

In case of a MEDIA emergency...

BEFORE you speak to anyone in the press about your incoming crisis, review this card.

PREPARE THE CRISIS TEAM:

1. Meet with your team. Include at least one person from:
 - legal team
 - PR staff
 - expert on subject of the crisis
2. If you're an appointed official, alert at least one of your elected officials. If you're an elected official, brief your colleagues. Beware that anything you tell someone outside your crisis team may leak.
3. Have someone monitor social media and news coverage and give you updates.

PREPARE THE MESSAGE:

1. Remind the team (especially your lawyer) that saying "no comment" is the same as saying "we're guilty."
2. Until most facts are known, don't accept blame or accuse others.
3. Determine three major points. Avoid jargon. Each point must:
 - be true
 - show your compassion
 - show that you're gathering information and want a solution
4. If you have little or conflicting information, use one of the "general responses" (aka "holding statements") on the other side of this card, until facts are clear.

BEGIN COMMUNICATING

1. Write a short statement (100 words or less) and have the crisis team review it. Post it on social media and send it to local news media, noting who the statement is from.
2. Tell reporters to follow your social media feed for updated information. Update the feed accordingly.
3. If media are gathering, prepare a crowd-controlled area. Plan for visuals. Brief them by restating (not reading word for word) your released statement. If you take questions, limit answers to the substance of the original statement and promise to provide more information as it is confirmed.



IF YOU NEED QUICK HELP

Call Mark Weaver, a crisis communications pro who NBC News in Charlotte called "one of the nation's foremost experts in crisis communications." (614) 349-1145 or email Mark@CommunicationsCounsel.com

General Responses (aka Holding Statements)

Use something like one of these responses when you don't have the facts.

ASPIRATIONAL responses:



"This is a tragedy for all involved. We understand and appreciate the public's concern whenever an officer is faced with the difficult, split-second decision to defend himself and others against a potentially armed suspect. Police work hard every day to protect the public and stop crime. And there are times when an officer is faced with no other option but to use deadly force."



"Our goal is to make our organization a safe and fair place to work for everyone. We expect everyone here to follow the law."

PROCEDURAL responses:



"We understand how important this case is. That's why this is being presented to a grand jury that consists of citizens of this community, all from diverse backgrounds. These citizens will be able to examine all of the facts and determine whether this officer acted within the law."



"Our organization has policies in place that make sure there is a fair and impartial review of all allegations. We take complaints seriously and we're working to guarantee we have all the information surrounding this incident. This will ensure a fair process for everyone."



= A police-involved shooting



= A discrimination allegation

"MORE TO COME" or TRANSPARENCY responses:



"We know the public wants to know more, which is why we're moving quickly to gather facts. The most professional response is to take the time to get this right. We will provide more information as soon as it's confirmed."



"We understand and agree the public has a right to know what happened. We're moving quickly to gather and verify facts for release as soon as possible."

GAG ORDER responses:



"Much of this information is confidential by law. We must follow the law but we want the public to know that we'll have much more to say as soon as we're able."



"The judge has ordered us not to discuss the case outside court and we respect the judge's decision. We will present the facts in court."

Visit [CommunicationsCounsel.com/crisis-checklist](https://www.communicationscounsel.com/crisis-checklist) for the 15 must-do items to respond in a crisis.



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