

## Media Handling Guidelines

Whether it involves a vehicle crash, a seriously injured employee, or some other crisis that involves your company/organization, the news media thrives on bad news, and you shouldn't be surprised to find them at your door. Only one individual, your designated spokesperson, should handle the media.

When such an event occurs, let everyone in your organization know exactly who that person is, and that no one else is to talk to the media. Let your employees know that any calls or requests from the media should be directed only to that spokesperson.

If you are that spokesperson, remember, you do not avoid the media without having consequences. You want to deal with them on your own terms. You want to make them feel like you are cooperating and being helpful, while still keeping them at a distance.

### Tips on Dealing with the Media

- Listen to the attorneys working with you, but remember that their primary concern is liability, not the 'human factor'. Don't say any more than they advise, but use your own wording with compassion and sincerity.
- Be prepared. Before any interview, try to think of some difficult questions, and what your answer would be. Know the 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', 'how', and 'why' of the situation. Prepare answers to potential questions.
- Prepare a statement dealing with the crisis. Know what message you want to get across.
- Be in control of the interview with short, direct answers.
- Before any interview, check your appearance, reread your notes, and take a deep breath.
- Talk to the reporter, not the camera.
- If you can't answer a question, explain that you can't, but never say 'No Comment.' The media will either feel that you are uninformed, or that you *have something to hide*. If you don't have the answer, it's better to say, 'I don't know.', rather than be evasive or give an incorrect answer.
- Be honest. Don't lie or bend the truth; it could come back to haunt you.
- When talking to the media, tell only what you want the interviewer to know.
- Take time to think of your answers. Don't rush to speak, and regret what you've said.
- Going 'off the record' is NOT recommended. It's dangerous and you have no guarantees. Simply say, 'No, I'm not comfortable with that.'
- Don't be defensive or nasty. Be friendly to the media.
- Don't say anything that you don't want printed, heard or seen.
- Don't talk for the sake of talking. STOP! Remember – short direct answers.

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