



A FRAMEWORK FOR MAJOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



WORKING DRAFT

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT 5

A GUIDE TO WORKING WITH THE MEDIA



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INTRODUCTION TO A GUIDE TOWORKING WITH THE MEDIA

‘A Framework for Major Emergency Management’ (2006) replaces the *Framework for Co-ordinated Response to Major Emergency*, which has underpinned major emergency preparedness and response capability since 1984.

The Framework sets out the arrangements by which the principal response agencies will work together in the management of large-scale incidents.

This *Guide to Working with the Media* it is intended to support the Framework and provide additional guidance in relation to providing information to the public and the media during a Major Emergency.

This document is presented as a working draft and as such it is requested that comments and observations are fed back to the national level. Comments should be addressed to:
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Fires Service and Emergency Planning Section,
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1 GENERAL GUIDANCE

1.1 Introduction

Effective communication with the public and the media is vital to the successful handling of any Major Emergency. This is especially important in situations where members of the public perceive themselves and their families to be at risk and are seeking information on actions which they can take to protect themselves and their families.

Public perceptions and expectations are changing all the time. Similarly, the speed with which the media can descend on an emergency site, and on other locations associated with a Major Emergency, such as hospitals, and begin to communicate both information and opinions, increases all the time. Television channels, broadcasting 24 hours a day, are now a permanent feature and this presents a unique challenge for principal response agencies dealing with a Major Emergency. Time and resources are required to address the demands of the media, while, at the same time, the primary responsibility of the principal response agencies is to deliver an effective, inter-agency response, under conditions of extreme urgency and uncertainty.

A key factor in ensuring success is the preparation of an inter-agency Regional Communications Plan, which needs to be carefully prepared, tested and implemented. This plan should be based on a well thought out and 'joined-up' approach, capable of generating accurate, agreed information at speed. The implementation of such a plan can greatly reduce the possibility of misinformation and focus attention on important issues. It can also reduce the impact on the response of the influx onto the site of large numbers of media representatives – local, national and international.

The key objective of the Regional Communications Plan is to deliver accurate, clear and timely advice / information to the public and the media, so that the public can feel confident, safe and well informed during a major emergency.

The purpose of this document is to provide common guidance to principal response agencies on the provision of information to the public and working with the media during Major Emergencies.

1.2 Framework Requirements

The Framework states, in Section 5.4.7.2, that:

“It is the responsibility of the lead agency to establish a Media Centre at or near the site of the emergency for use by the principal response agencies in dealing with the media at the site. Each principal response agency should designate a Media Liaison Officer at the site and the activities of the Media Liaison Officers on site should be co-ordinated by the Media Liaison Officer of the lead agency. All statements to the media should be cleared with the On-Site Co-ordinator or his/her Media Liaison Officer.

The Local Co-ordination Group should take the lead in terms of working with the media, away from the site, during a major emergency. As with arrangements at the site, each principal response agency should designate a Media Liaison Officer at the Local Co-ordination Centre and the activities of the Media Liaison Officers should be co-ordinated by the Media Liaison Officer of the lead agency. All statements to the media at this level should be cleared with the chair of the Local Co-ordination Group.”

1.3 Making the Most of the Media

The media, and particularly the local media, can be a key resource for the principal response agencies in distributing important messages to the public; identifying, informing and reassuring those who are affected, and those who are not, so that fear and confusion are minimised.

Establishing and maintaining good relations with the media from the outset of an incident can lay the ground for continued positive contact as the incident develops.

After the first few hours, the media may be eager for new aspects of the story to cover. At this point, the principal response agencies, operating through the Media Liaison Officers, may be in a position to develop and communicate a number of strategic messages which will assist the long term response into the recovery phase.

1.4 Overall Objectives

The overall objective of the Regional Communications Plan is to facilitate the principal response agencies in producing an effective response by:

- Issuing factual information to help relieve public apprehension and quickly rebutting any serious misinformation
- Assisting the response, by publicising emergency information, such as help line telephone numbers
- Managing the media so that they do not impede the emergency services or cause unnecessary distress
- Appointing and training Media Liaison Officers with the expertise necessary to effectively work with the media

1.5 Dealing with Rumour and Speculation

During the early stages of an incident, rumour and speculation may very well be rife. These will combine with the inevitable mixed and/or contradictory messages which often emerge from the scene of the incident at the early stages. It is critical that the principal response agencies provide co-ordinated messages to the media, so as to minimise the risk of this occurring.

