



Media Management Tip Sheet

The media plays a critical role in shaping public understanding during crises. Being prepared to respond to media inquiries and leverage media as a communication channel will help protect your reputation, build public trust, and reduce misinformation.

THIS TIP SHEET WILL HELP YOU:

- Be confident when interacting with media
- Determine your role in the response
- Understand when and how to respond to media inquiries

Note: Please complete the Media Readiness Worksheet and Know Your Role Worksheet in advance.

WHEN MEDIA CALLS: QUESTIONS TO ASK

When a call comes in from media, make sure to gather the facts so you can prepare a response that supports your organization and meets the reporter's needs. Ask the reporter:

1. What is your name, outlet, and contact information?
2. What is your deadline?
3. What is the focus of your story?
4. What specific information are you looking for us to provide?
5. Who else, if anyone, have you spoken to for the story?
6. Are you looking for a phone or on-camera interview?
 - If on-camera, confirm the date and time.

Once you have answers to the questions, let the reporter know you will get back to them as soon as possible with a formal response.

“Thank you so much for your call. I want to make sure we respond accurately, so I’ll need to speak with our leadership about your request. I’ll get back to you by noon to ensure you have a response for your 3:00pm deadline.”

YOUR ROLE IN THE RESPONSE

Refer back to the [Know Your Role Worksheet](#). Knowing your role in each scenario will help you understand how to respond to media inquiries.

WHEN YOU ARE THE LEAD

You are responsible for the main communication on this crisis with media. Your role is to respond with as much information as possible, and to continue making updates throughout the crisis. Information could be provided through a written statement or recorded interview.

WHEN YOU ARE A SUPPORT ORGANIZATION:

Your main priority is to refer media to the Lead organization(s). You can support their media response after coordinating with the Lead organization (e.g. as the authority on local tourism), you may have a specific point-of-view and messaging that media are interested in. Ensure that all communication is in alignment with the Lead response.

IF YOU ARE IN AN OBSERVE ROLE:

Monitor the situation closely. When appropriate, amplify key messaging from official sources through your communication channels. In the Observe role, you would not likely speak to media, however, you should continue to assess any risks to your brand, organization or visitors.

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR RESPONSE

If you've determined that you will be responding to the media request, follow these steps:

- 1. Decide the best way to respond:** Your response to a media inquiry will depend on two factors:
 - a. What has the media requested? (e.g. Interview, statement, background details, etc.)
 - b. How ready is your organization and what are you prepared to provide? Your response should meet media's needs but not put your organization at risk. (e.g. Don't put a spokesperson on camera who isn't prepared or comfortable)
 - c. Any of the following are appropriate responses to a media inquiry:
 - i. Holding Statement
 - ii. News Release
 - iii. Interview (phone, camera, etc.)
 - iv. Press conference or media briefing
- 2. Confirm the facts and prepare your key messaging:** Develop three key messages that can be repeated consistently through all communications. Consider what information you want audiences to understand and take away. In a recorded interview, your spokesperson may only get a 10 second clip - your job is to make sure that clip shares the most important information. When writing key messaging, think about:
 - a. What happened?
 - b. What's being done?
 - c. What actions can they take?
- 3. Prepare your spokesperson:** At the start of a crisis you may issue a holding statement; however, you should start preparing the spokesperson to conduct media interviews as the crisis unfolds. To prepare your spokesperson:
 - a. Inform them of the current situation with media—what you've done, current requests, your plan going forward if media picks up.
 - b. Confirm the spokesperson's availability and identify a backup if needed.
 - c. Make sure they are briefed with key messages. Prepare a list of questions media are likely to ask and align your key messages with those questions. Practice a run-through with your spokesperson.

TIP! Take Your Time.

If you're unsure about anything or caught off guard, it's okay to pause:

1. Thank them for reaching out.
2. Assure them you want to provide the most accurate information.
3. Let them know you'll connect with your team and get back to them as soon as possible.

4. **Align your team internally:** Ensure that all staff are:
 - a. Briefed on what is happening
 - b. Aware of who speaks to media
 - c. Clear on what to say or not to say to media
5. **Activate your response:** Activate the response that best aligns with your situation (i.e. send your statement, organize press conference, book an interview, etc.)
6. **Follow it up with media monitoring:** Once the media publishes their story, you should monitor the coverage:
 - a. Ensure the media published the correct information. If any facts are incorrect, immediately request a correction.
 - b. Update all your organization's communications channels to reflect any new messaging.
 - c. Inform partner organizations in the Support role of the media coverage.
 - d. Track your media coverage if other media pick up the story, check comments online and follow social media. Prepare to send further messaging if needed.