy
- ✓ Competence and expertise
- ✓ Honesty and openness
- Dedication and commitment

Your audience will evaluate the credibility of your communications against these factors, and over 50 percent of your credibility will depend on whether you are perceived as empathetic and caring. In most communications your audience will decide on your credibility in the first 9–30 seconds.



The higher the level of your audience's emotion or distrust, the more you will need to consistently communicate that you are listening, that you care, and that you are empathetic.

You can build trust and credibility by using support from credible third-party sources. A lower-credibility source takes on the credibility of the highest credible source that agrees with its position on an issue. When a lower-credibility source attacks the credibility of a higher-credibility source, the lower-credibility source loses more credibility. Remember, the only information source that can effectively attack the credibility of another source is one of equal or higher credibility.

Who typically has the highest credibility?

- ✓ High: Health professionals, scientists, educators, advisory groups
- ✓ Medium: Media, activist groups
- ✓ Low: Industry, paid external consultants

NOTES

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Mental Noise Theory – When people are upset they have difficulty hearing, understanding, and remembering.

- ✓ Send a limited number of clear messages: three key messages.
- ✓ Keep messages brief: 10 seconds or 30 words.
- ✓ Repeat messages: Tell them what you are going to tell them. Tell them. Tell them what you told them.
- ✓ Use visual aids: graphics, slides.
- ✓ Be aware that it takes three positive messages to balance one negative statement.
- ✓ Avoid unnecessary use of the words: No, Not, Never, Nothing, None.

– Vincent T. Covello, Director of the Center for Risk Communication, New York
in “Communication In Risk Situations”
published by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, Washington, DC, 2002

WHAT NOT TO WEAR &

FUN THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR HANDS

Researchers have found that somewhere between 50 and 90 percent of communication is nonverbal. Body language or other nonverbal, physical cues can tell an audience more than you realize – about how you are feeling and whether you are telling the truth. Your body language can distract your audience’s attention away from listening to your message.

What To Do

Look at the reporter and maintain eye contact. Do not respond to the camera, unless you are at a different location from the reporter and must respond to the camera, or the reporter gives you the opportunity to speak directly to the public.

Make sure your hair is groomed and your mode of dress appropriate. You never want your audience to notice your clothing, so make the clothing as understated as possible. However, don’t wear a suit to a fire on a hot day. Dress appropriate to the situation at hand.



The eyes – Never wear sunglasses. Unless you can't see at all without your eyeglasses, remove those, as well. Seeing your eyes ensures that you are trustworthy, believable, and likeable.

Hats – Do not wear a hat unless it is required as part of a uniform by your agency. If you wear a hat, position it so that it does not cast a shadow over your eyes. You can ask the photographers to assist you.

Umbrellas – If you have to hold an umbrella for the interview, make sure the umbrella is tipped back behind your head. If you are being interviewed outside, always look into the sun so there will be good light on your face and no shadows on your eyes. However, try not to squint.

The hair – The first rule of “television hair” is to get it out of your eyes. For women, the best television hair is away from the face and not moving. You should not have to fuss with your hair. It is very distracting and unprofessional for an interviewee's hair to be blowing in her face and constantly being brushed aside. If you are a woman being interviewed outside, pull your hair back into a bun or ponytail so the wind doesn't blow your hair into your face. For men, make sure your hair is combed and neat. Don't be afraid of hairspray to keep things in place – especially if the interview is outside. If you are bald/balding, make sure you powder the top to avoid the shine.

Color – Television cameras read colors differently than the eye does. Cameras always read blue well, but reds often can be read as brown or orange. Stay away from all-white for an interview. Also, stay far away from anything with lines. Cameras will read the lines as a blur.

Clothes – You always want to look clean and crisp on television so nothing distracts from your words. Women should avoid wearing bright scarves, large reflective earrings, large pins, etc. Also for women, more skin equals less credibility. Men should be clean shaven or have neatly trimmed facial hair – this includes trimming nose and ear hair. Men should not wear “funny” ties that stand out and make a statement. You never want to your audience to notice your clothing, so make the clothing as understated as possible. Keep it simple.

Uniforms – Uniforms are icons of your profession and communicate that the wearer has a certain amount of expertise in his or her field. If your agency is uniformed, wear that uniform for interviews. If your agency does not have a uniform, dress appropriately for the situation (e.g., a suit in an office, working clothes at a disaster site).

Identification – For security reasons, many agencies require their staff to remove any agency ID prior to appearing in front of a camera. You can place it in your pocket or turn it around so the front does not show.

Posture – Stand straight with your feet planted. Don't move about or "wobble" while you talk. Don't touch your face with your hands during the interview.

What to do with your hands – A common question is what to do with your hands during an interview. Let your arms hang straight down with your hands at your side. It is okay to gesture with your hands during an interview – but keep the gestures small and confined to the area between your shoulders and your hips. If you gesture, try to keep your palms "up" because this pose automatically signals trust in the viewer. Avoid placing your hands in your pockets or holding them behind your back in the "at ease" pose.

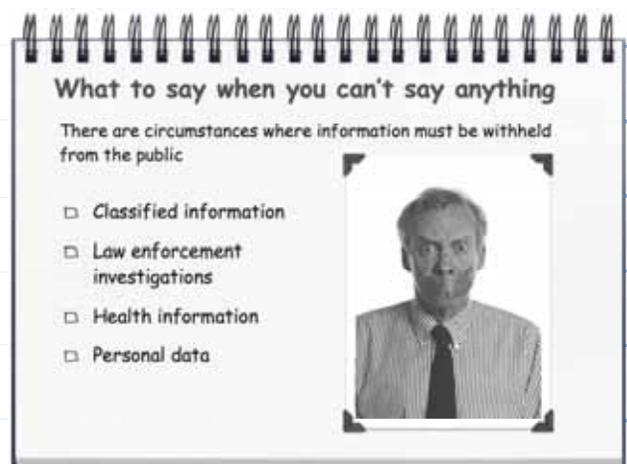
Just remember that you can conduct a successful interview, give the reporter amazingly knowledgeable answers, and appear confident and in control – but if you are wearing the wrong clothing and don't "look the part," your words will be lost.



What to Say, When to Say It, and When to Shut Up

Policy issues – These should be addressed by you or other policy makers. Your PIO/PAO can address these types of issues if he or she is well versed in the issues and reasons for the policy. Your PIO/PAO can also be used as a shield to distance yourself from unfavorable issues. But use this tactic sparingly, because it can turn against you and make you appear evasive or not in control of your agency.

Open-ended questions – They are designed to relax you, but may give you a false sense of security that the interview is going well. Listen carefully and plan your answers. Open-ended



questions can be the most difficult to answer well (e.g., “How are things going?” vs. “What support is the state providing to the affected jurisdictions?”).

