

## TIPS FOR DEALING WITH THE MEDIA IN A CRISIS

When a crisis happens, the media can be a useful tool for disseminating accurate and timely information. Dealing with the media in good times or when things are more challenging, can be frustrating. But, with proper planning, dealing with the media yields positive results.

### TIPS FOR DEALING WITH THE MEDIA DURING A CRISIS

- **Coordinate Press Coverage.** A central office should always be aware of what information is being released. Information should be released regularly.
- **Shoot Straight.** Good news or bad... let the media know what's happening.
- **Never Speculate.** Release only the information you know is accurate.
- **Stay Calm.** The more calm you appear, the quicker people will realize that everything is under control.

### UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TELEVISION, RADIO AND NEWSPAPER:

Television, radio and newspaper reporters are not looking for the same thing when they are covering a story. Knowing what each reporter is looking for and trying to meet those needs can save you (and them) a lot of frustration.

#### **TELEVISION:**

- Television reporters are always looking for good visuals. If you really want to get a good story high in a newscast, then be prepared to suggest some good visuals.
- Television reporters are also looking for short, to-the-point sound bites. You'll rarely see a person speaking for more than 9 to 10 seconds during a TV story. Remember this when you talk to reporters; speak in sound bites.
- Spare the detail. Most stories are never going to run more than a minute and thirty seconds. TV reporters aren't looking for hours of detail. They get frustrated when you insist on giving them minute details, and you get frustrated when you spend two hours being interviewed and show up as a 10-second talking head on the 6 p.m. news.

## ***RADIO:***

- Radio reporters are looking for good sound. If you really want to get a good story placement on radio, be prepared to suggest good ideas for natural sound.
- Radio reporters are also looking for short, to-the-point sound bites. Once again, you've got to speak in short bites when doing radio interview.
- Radio reporters are not particularly interested in lots of detail. Remember the average radio reporter who calls you is probably doing eight stories in a day. They don't have the ability to work on any one story for days at a time.

## ***NEWSPAPERS:***

Here's the spot for detail. They want it all, and the history.

- Most newspaper reporters want details.
- Be prepared to give them details.
- Here's your chance to get the whole story out.
- Have all documents you need on hand – statistics, memos and timelines.

## **RULES TO LIVE BY WHEN DEALING WITH REPORTERS**

- Think before you speak.
- Never LIE to a reporter.
- Don't speculate.
- Don't say "no comment."
- Stay on the record.
- Don't be offended by a reporter's ignorance; don't be impatient with a reporter.
- Don't accept definitions.
- Never be argumentative, nasty or yell at a reporter.
- Avoid jargon.
- Always prepare for an interview.
- Know what you are getting into.
- Always have an agenda. Know what you want to achieve through this interview.
- Answer reporter's calls, or refer them to someone who will return their calls.
- Announce your own news first... even if it's bad news.
- Don't ask to review a story before it is printed or aired.
- If you have a statement or idea that must be understood, repeat it again, and again, and again.