Note: In a Major Emergency, anyone and everyone can be quoted as a spokesperson. Media Liaison Officers and others engaged with media must be guarded when dealing with journalists and resist the pressure to speculate or make informal comments. Media Liaison Officers will need to stick rigidly to agreed messages and inform relevant Co-ordination Groups of any pressure from journalists to change this.

1.6 Establishing the Lead Agency

Establishing the lead agency is a critical first step in the co-ordination of the efforts of the principal response agencies. Once the lead agency has been agreed, its Media Liaison Officer will:

- Confirm its lead role on all issues, including communications
- Inform other key stakeholders of its lead role
- Establish the key spokespeople who will speak on inter-agency issues
- Coordinate on-going activity and briefing, which will include:
 - Liaising with the chair of the relevant Co-ordination Centre
 - Writing, approving and issuing media materials (statements, press releases, etc) based on the Information Management System
 - Taking responsibility for and managing telephone contacts from journalists (including keeping records of calls taken, where resources allow).
 - Communicating with Media Liaison Officers who may be dealing with the media at other Co-ordination Centres
 - Organising and timetabling media briefings and press conferences
 - Setting up press conference venues

It should be recognised that the necessary expertise required to deliver communications to the media may be more developed in some principal response agencies than in others. In such a situation, the Media Liaison Officer of the lead agency may hand over the role of spokesperson on inter-agency issues to the representative of another agency.

The Media Liaison Officer of the lead agency will, however, retain the role of coordinating the media response of all of the principal response agencies involved.

It is important to note that, as the incident develops and eventually moves into recovery phase, the lead agency may change.

2. PLANNING

2.1 Planning Ahead

Effective, co-ordinated, multi-agency communication with the public and the media during a Major Emergency requires significant advanced planning. In each Major Emergency Region, a Sub Group of the Working Group should be established to progress this issue. This Sub Group should include media/communications specialists from the principal response agencies in the region.

An important part of the work of the Communications Sub Group will be the preparation of a Regional Communications Plan, which should be based on this Guidance Document, endorsed by the Regional Steering Group, and signed by the chair. Such a plan will facilitate a proactive, rapid and effective response, in the areas of public information and the media, once a Major Emergency occurs. Agreement in advance on key strategies and procedures will save precious time when a Major Emergency occurs and will enable the principal response agencies and their Media Liaison Officers to focus on the quality, accuracy and speed of their response.

Once completed, the Regional Communications Plan should be exercised, revised and updated on a regular basis, and, in particular, should be evaluated and updated, as necessary, in the aftermath of any exercise or event, where public information and media issues arise.

2.2 Regional Communications Plan

A typical Regional Communications Plan should include:

- A signed endorsement by the Chair of the Regional Steering Group
- An introduction, explaining the function and status of the plan, and its relationship to the Major Emergency Plans of the PRAs
- An overview of the strategy to be followed when Major Emergency Plans are activated, including
 - Initial press releases by An Garda Síochána
 - Initial meeting of Media Liaison Officers from the PRAs
 - Assumption of Co-ordinator role by Media Liaison Officer of lead agency
 - Nomination of Media Reception Point, where appropriate
 - Establishment of Media Centre
 - Link to Local Co-ordination Group
 - Verification of information
 - Preparation and issue of joint press statements
 - Holding of joint press conferences
 - Issue of public information (including warnings)
 - Organisation of telephone help lines
 - Provision of joint information on websites
- Contact information for individuals in each PRA, who may act as Media Liaison Officers (**Appendix 1**)

- Protocols for establishing a Media Centre
- Protocols for securing and up-scaling resources
- Means of measuring achievements of planned objectives (**Appendix 2**)
- Contact details for relevant media
- Sample holding statements and message templates
- Checklists for the first two, four, eight, twelve, twenty four and forty eight hours
- Procedures for exercising, evaluating and updating the Plan on a regular basis.