Speculation – The media wants you to speculate and advance its story. By speculating, you predict an unknown future and may be incorrect. Don't give in to temptation. This takes discipline. Return the interview to the facts you are prepared to release.

Request for opinion – Opinion questions prompt you to take a position. Your response will likely be edited or used next to an opposing response from another person. Remember: release only official, factual, and confirmed information. Always return to the facts and stick to the facts.

Inquiries about other agencies – You have no authority to speak for other agencies. Responding to questions outside of your area of expertise or jurisdiction makes you the source for another media story. It can destroy your credibility and alienate you from other agencies. Defer questions to the appropriate agencies.

- ☛ The only time you may provide information from another agency is while working in a Joint Information Center / Joint Information System – and the only information you should release then is material that has already been approved for release by that agency (e.g., while working in a JIS, you could provide information about where Red Cross shelters are located if that information has already been approved and released by a Red Cross official).

When you can't say anything – There are times when you cannot release information. Active criminal investigations, national security, personnel issues, or health care laws may be reasons you cannot provide certain pieces of information to the public and the media. When you cannot comment, take the time to explain to the media why you cannot discuss certain pieces of information.

If you cannot reveal some information, often you can discuss other details to help the media build their stories. Plans in place, training, and processes used by your agency can all be highlighted to help them with their story. Avoid talking about cause, blame, or costs. These issues can be addressed following the crisis.

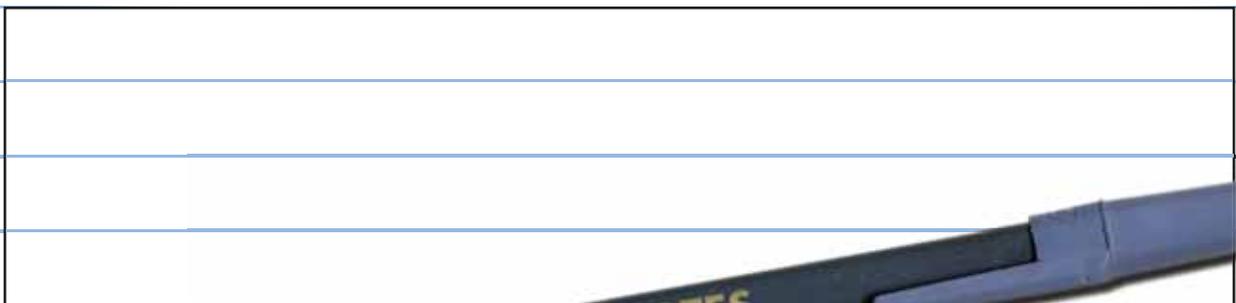
What about "No comment"? Using the phrase “No comment” builds a barrier between you, the reporter, and, perhaps, the audience. It suggests you are

trying to hide something. Also, it implies that you are indirectly confirming the supposition in the question. You may be asked tougher questions as a result. Public opinion may sway against you.

"No Comment" Alternatives:

- ✓ I don't have all of the details yet, but let me tell you what we do know.
- ✓ Let me help you by referring you to someone with more information.
- ✓ I don't intend to second guess our elected officials. They'll make the decision.
- ✓ Our board will consider this ordinance the same way it always does. The board members will balance the needs and wishes of all their constituents.
- ✓ Our board will hear all the voices and consider all the interests.
- ✓ It's too early to begin looking at costs – our primary concern at this time is making sure everyone is safe.
- ✓ I can't talk about that because it's part of an active investigation, but I can tell you about some of the methods we use in an investigation such as this.
- ✓ My area of expertise is _____. I'll be happy to talk with you about that.
- ✓ You're asking me to predict the future and I can't do that.
- ✓ I don't know the answer to that. Let me recommend someone who can help you.

Remember, provocative questions from the media are calculated to get a rise out of you. Lively, controversial coverage boosts listeners/viewers/readership, raising ratings (for electronic media) and advertising revenue. It isn't personal.



Responding With "I Don't Know..."

Don't be afraid to say "I don't know." When you respond honestly that you don't know, you have successfully deflected the question. You have diffused the energy, pace, and pattern of the reporter's questioning. And you have given yourself time to research the answer.

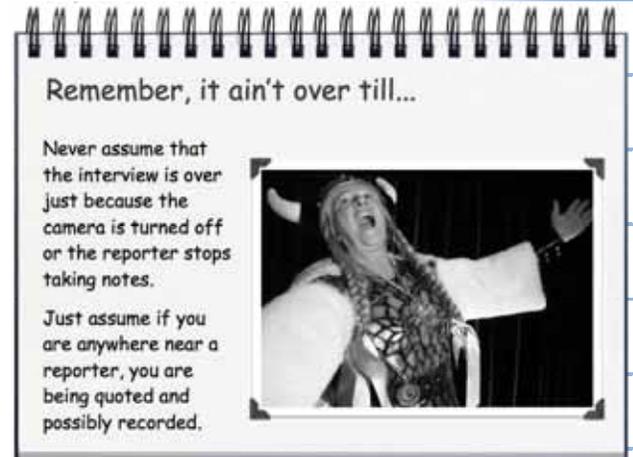
It Ain't Over Till...

Never assume that the interview is over just because the camera is turned off or the reporter stops taking notes. Cameras can run without their red lights on, audio can be picked up from microphones when a camera is turned the other way, information and quotes can be recalled and repeated when the interviewer's

pencil is in his or her pocket. Just assume, if you are anywhere near a reporter, that you are being quoted and possibly recorded.

At the same time, don't refuse to continue talking to reporters just because the "formal" interview is complete. Treat them with respect and professionalism.

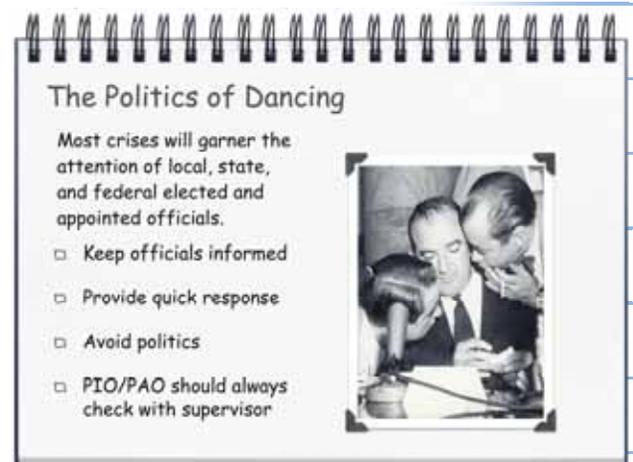
Don't ask the reporter, "How did I do?" It indicates a lack of experience and sophistication that could color the reporter's impression of you and your agency.



