

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Most people have some idea what the media covers in day-to-day activities, but how many have thought about dealing with them in an accident, crisis or disaster? As an emergency or incident unfolds, media pressure will almost certainly become more demanding and complex to deal with than the original disaster.

To survive the impact of a disaster or emergency, organizations must give detailed consideration on how to deal with the media. If they do, the organisation can emerge with their reputation and business enhanced. If they do not, there is a strong possibility that they will be severely damaged.

Knowing the Media

- . they are not going to take NO for an answer;
- . they will not go away if you do not deal with them;
- . they will want to film and photograph the operation;
- . they will want to speak to survivors;
- . they will want to know what happened and why;
- . they will track down 'experts' in the field to talk with apparent knowledge;
- . they will produce library material on past events;
- . they will interview politicians and officials who have something to add;
- . they will want to know who is to blame;
- . they may call for an enquiry;
- . they will be deeply suspicious if treated with silence.

Television reporters have different requirements than radio reporters; both are different to the national newspaper reporter, who in turn have different needs to the local reporter.

Prepare for the Media

- . take responsibility;
- . take the first 24 hours very seriously;
- . invoke your Emergency Response Plan, if you have one;
- . your response to the media is critical to an understanding of the situation;
- . respond honestly and openly where possible;
- . if there is classified information which is not releasable, tell them; they will accept this;
- . DO NOT tell them lies;
- . Be speedy in your response, but be right rather than fast;
- . do not get caught in the urgency of one media outlet;
- . update the situation report (SITREP);
- . do not lay blame;
- . have a trained and rehearsed spokesperson;
- . watch the social media and the web as closely as traditional media;

We all know how difficult and demanding the media can be, but they can and will destroy you if you let them get the better of you. **Be warned.**