

Facing the Media

**A Course To Prepare CDC
Spokespersons for Crisis
and Emergency Situations**



AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH
Prospect Center

Facing the Media

A Course To Prepare CDC Spokespersons for Crisis and Emergency Situations



American Institutes for Research
Prospect Center
10720 Columbia Pike, Suite 500
Silver Spring, MD 20901

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Agenda



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Agenda

Facing the Media

***Tuesday and Wednesday, December 3–4, 2002
Atlanta, GA***

***8:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.
(Same agenda for both days)***

8:30 a.m.	On-Camera Press Conference	Training Team
10:30 a.m.	Introduction and Understanding a Crisis	Lynn Sokler
11:15 a.m.	Your Role as a Spokesperson	Linda Weinberg
12:45 p.m.	Lunch	
1:30 p.m.	Message Development	Lynn Sokler
2:30 p.m.	Individual On-Camera Training	Tom Hendrick



Presentation



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Handouts



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Tips for Makeup and Clothing

The rule of thumb for television appearances, in particular, is to dress simply and conservatively. Make sure that your hair and nails are clean and trimmed, your shoes are polished, and your clothing is crisp and pressed. Wear your glasses if you normally do. Do not wear tinted lenses.

Wear clothes appropriate for the situation.

If you're in a field situation, a suit may not be appropriate. However, do not wear a lab coat or other distinctive clothes unless you would be wearing them for your job.

Makeup

Most television stations will offer you the services of their makeup professional. If one is not offered, follow these guidelines:

Makeup for Men	Makeup for Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Appear clean-shaven, and apply a light coat of face powder.▪ Bald men should powder the tops of their heads.▪ Straighten your tie, and comb your hair before the interview.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Use foundation and face powder, eyeliner, and a pale shade of eye shadow, dark mascara, light cheek blush, lip liner, and medium-hued lipstick.▪ Keep the colors soft and natural looking. Avoid bright fingernail color.

Clothing

Keep it simple, elegant, and understated.

Wear nothing that could allow viewers to become distracted from your face and what you are saying. Avoid hats, loud ties (for men), and flashy jewelry (for women).

Clothing for Men	Clothing for Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Avoid patterned suits, polka dots, stripes, and checks. The camera will make them appear wavy and distract the viewers. If you wear a suit, choose navy blue or dark gray.▪ Button double-breasted suits. You may unbutton single-breasted suits. If possible, sit on your coattails to avoid bunching around your neck and shoulders.▪ White shirts are considered the most conservative. Also consider wearing light blue or grey. Bottom line: In an emergency, you should look conservative, not stylish or flashy.▪ Neckties should be solid colors or small patterns. Do not "advertise" a product or point of view on your tie. Do not wear a pocket-handkerchief.▪ Wear dark shoes and knee-length socks darker than your suit. Your credibility can plummet if your socks end at your ankles and your pant legs creep up.▪ Avoid jewelry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Tailored clothes work best.▪ Avoid short skirts as they may compromise your credibility.▪ Neutral colors and muted patterns work best. Most set backdrops are blue or purple. Consider taking along a contrasting shawl or scarf to ensure that you do not blend into the background if your suit matches the set color. A dark suit with a light-colored blouse works well.▪ Wear dark shoes.▪ Avoid distracting or shiny jewelry and any accessory that jangles or needs constant adjusting. If you wear jewelry, choose small gold or pearl earrings and a simple necklace.



Questions That the Media and the Public May Ask in a Crisis

Individuals want your message to answer:

- Is my family safe? Am I safe?
- What have you found that will affect my family and me?
- What can I do to protect my family and myself?
- Who (what) caused this problem?
- Can you fix it?

The media and communities want your message to answer:

- Who is in charge here?
- How are those who got hurt getting help?
- Is this thing being contained?
- What can we expect?
- What should we do?
- Why did this happen? (Don't speculate. Repeat the facts of the event, describe the data collection effort, and describe treatment from factsheets.)
- Did you have forewarning that this might happen?
- Why wasn't this kept from happening (again)?
- What else can go wrong?
- When did you begin working on this? (e.g., when were you notified of this; when did you determine this?)
- What do these data/results or this information mean?
- What bad things aren't you telling us about? (Don't forget the good.)



First 48 Hours

Critical First Steps After Verification:

Notification:

- Use your crisis plan's notification list to ensure that the chain of command is aware and knows that you are involved.
- Ensure that your leadership is aware (especially if it comes from the media and not the EOC) of the emergency and that your leaders know you are involved.
- Give leadership your first assessment of the emergency from a communication perspective, and inform them of your next steps. *Remember: Be first; be right; be credible.*

Coordination:

- Contact local, state, and federal partners now.
- If there is potential for criminal investigation, contact your FBI counterpart now.
- Secure a spokesperson as designated in the plan.
- Initiate alert notification, and call in extra communication staff, per the plan.
- Connect with the EOC—make your presence known.

Media:

- Be first: Provide a statement that says your agency is aware of the emergency and is involved in the response.
- Be right: Start monitoring the media for misinformation that must be corrected.
- Be credible: Tell the media when and where to get updates from your agency.
- Give facts. Don't speculate. Ensure that partners are saying the same thing.

Resources:

- Conduct a crisis risk assessment, and implement assignments and hours of operation accordingly.
- Stake out your preplanned place in the EOC or adjoining area.