The Politics of Dancing

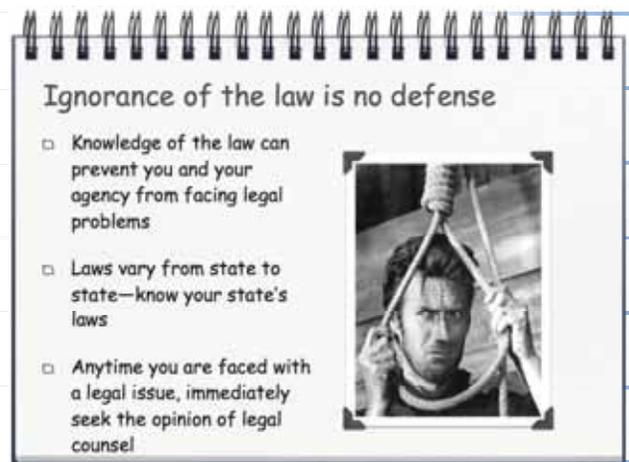
Most crises will garner the attention of local, state, and federal elected and appointed officials. Keeping these individuals informed about the situation can reduce criticism, minimize uninformed interference, and sometimes result in additional resources being brought to bear on the problem. Be sure to provide quick responses to all government inquiries with assurances of full cooperation. Caution-

work to avoid any signs of political favoritism that could cause damage to your agency's image. Ideally, politics should have no place in responding to a crisis. This can be a very sensitive issue. Your PIO/PAO should always coordinate any communication with his or her supervisor or directly with you.



WHAT IS THE LAW?

Knowledge of the law can prevent you and your agency from facing future legal problems that can be costly and time consuming. Laws may often vary from state to state – your PIO/PAO should know what your state's laws are. Anytime you are faced with a legal question or issue you should immediately seek the opinion of your agency's legal counsel.



Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The Freedom of Information Act provides public access to federal records. Most states have similar laws. Agencies have 10 working days to comply with requests for information. Standard fees can apply for information searches, and a request for records may be denied if the record contains information that falls into one of the nine categories listed below.

Categories of Exempt Information:

1. National defense or foreign policy
2. Internal personnel rules and practices
3. Records specifically exempted from disclosure by statute, provided that such statute requires that the matters be withheld from the public, or establishes particular criteria for withholding, or refers to particular types of matters to be withheld
4. Trade secrets and commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential
5. Interagency or intra-agency memoranda or letters that would not be available by law to a private party in litigation
6. Personnel, medical, and similar files (including financial files) that constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
7. Records compiled for law enforcement purposes that interfere with enforcement proceedings, deprive right to a fair trial, are an unwarranted invasion of privacy, disclose the identity of a confidential source, would disclose techniques and procedures for law enforcement to facilitate circumvention of the law, or endanger the life or physical safety of any individual

8. Records for regulation or supervision of financial institutions

9. Information, including maps, concerning the placement of wells

Sunshine Laws

All states have some form of sunshine law on the books. Generally, sunshine laws require formal public notice of government meetings, that all government meetings where formal action is taken or discussed be open to the public, that minutes be maintained, and that executive session be allowed for under certain circumstances, including:

- ✓ Personnel matters – particularly when the agency is firing, hiring, or disciplining an individual employee (In some cases the employee has the right to request a public hearing.)
- ✓ Collective bargaining sessions
- ✓ Discussions with agency attorneys regarding pending or imminent litigation involving the agency
- ✓ Acquisition or sale of public property

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Libel and Slander

Libel and slander are legal claims for false statements of fact about a person that are printed, broadcast, spoken, or otherwise communicated to others. Libel generally refers to statements or visual depictions in written or other permanent form, while slander refers to oral statements and gestures. The term “defamation” is often used to encompass both libel and slander. It usually occurs from news stories that allege crime, fraud, dishonesty, or immoral or dishonorable conduct. Defense from libel includes:

- ✓ **When facts are “provably” true** – This is the primary defense.
- ✓ **Privilege** – Certain people under certain circumstances can state, without fear of being sued, material that may be false, malicious, and damaging when the statement is said to be privileged (and thus not public). Judges, legislators, doctors, lawyers, psychologists, and individuals (chiefly a spouse) can maintain that privilege. Privilege can also apply to public officials and public figures while they are talking about public issues. Public and official proceedings and the contents of most public records are also privileged.
- ✓ **Qualified** – Courts have held that when applied to the press, privilege is not “absolute.” Protection from libel action may be lost or diluted by how the journalist handles the material. This includes errors in reporting and proof of malice.

Surreptitious Recording

Most states allow you to record a conversation to which you are a party without informing the other parties you are doing so. Most of these states have copied the federal law. Some expand on the federal law’s language and prohibit all surreptitious recording or filming without the consent of all parties. Some state statutes go even further, prohibiting unauthorized filming, observing, and broadcasting in addition to recording and eavesdropping, and prescribing additional penalties for divulging or using unlawfully acquired information and for trespassing to acquire it. In most states, the laws allow for civil as well as criminal liability. Most of the state statutes do permit the recording of speeches and conversations that take place where the parties may reasonably expect to be recorded.

SARA Title III -- Right to Know Act

Created in response to the Bhopal, India, chemical disaster, the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) was passed in 1986 with

staggered implementation beginning in 1987. It allows each emergency response plan, material safety data sheet, inventory form, toxic chemical release form, and follow-up emergency notice to be made available to the public upon request. Each local emergency planning committee is required to annually publish a notice that the emergency response plan, material safety data sheets, and inventory forms have been submitted and are available.

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

HIPAA guarantees privacy of individuals' medical records. In strictest form, you cannot release ANY health and/or medical information without the patient's written consent:

- ✓ No patient conditions released to the media.
- ✓ No email transmission of a patient's history.
- ✓ No sharing of patient health information with colleagues.
- ✓ All medical information must be protected as proprietary.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA gives parents rights to their children's education records. Parents have the right to inspect the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools must have written permission from the parent to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties under the conditions stated:

- ✓ School officials with legitimate interest
- ✓ Other schools to which a student is transferring
- ✓ Specified officials for audit or evaluation
- ✓ Organizations conducting studies for the school
- ✓ Legal authorities to comply with judicial orders or subpoenas
- ✓ Appropriate officials in health and safety emergencies
- ✓ State and local authorities within a juvenile justice system

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents about directory information and allow parents a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information.

Copyright Law

A copyright law was first enacted by British Parliament in 1710 as the Statute of Anne. Congress passed the first US copyright law in 1790. It was revised in 1909 and again in 1978 (implementing the Copyright Law of 1976). Copyright protects creative works from being reproduced, performed, or disseminated by others without permission. Work means any original creation of authorship produced in a tangible medium. Copyright may be conferred by license or permission.

Pre-1976 copyright:

- ✓ Is protected for 28 years and may be extended for another 28 years, for a maximum of 56 years from date of publication.