2.3 Preparedness

Once the Regional Communications Plan has been agreed and endorsed by the Regional Steering Group, the Communications Sub Group should continue to meet to ensure that:

- All contact details in the Plan are kept up to date
- The potential Media Liaison Officers in the region are acquainted with one another and have a forum for the regular exchange of views
- The Plan is exercised on a regular basis
- The Plan is reviewed and updated as necessary

Major Emergencies are rare events and, therefore, all opportunities to test preparedness, including preparedness for communicating with the public and the media, should be utilised. It may be useful to consider inviting media representatives to take part in planned Major Emergency exercises, where, in certain circumstances, they may be asked to participate in mock interviews, press conferences, etc.

2.4 Media Centre

Where Co-Ordination Centres are being identified and developed, consideration should be given to the identification of facilities nearby which might be suitable for a Media Centre. Ideally, a Media Centre should be close to a Co-ordination Centre, but not so close as to impinge on the work of the Co-ordination Group.

A Media Centre should, if possible, include a Media Area which will:

- Provide working space for journalists, with desks, and telephone/data points
- Have white boards (or similar) where information and updates can be posted
- Be adjacent to a hall or other room, suitable for staging press conferences
- Provide a suitable backdrop for TV interviews
- Include areas suitable for radio interviews, both live and pre-recorded

As well as the Media Area, a Media Centre should also include a separate area for Media Liaison Officers and Spokespersons. It is in this area that the Media Liaison Officers will meet and agree strategy, deal with queries from the Media, prepare press releases and provide briefings to Spokespersons prior to press conferences.

A Media Centre should also include refreshment facilities, tea, coffee, etc., as well as toilets.

3 ON ACTIVATION OF PLAN

3.1 Initial Response (Appendix Four)

Once the Major Emergency Plans of the principal response agencies have been activated, the Garda Press Office will, as soon as practical thereafter, provide an initial response to the media, by issuing one or more holding statements. *Where feasible / possible, An Garda Síochána will consult with the other principal response agencies involved.*

The purpose of these initial holding statements will be for immediate operational requirements and to:

- Provide initial information to the public on the incident,
- Reassure the public that the incident is being managed.

Typically, this initial response should cover some or all of the following, depending on the nature of the incident, the information to hand and media deadlines:

- Inform the public that the incident has occurred.
- Inform the public of traffic diversions in place.
- Provide traffic updates (avoid an area, use public transport where possible, etc).
- Reassure the public as to action been taken and likely duration of the incident.
- Inform the public of any possible danger (but avoid panic).
- Assist in maintaining public order.
- Consider harnessing community spirit, as in, “look after your neighbours”
- Provide a spokesperson, so that radio can carry the message without delay.
- Identify a Media Reception Point

If the circumstances warrant, a location and time for a first press briefing may be provided. This may assist in:

- Keeping the media away from the scene
- Managing expectations and
- Minimising misinformation.

4 CO-ORDINATED RESPONSE

4.1 Co-ordinated Response

Major Emergencies are news and the media will respond quickly to the site of any large-scale incident. Their presence at the site and at other locations associated with the Major Emergency, such as hospitals, may extend for days or even weeks. The co-ordinated media response of the principal response agencies will involve the following:

- Each principal response agency will provide a Media Liaison Officer at the site.
- The activities of these Media Liaison Officers will be coordinated by the Media Liaison Officer of the lead agency.
- The lead agency will establish a Media Centre at or near the site of the emergency for use by the principal response agencies.
- All inter-agency media statements will be issued from one agreed location and source. This arrangement should be made clear to the media at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The content of all press statements must be based on the Information Management System (both at the site and at the Local Co-ordination Centre).
- All statements to the media at or near the site must be cleared by the On-Site Co-ordinator or his/her Media Liaison Officer.
- Once it is established, the Local Coordination Group should take the lead in terms of working with the media, away from the site.
- As with arrangements at the site, each principal response agency should provide a Media Liaison Officer at the Local Co-ordination Centre
- The activities of these Media Liaison Officers will also be co-ordinated by the Media Liaison Officer of the lead agency.
- The Media Liaison Officer of the lead agency should be involved in Local Co-ordination Group Meetings so that he or she is fully briefed and can effectively plan the media response.
- All statements to the media at this level should be cleared with the Chair of the Local Co-ordinating Group.

