



Media Influence on a Critical Incident

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Dallas PD video



It Happened.....

- We've had a Critical incident....



The media won't go away

- We will have a lot going on
- Our primary purpose is investigating the incident
- We also need to inform the public





Hungry alligators.....

- They will find food somewhere
- We need to provide the food



Before the crisis....

- Develop a crisis communications plan
- Determine who is going to talk
 - A crisis communications team
 - Spokesperson and technical experts
- Try to anticipate questions



Three stages

(from *Mass Media and American Politics* by Doris A. Graber)

■ Stage One

- Reporters, officials and onlookers rush to the scene
- News dissemination escalates
- The media will be the major source of information for everyone, including public officials
- The problem will be getting out **ACCURATE** information

Stage One

- Responsibilities
 - We need to say something, quickly
 - Develop 2 key messages
 - Ensures you get your message out
 - Provides you a clear plan to communicate
 - Instruct and reassure people
 - They will be scared
 - They need direction
 - They need to feel like they can do something
 - PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE.....



Prepared material....

- Provide copies of written statements
- If there are other relevant materials provide those as well
- Do what you can to help them understand a complicated issue
 - Remember, they know nothing about the incident
 - Many critical incidents can be very technical

Stage One

- Designate a media assembly point
 - Make sure it is big enough
 - Emergency Operations Center
- Designate a time for updates
 - Keep in mind media deadlines
- Designate a way for the media to contact you
 - Someone should always be available
 - Always return phone calls
 - Keep a log
- Monitor coverage

The scoop.....

- Make sure you give the same information to everyone
- Every reporter wants the scoop
 - Don't share "scoop" information with everyone
- If you get a request, give it serious consideration

Stage Two

- Media will try to correct errors reported in Stage One
- The scope of the problem will most likely be understood
- This will be a time for more in-depth coverage
- Be prepared for political fallout
- Continue to monitor coverage

Side-Bar stories

- Once the initial crisis is reported, the media is going to try to advance the story
- This is the time to provide more in-depth information
- These will not be case specific
- Examples include
 - Experts in the field
 - Examples of response to the incident (HRT, biologists, bomb techs, sketch artists, etc.)
- It's all about the food.....

Stage Three

- This will overlap with the first two stages
- Media will put the incident into a larger, long-range perspective
- Media will prepare people to cope with the aftermath

Throughout the incident....

- Provide regular updates
 - Remember the hungry alligator
- The instant, 24 hour news cycle
 - This will put pressure on your team
- Think before you speak
 - “I don’t know but I will find out.”
- Don’t speculate
 - You will get pressure to do so.
- Provide written material as much as possible
 - Reduces errors

Contact information...

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