For copyrights after 1976:

- ✓ Work created by an author is protected for the life of the author plus 50 years.
- ✓ Work created by an employee is the copyrighted property of the employer and is protected for 75 years from the date of publication or 100 years from the date of creation.
- ✓ Copyright is lost if a prescribed copyright notice is not placed on all publicly distributed copies.

Fair Use

Fair use permits reproduction of a small amount of copyrighted material as long as the source is specified when copying will have little effect on the value of the original work.

Examples include:

- ✓ Quotation from a book in a critical review
- ✓ Quotation of a short passage in a scholarly or technical book
- ✓ Use in a parody
- ✓ Summary of a speech or article
- ✓ Reproduction by a teacher or student to illustrate a lesson

NOTES

MEDIA ON THE SCENE

Why the media WILL arrive on the scene:

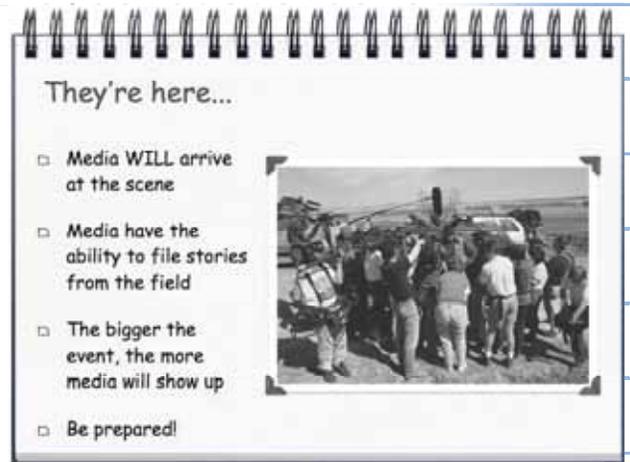
- ✓ To get the most current information.
- ✓ To capture any images they can use in telling the story.
- ✓ To add excitement and immediacy to the story.

All media now have the ability to tell the story from where it is happening.

- ✓ They have remote broadcasting equipment.
- ✓ They have access to freeway cameras, weather cameras, etc.
- ✓ Many television stations have helicopters.
- ✓ Print/web reporters can digitally transmit stories and photographs instantly.

Understand that the vast majority of media outlets can link with their national and international counterparts to transmit a story globally within seconds.

Also understand that the bigger the event, the more media will arrive.



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE IT ALL WORK?

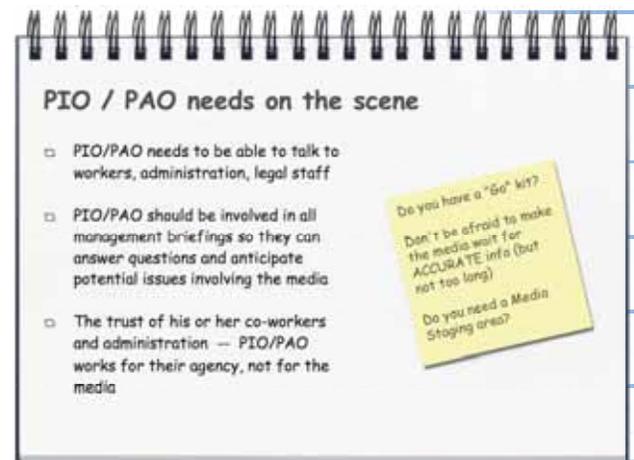
What Is the Law?

State laws vary concerning access to a public safety scene. Media access is an important issue. If your agency does not have a media relations/access policy, your legal department and PIO/PAO should work together to develop a policy beneficial to all.

PIO Needs on the Scene

What your PIO/PAO needs on the scene is complete access.

- ✓ The PIO/PAO needs to be able to talk to workers, administration, and legal staff.
- ✓ The PIO/PAO should be involved in all management briefings so he or she can answer questions and help you anticipate potential issues involving the media.
- ✓ The PIO/PAO needs your trust. The PIO/PAO works for your agency, not for the media.



Media Staging Areas

Many times at the scene of an incident a staging area can be set up to facilitate the enhanced flow of information between the PIO and the media. Prior to establishing the location for this staging area there are several factors to consider:

- ✓ Does it infringe on the scene (for investigative purposes)?
 - ✓ Many times the site of a crisis or disaster may be considered a crime scene and need to be processed by forensic units. In order to maintain the integrity of the scene and enhance the possibility of a successful investigation and subsequent prosecution, the scene must be kept clear of all nonessential personnel.
- ✓ Does the media's presence interfere with work being done (rescue, clean-up, etc.)?
- ✓ The ultimate goal of all public safety endeavors is to save lives, protect property, and preserve the environment – and almost all reporters

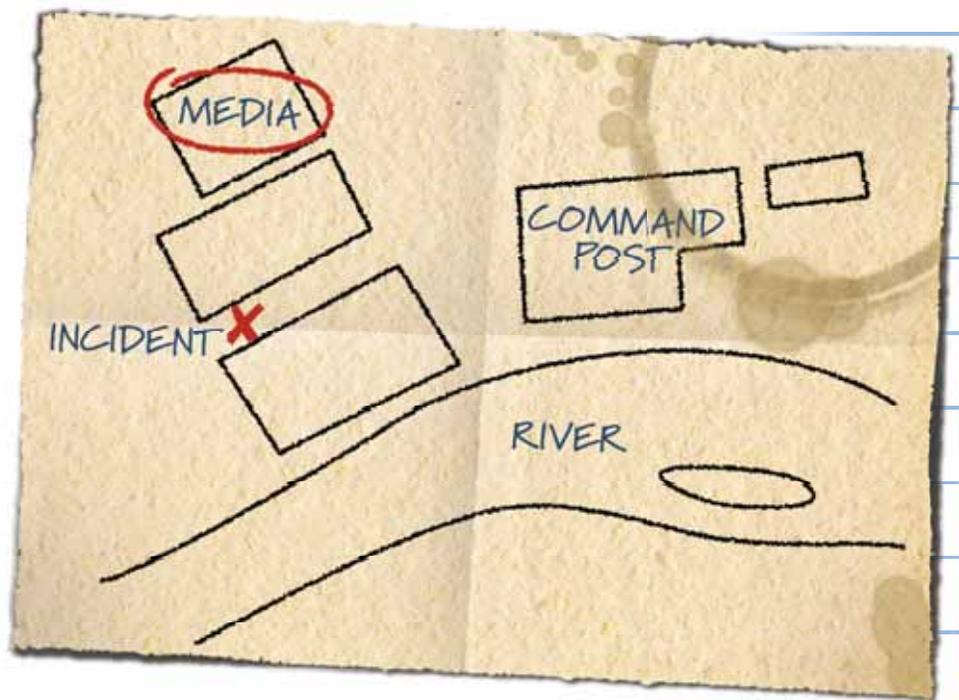
would agree that their needs will come after these important tasks. Members of the media do not want to interfere with these important tasks, but if they can get close enough to observe/photograph, they will be happy.