Partners/Stakeholders:

- Send a basic statement to partners and stakeholders to let them know that you are thinking about them.
- Use prearranged notification systems (preferably e-mail listservs).
- Engage leadership to make important first phone calls, based on your plan, to partners and key stakeholders to let them know that your agency is responding.
- Use the internal communication system (e-mail) to notify employees that their agencies are involved in the response and that updates will follow. Ask for their support.

The Public:

- Trigger the operation of your public information toll-free number now if you anticipate that the public will seek reassurance or information directly from your organization. (You may adjust hours of operation and number of call managers as needed.)
- Use your initial media statement as your first message to the public.
- Ensure that your statement expresses empathy and acknowledges public concern about the uncertainty.
- Give the precleared facts that you have, and refer the public to other information sites as appropriate.
- Remind people that your agency has a process in place to mitigate the crisis.
- Start public call-monitoring to catch trends or rumors now.



Message Development for Emergency Communication

First, consider the following:

Audience	Purpose of Message	Method of Delivery
<input type="checkbox"/> Relationship to event <input type="checkbox"/> Demographics (e.g., age, language, education, culture) <input type="checkbox"/> Level of outrage (based on risk principles)	<input type="checkbox"/> Give facts/update <input type="checkbox"/> Rally to action <input type="checkbox"/> Clarify event status <input type="checkbox"/> Address rumors <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfy media requests	<input type="checkbox"/> Print media release <input type="checkbox"/> Web release <input type="checkbox"/> Spokesperson (TV or in-person appearance) <input type="checkbox"/> Radio <input type="checkbox"/> Other (e.g., recorded phone message)

Six Basic Emergency Message Components:

1. Expression of empathy: _____

2. Clarifying facts/Call for action:

Who _____

What _____

Where _____

When _____

Why _____

How _____

3. What we don't know: _____

4. Process to get answers: _____

5. Statement of commitment: _____

6. Referrals: _____

For more information _____

Next scheduled update _____

Finally, check that your message:

<input type="checkbox"/> Includes positive action steps <input type="checkbox"/> Has an honest/open tone <input type="checkbox"/> States applied risk communication principles <input type="checkbox"/> Is clear <input type="checkbox"/> Uses simple words and short sentences	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoids jargon <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids judgmental phrases <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids humor <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids extreme speculation
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What Spokespersons Need To Know

CRISIS EMERGENCY RISK COMMUNICATION

Build Trust and Credibility by Expressing:

- + Empathy and caring
- + Competence and expertise
- + Honesty and openness
- + Commitment and dedication

Top Tips

- + Don't over reassure.
- + Acknowledge uncertainty.
- + Express wishes ("I wish I had answers").
- + Explain the process in place to find answers.
- + Acknowledge people's fear.
- + Give people things to do.
- + Ask more of people (share risk).

As a Spokesman

- + Know your organization's policies.
- + Stay within the scope of responsibilities.
- + Tell the truth. Be transparent.
- + Embody your agency's identity.

CONSISTENT MESSAGES ARE VITAL

Prepare to Answer These Questions:

- + Are my family and I safe?
- + What can I do to protect myself and my family?
- + Who is in charge here?
- + What can we expect?
- + Why did this happen?
- + Were you forewarned?
- + Why wasn't this prevented?
- + What else can go wrong?
- + When did you begin working on this?
- + What does this information mean?

Stay on Message

- + "What's important is to remember..."
- + "I can't answer that question, but I can tell you..."
- + "Before I forget, I want to tell your viewers..."
- + "Let me put that in perspective..."

BE FIRST. BE RIGHT. BE CREDIBLE.



Self-Diagnostic Tool— Before the Interview

This tool is designed to help spokespersons ensure that they are ready for their interviews. Consider the following questions, and fill in the answers. It is best to do this worksheet at least a few hours before your interview (if possible), so that you can do any additional preparation that you may need to. You may not always have all the answers to all of these questions, but if you can't answer several of them, carefully consider whether or not you are prepared for your interview.

Questions	Answers
To what audience is this interview targeted?	
Do I have specific message points prepared? What are they?	
What complex, scientific topics will I need to explain? Have I prepared simple explanations?	
What is the format of this interview (e.g., newspaper, radio, television news magazine)? Have I prepared specifically for this format (e.g., length, type of questions)?	
Do I know the reporter's goals, style, and the type of questions that he or she is likely to ask?	
How will I handle difficult questions?	
Do I have a quotable sentence or phrase if needed? What is it?	
What are the things I can't talk about? Who can talk about these things?	



Self-Diagnostic Tool— After the Interview

This tool is designed to help spokespersons assess their interviews after the fact to identify what went well, in addition to areas for improvement. Assess your interview by evaluating the elements in the table below. Provide details where applicable.

Interview Element	Assessment Criteria	What I Did Well	Areas for Improvement
Message Points	Were they concise, focused, and appropriately tailored for the audience?		
Tone	Was I open, honest, and empathetic, but not over reassuring?		
Action Steps	Did I provide specific, positive action steps, as appropriate?		
Jargon and Complex Topics	Did I avoid the use of jargon? Did I explain scientifically complex topics simply?		
Interview Format	Was I properly prepared for the format (e.g., had more than a sound bite for a 30-minute interview)?		
Scope	Did I answer only the questions in my scope of expertise and refer the reporter to others as needed?		
Difficult Questions and Difficult Interviewer Techniques	Did I handle these straightforwardly, calmly, and with poise?		