✓ Are they in danger – will they endanger others?

✓ In their zeal to “get the story,” reporters may not always recognize the potential for danger to themselves. Work to keep them out of danger as you would any member of the public. Also, it may be necessary to explain to them the danger, and how if they fail to heed the warnings and become injured they may endanger others who would have to then go in to rescue them (e.g., passing into the plume of a hazmat area, traveling over an unsafe structure that may collapse, or moving into the line of fire of an armed suspect).

✓ Is it convenient for you and the PIO/PAO?

✓ In order to keep a consistent two-way flow of information with the media at the scene, it is important to make it relatively easy to communicate with them face to face.



✓ Are they too close – can they find out sensitive/protected information?

✓ Zoom lenses, parabolic microphones, and just plain observant reporters may be able to discover sensitive or protected information from your incident command post (e.g., zoom shots of maps, recorded conversations, etc.). Make sure the staging area is far enough away and that your workspaces are shielded from prying cameras, microphones, and eyes.

- ✓ Do the media have a clear line-of-sight to satellite or microwave towers?
- ✓ Depending on where the staging area is, the media will need to be able to connect with their microwave towers or uplink with a satellite. Check with them to see whether the location selected for a staging area will allow them to accomplish this.
- ✓ Can the media get the images they want?
 - ✓ The media will want to get as close as possible to get pictures/audio/interviews.
 - ✓ If there is a reason that the media cannot be allowed access to the scene, consider using a media pool (see below) to restrict access while allowing them to obtain the images and interviews they desire.
 - ✓ If a media pool is not an option, consider providing professional-quality images to the media in the form of video and stills.
- ✓ Are there “convenience” facilities available for media (restrooms, food, electrical outlets, etc.)?
 - ✓ While it is not your responsibility to provide food or facilities for the media, a little kindness in this area can go far in building a positive relationship with the media – especially if the incident occurs in a remote area where few if any comfort facilities exist (e.g., if the incident is in a remote field, a porta-john will go a long way in making friends!).
- ✓ How can you keep them at the staging area?
 - ✓ You can’t – and don’t expect them to stay there all of the time. They will go other places to get other information (local citizen reactions, sidebar stories, etc.).
 - ✓ You can entice them to stay by giving them regular “official” updates and letting them know that if they are absent they may miss something important or interesting.

NOTES

The Media Pool

Occasionally it is necessary to restrict access to an area from the multitude of the media, but you still want to provide access under a more controlled system. When this occurs you have the option of using a “media pool.”

What is a Media Pool?

- ✓ A media pool is simply one representative from each of the four types of media (television, radio, print, web) who will be allowed access to a restricted area. These representatives are allowed access with the understanding that any video, audio, or interviews they acquire will be shared with the rest of the media.
- ✓ Sometimes they need to bring more than one person from each media type (e.g., television might need to bring a reporter and photographer or a newspaper might also want to bring a reporter and photographer). This is a normal occurrence and should be allowed.

How do you select which reporters/photographers will be allowed in the media pool?

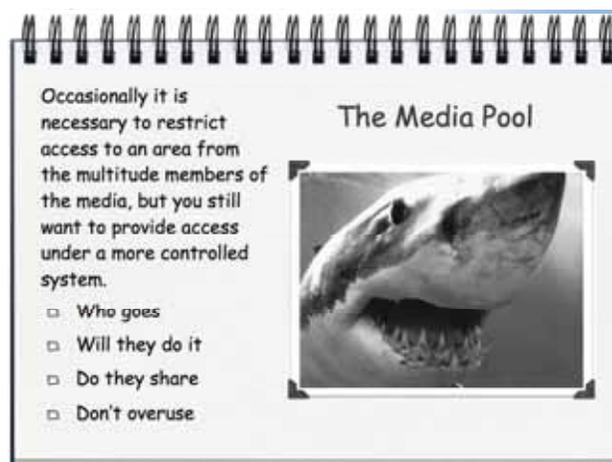
- ✓ The best way is to allow the members of the media to choose among themselves. That way there can be no accusations of unfairness or bias. Simply have your PIO/PAO announce intentions to allow a media pool access to the restricted area. Allow them some time to decide among themselves who will go (give them 15–30 minutes to decide).

Why they will do it?

- ✓ The media will work within a pool because it's always better to get something rather than nothing. They may not always be happy about it, but given a choice between getting information/images via a pool or getting nothing, they will always choose the pool.

How do you ensure that what the media pool gets will be shared?

- ✓ This is an internal issue with the media. They will police themselves in this area.



Don't overuse the media pool

- ✓ DON'T USE A POOL SIMPLY TO MAKE YOUR JOB EASIER. MAKE SURE THERE IS A VALID REASON (SUCH AS SAFETY CONCERNS OR INTEGRITY OF A CRIME SCENE) IF YOU ARE GOING TO USE A MEDIA POOL.



NEWS CONFERENCES AND BRIEFINGS

What is the difference between a news briefing and a news conference? Not much! The vast majority of preparation work and presentation is identical. But the best way to differentiate between the two is this simple concept ... a news briefing deals with one topic, may cover breaking information or updates, is more frequent, and is generally less formal. A news conference deals with multiple topics, is announced well in advance, and is more formal.

When To Do It

When properly planned and executed, a news briefing can be a powerful tool to aid you in communicating the messages you want disseminated to the public. But a poorly planned and executed news briefing can quickly deteriorate into chaos, causing your message to be lost, speculation and misinformation to prevail, and resulting in the loss of public confidence in your ability to handle the crisis.

A news briefing can be an effective way to disseminate vital information rapidly to the public. It allows a spokesperson or spokespersons to address all of the media at once and to set up a timetable for when updated information will be available. This can often help manage and reduce the number of media inquires. It is important to remember to use a news briefing only for important events or significant new information. Do not hold a news briefing just to state that there is nothing new to report. And, do not wait for a news briefing to present life and safety information. Release it as soon as possible.

Who Does What?

Your PIO/PAO is responsible for organizing and managing a news briefing. Others should assist him or her in facilitating the briefing.

NEWS BRIEFING CHECKLIST

Before the News Briefing

- Determine location
- Determine time
- Prepare facility
- Announce news briefing
- Prepare media kits
- Prepare participants

Open the News Briefing

- Greet media — thank them for coming
- Provide introductions with names, titles and agencies represented
- Tell how the news briefing will proceed
- Introduce speakers
- Deliver brief situation update
- Open for questions and answers
- Remain calm, in control, helpful

Close the News Briefing

- Summarize, reiterate key points
- Acknowledge action you now will take
- Advise time of next news briefing
- Close and leave room
- Use your PIO/moderator as barrier

Following the news briefing

- Document what was said and media questions
- Monitor media coverage
- Actively correct any media inaccuracies
- Debrief all participants afterward

You or the most senior official of your organization should be the primary spokesperson. If multiple agencies/organizations are involved, the official from the agency with primary responsibility in the event should be the primary speaker. All speakers should be briefed on anticipated questions, relevant issues, and stagecraft immediately prior to the start of the news briefing.

Elected officials should act in a calming capacity, assuring the public that everything is being done to resolve the situation and get things back to normal. Other participants should talk only about their agencies and their areas of expertise and responsibility. Avoid a parade of speakers with long statements – this only detracts from what your critical key messages are and often leads media covering the news briefing live to cut back to regularly scheduled programming. Better to simply have these technical experts on-hand to answer questions if they arise.

Briefing Mechanics -- How To Get It Done

Whenever possible, a news briefing should be held indoors for a controlled environment. Outside, wind, rain, insects, bright sunshine, and loud noise can detract from what you are trying to communicate. Make sure the room is large enough for all participants, including reporters and camera crews. If you must hold the news briefing outside, hold it near a building wall or bring in a vehicle (such as a van) to provide a backdrop. The location for the cameras should not be lower than the speakers and should not be significantly higher. A low platform at the back of the room with a clear shot of the speakers is preferable.

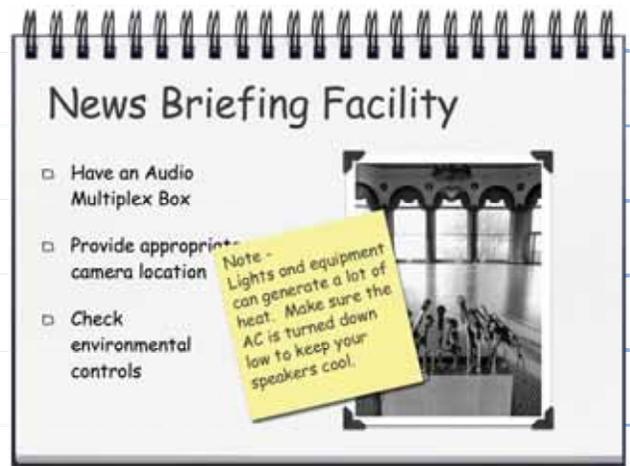
Have clear ingress and egress for you and the other speakers – Make sure you do not have to walk through gathered reporters. Reporters will not stop asking questions just because the news briefing has concluded if you are still within sight. Be sure to have all briefing speakers exit the area calmly yet rapidly. If you or other speakers are available for follow-up interviews, have the PIO or designee remain following the briefing to make arrangements for those interviews.

Will it be covered "live"? The PIO should tell you whether stations are planning to cover the briefing live.

Have an audio mult box – This allows just one microphone to be placed in front of the speaker, eliminating the microphone “tree” and providing clearer audio.

Environmental control – Make sure the heating and air conditioning are working properly. Lights used for broadcast can be hot – you do not want your speakers sweating on camera.

Security – A location filled with cameras and high-ranking officials can be an opportunity for someone who may want to cause a disturbance or promote an “alternative” viewpoint. Also, media satellite/live trucks contain a considerable amount of high-value equipment. Security should be provided both for members of the media and for the news briefing participants. Often local law enforcement may offer to assist in providing security. Security staffing should be visible but not intrusive, and can be stationed at the facility entrance and possibly out by the media satellite/live trucks.



Invite all agencies with a stake in the event to attend – If a Joint Information Center (JIC) is active, make sure all members of the JIC team are aware of the news briefing and know what their responsibilities will be in relation to it.

Invite all media outlets, including:

- ✓ Local, regional, and national TV, radio, and print outlets
- ✓ Non-English news outlets
- ✓ Wire services

Make sure there is enough time for them to attend and still meet their deadlines. Ask them if they will cover it live.

Determine who speaks about what – Make sure speakers stick to their areas of expertise and responsibility.

Work with your PIO/PAO to develop and rehearse key messages and "sound bite" comments with the participants – Sound bites are short concise and easy to understand statements spoken in 5- to 7-second intervals.

Rehearse stagecraft and "handoffs" – Show speakers how to leave the microphone and allow another speaker to step up in a smooth fashion. Remind speakers not to touch the microphone or tap on the podium. Remind them not to “hunch” down if the microphone is low.

Make sure you understand your role and what you will be talking about. Stay in your “lane” and only address issues and questions that fall within your area of responsibility.

Find out what media are present and if any of them have prior issues or agendas – Make sure your PIO/PAO briefs you on any anticipated issues or questions from the media. Find out what information has already been provided and any “spin” the media have been placing on the event.

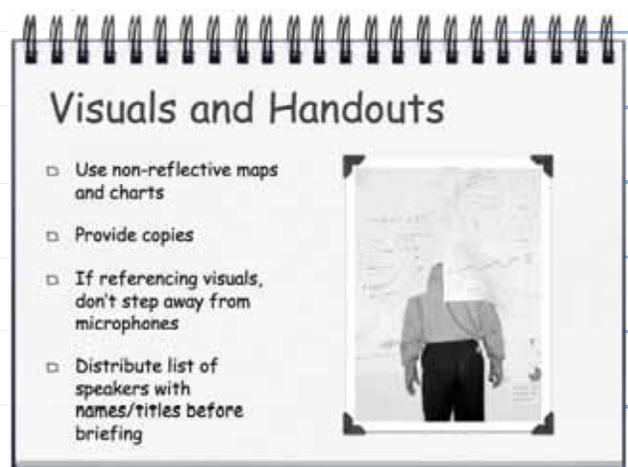
Focus on key messages – Any statement should consist of no more than three or four key messages you want to convey to the public. In the initial stages of the crisis, information about health and safety issues should constitute the primary message. Other key messages should include information to calm the public such as what is being done to respond and recover from the crisis, dedication to solving the problem, actions taken, levels of expertise, and statements of concern. Try to phrase your key messages in sound bites for ease of understanding.

How to withhold information – There are circumstances where information must be withheld from the public. Classified information, details of law enforcement investigations, health information, and some personal data cannot be discussed. If these issues arise, state why they cannot be discussed and then offer information on how or why things work (e.g., talk about your agency’s response, the process and resources used in responding, Emergency Operation Center and JIC activation, effectiveness of planning and training, number of people and agencies responding, how you are working to solve the problem) – or bridge back to key messages.

Avoid talking about cause, blame, or costs – These issues can be addressed following the crisis. Also, never talk about another agency or the work it is doing unless it is to thank or praise the agency.

Visuals and Handouts

Maps – These can be very useful in explaining where things are or to highlight travel paths. Make sure maps are nonreflective. If referencing them during the news briefing, you should not step away from the microphones but should have another participant act as a “pointer.” Make sure that copies of any maps used are available in handout form to the media. If possible, provide maps to media outlets ahead of time so that they can recreate them in their particular graphics “style.”



How Do I Look?

Between 70 and 90 percent of communication is nonverbal. What they wear and how they look can affect how your briefing participants are perceived by the public. If your agency has a uniform, wear it. Uniforms convey authority and expertise and lend credibility to what you say. If you are with a nonuniformed organization, wear clothing appropriate to the situation (e.g., a suit in an office, working clothes at a disaster site). Hats can cast shadows over the eyes. Never wear sunglasses. If glasses are needed, wear nonreflective lenses and avoid photogray lenses. Avoid clothing with high-contrast colors or “busy” patterns. For women, more skin equals less credibility. Avoid large shiny jewelry.

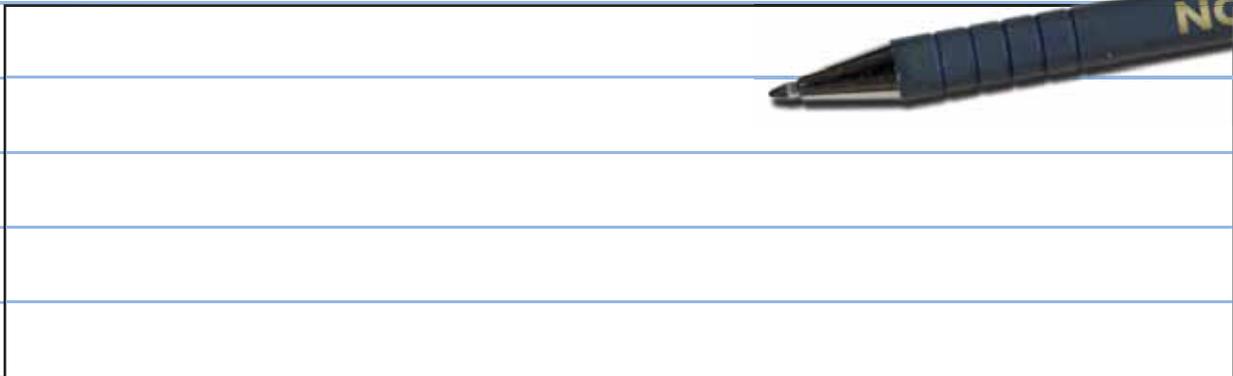
Body Language

Body language is an important element in communication. Stand straight with your arms hanging loosely at your side. It is acceptable, and even preferable, to use your hands in natural gestures while speaking – but avoid wild gesticulation. Prior to the news briefing, have someone (the Lead PIO, Information Dissemination Group Leader, or a member of the Briefing Unit) check the appearance of the participants to make sure their hair is combed, ties are straight, etc.

If more than one person is on “stage” for the news briefing, make sure they all know to focus their attention on the person speaking. News briefing participants could be on camera at any time – even if they are not the one speaking.

Participants should not be looking at the crowd, talking among themselves, or doing anything that might distract from the message being delivered. While speaking, do not touch the microphone or tap on the lectern, or hunch down to the microphone. Never leave the microphone unattended.

Work with the briefing participants to make sure their appearance is appropriate and that they understand the “choreography” of a news briefing.



News Conference / Briefing Checklist

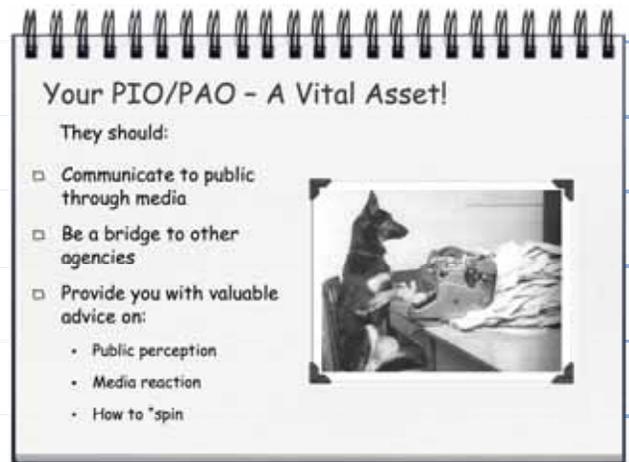
When and What	Who does it
BEFORE	
Determine location.	Lead PIO in consultation with senior agency official or incident commander (If a JIC is active, include the information dissemination group leader.)
Determine time.	Lead PIO in consultation with senior agency official or incident commander (If a JIC is active, include the information branch director.)
Prepare the facility.	Lead PIO with assistance from other PIO/PAOs, if possible (If a JIC is active, the information dissemination group leader directs the briefing of unit members.)
Announce the news conference.	Lead PIO (If a JIC is active, the information dissemination group leader directs the media unit and the media telephone unit. The information dissemination group leader may coordinate with the information gathering and production group leader to acquire assistance from the writing unit.)
Prepare media kits.	Lead PIO (If a JIC is active, the information branch director and information gathering and production group leader direct audio-visual support unit and the research and writing unit.)
Prepare the participants and assign roles to support personnel.	Lead PIO (If a JIC is active, include the information branch director.)

When and What	Who does it
OPEN THE BRIEFING	
Greet media – Thank them for coming.	Lead PIO or primary speaker
Provide introductions with names, titles and agencies represented.	Lead PIO or primary speaker
Deliver key messages and/or a brief situation update. Statements should be brief.	Primary speaker
Open for questions and answers.	Primary speaker
Record the news conference, document media questions and answers provided.	Individual assigned by lead PIO (If a JIC is active, a briefing unit member under the direction of the information dissemination group leader.)
CLOSE EFFECTIVELY	
Summarize, reiterate key points.	Primary speaker
Acknowledge action you now will take.	Primary speaker
Advise time of next news conference.	Lead PIO or primary speaker
Close and leave room.	All
Use your PIO/moderator as barrier.	Lead PIO or individual assigned by PIO (If a JIC is active, a briefing unit member under the direction of the information dissemination group leader.)
Let media know if individuals will be available for one-on-one interviews following the news conference.	Lead PIO or individual assigned by PIO (If a JIC is active, a briefing unit member under the direction of the information dissemination group leader.)

When and What	Who does it
FOLLOWING THE NEWS CONFERENCE	
<p>Debrief all participants afterward. Let them know what went well and what might be improved next time. Discuss whether key messages were effectively disseminated.</p>	<p>Lead PIO with support from information branch director.</p>
<p>Transcribe recording of news conference and distribute copies to appropriate agencies.</p>	<p>Lead PIO or individual assigned by PIO. (If a JIC is active, the information branch director and information gathering and production group leader direct the audio-visual support unit and the research and writing unit.)</p>
<p>Monitor media coverage.</p>	<p>Lead PIO or individual assigned by PIO. (If a JIC is active, include the information gathering and production group leader and the information analysis unit.)</p>
<p>Actively correct any media inaccuracies.</p>	<p>Lead PIO in consultation with senior agency official or incident commander. (If a JIC is active, the information dissemination group leader directs the media unit and the media telephone unit. The information dissemination group leader may coordinate with the information gathering and production group leader to acquire assistance from the writing unit.)</p>

YOUR PIO/PAO -- WHAT HE/SHE SHOULD DO FOR YOU

Your PIO/PAO should be a vital asset to you and your organization. It is the PIO/PAO's responsibility to work with you and other members of your agency to ensure your messages are communicated to the public through the media. He or she should also act as a bridge for communicating with other agencies, disseminate information within your organization, and provide you with valuable advice and insight into potential public perception of actions and activities by your agency.



Qualities of a Good PIO/PAO

Knowledgeable about your organization – He or she:

- ✓ Can speak with authority and credibility on all facets of operations.
- ✓ Is willing to ask questions and seeks your input.
- ✓ Has access to the organization's leadership.
- ✓ Has good working relationships within the organization. Because the PIO/PAO requires support from within the organization, a good working relationship with all divisions is critical.

Aggressive – Often a PIO/PAO is thrust into the middle of dynamic situations that require the ability to penetrate layers of bureaucracy, speak with authority, gain concessions from key players, and seamlessly integrate ideas, strategies, and information. The ability to seek out important information and provide solid, thoughtful advice to leadership makes the PIO/PAO a key “inner-circle” adviser.

Trusted adviser, strategist – The PIO/PAO should be an adviser that sees reality – how things will be perceived outside the organization. He or she must be able to see the downside of actions and gauge possible negative community response.

Knowledgeable about communications – Your PIO/PAO should understand how the media works, laws that affect public information and media relations, and emerging communication technologies and how they impact and can be used by your agency.

✓ **Community relations** – Your PIO/PAO should have an awareness of demographics – know who lives and works in the community and their values, concerns, and interests. Because communities evolve, the PIO/PAO must be aware of population changes and transitions. He or she should also have an awareness of community organizations – how they work and how they interact.

✓ **Media relations** – Your PIO/PAO must develop credibility through developing contacts with the media and being available for media questions at all times. He or she should provide opportunities for news media interviews and background briefings. Skills should also include providing information and assisting with access to newsmakers. The PIO/PAO should have an understanding of media needs and operations and maintain continuing open dialogue.

✓ **Writing** – Your PIO/PAO must be able to organize clear thoughts on paper; develop communication points, guidance, strategy papers, and speeches; and ghost write “thought” papers for leadership. He or she must know proper grammar and spelling – nothing kills credibility faster than errors in grammar and spelling. The PIO/PAO must know formats and writing styles and be familiar with Associated Press writing style and the various ways to communicate with the public and press. He or she must be able to produce quality documents and be familiar with the formats and purposes of all types of corporate communications, such as news releases, fact sheets, media advisories, public service announcements, brochures, newsletters, annual reports, after-action reports, and grant requests.

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NOTES

✓ **Crisis management** – In a crisis, the function of the PIO/PAO is to collect, verify, and disseminate information to the public through effective communication with the media that will help citizens make decisions about their:

✓ Health

✓ Safety

✓ Welfare

✓ **Web site management** – Your PIO/PAO should have a firm understanding of how to develop and manage your agency’s web site. While detailed technical knowledge is not necessary, understanding what information should be posted, who will access the site, what information they expect, and how they want to access it is crucial.

PROACTIVE PUBLIC INFORMATION AND MEDIA RELATIONS

What Should the PIO/PAO Do NOW...

Before the Crisis?

✓ Conduct media outreach on a regular basis. Establish and maintain media relationships.

✓ Those relationships may get your agency’s story told or influence treatment of a “negative” story.

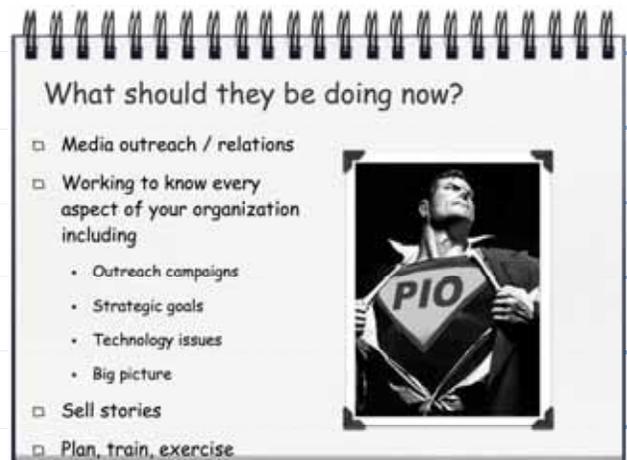
✓ Know your organization inside and out (familiarity with “stories”/ campaigns/programs).

✓ This is part of being an integral part of your organization.

✓ Awareness of strategic campaigns/goals/technology and planning can help a PIO/PAO identify opportunities and capitalize on existing stories.

✓ Understand the ‘big picture’ and where your organization fits.

✓ Have positive working relationships with the PIO/PAOs of other organizations that may interact with your agency.



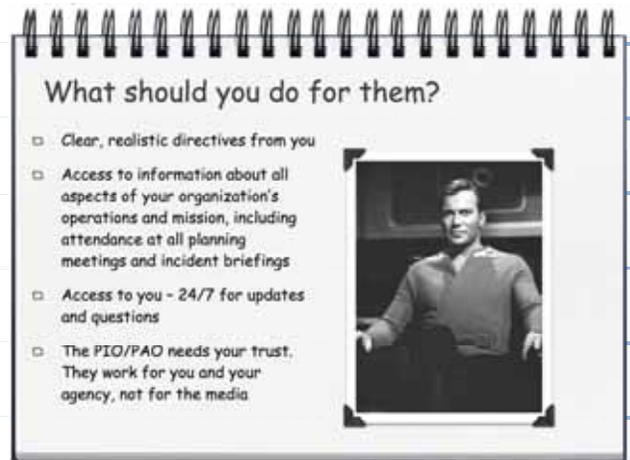
- ✓ Sell story ideas on your agency to the media.
- ✓ Plan, train, and exercise...

Your PIO/PAO --

What You Should Do for Him/Her

Your PIO/PAO needs the following to effectively do his or her job and support you and your agency:

- ✓ Clear, realistic directives from you on what he or she is expected to accomplish.
- ✓ Access to information about all aspects of your organization's operations and mission. This should include attendance at all planning meetings and incident briefings.
- ✓ Access to you 24/7 for updates and questions.
- ✓ Your trust. The PIO/PAO works for you and your agency, not for the media.



Bottom line: If you do not trust your PIO/PAO to represent your agency, if you do not trust him or her to make statements and to advise you, get a new one.

Bottom line: You should understand the value of your PIO/PAO to you and your organization. A PIO/PAO can do much to enhance the image of your agency, to create and maintain lines of communication with both internal and external audiences, to promote the positive aspects of your organization, and to shield you from negative publicity.