The Media Liaison Officer of the lead agency should oversee all aspects of the media response including:

- Activities at the Media Reception Point
- Arrangements for the media to visit the site, possibly including transport, where events have occurred in a remote area
- Management of the Media Centre, when one is established
- Monitoring media activities away from the site
- Monitoring media coverage
- Supporting those who choose to be interviewed and protecting the privacy of those who do not wish to be interviewed.

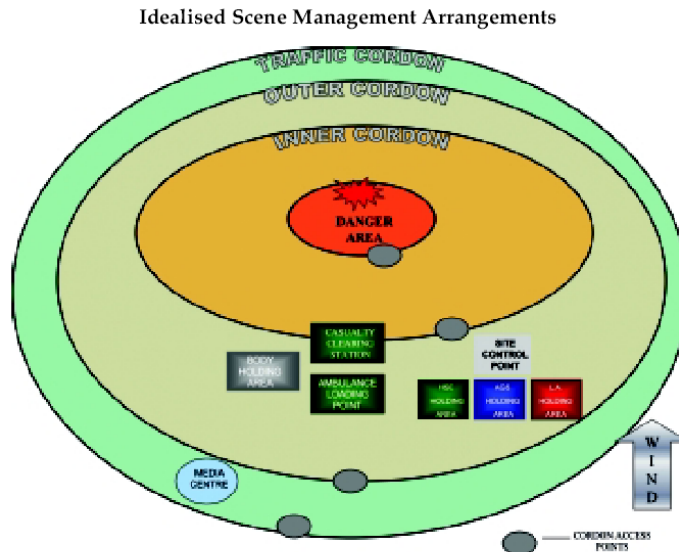
5 GENERAL MEDIA ISSUES

5.1 Media Centre

Following the initial stages of the response, a Media Centre should be established by the lead agency. The location of this centre will depend on the nature of the emergency and its location. (See Section 2.4 for details).

5.2 Media Reception Point

This is a designated point close to a Major Emergency site, preferably (but not always) outside the outer cordon. It is used for the reception (and possibly accreditation) of media personnel at the site and briefing them on arrangements for reporting, filming and photography. It may be little more than a meeting point, to which Media approaching the site are directed, with more advanced facilities provided at the Media Centre.



5.3 Control of Access to the Emergency Scene

An Garda Síochána are responsible for controlling access to a Major Emergency site. Restricting access allows the emergency services to carry out their work unhindered and facilitates the preserving of evidence, at what may be the scene of a crime. It can be expected that the broadcasting media, and in particular international TV networks, will bring large communications vehicles to the site. In addition, media helicopters are often deployed and the control of the airspace over an incident should be an early consideration (see Section 5.5.6 of the Framework on Air Exclusion Zones).

5.4 Media Movement

In some circumstances, individual principal response agencies may hold press briefings on issues which are under their exclusive control. For example, when the focus of the media moves to hospitals, after the initial phase of the response, the Health Service Executive may organise briefings, with prior consultation with the Local Co-ordination Group, on the scale and nature of the injuries involved.

5.5 Remote Handling

During some Major Emergencies, attention may focus on communities and individuals living many miles from the site, who nevertheless become a centre of media attention. For example, where friends and relatives of the victims of an aircraft crash assemble at an airport. Such secondary sites will also require coordinated media handling arrangements, to ensure an efficient and coherent response from the authorities involved. These arrangements may include measures to protect grieving family members from excessive media attention.

5.6 Monitoring the Media Coverage

Monitoring of the media coverage is crucial, particularly during Major Emergencies which run for a number of days or even weeks. This should be a task for the Media Liaison Officer of each organisation and any issues arising should be rectified, following consultation with and reference to the other Media Liaison Officers. Prompt and effective action should allow the Local and On-Site Coordination Groups to focus on the emerging incident, rather than on unfolding media issues.

Each agency should monitor the technical aspects of all press releases, to ensure that misinformation is corrected as soon as possible. They should discourage unauthorised interviews, so as to ensure that a common message is given and misinformation avoided.

5.7 Regular Briefings

Arrangements should be made for regular media briefings. These briefings should be agreed in advance by the Media Liaison Officer and details of locations and times communicated to the Chairs and Information Management Officers of relevant Co-ordination Groups.

The number of agencies at the top table of a briefing should be kept to a minimum and, where possible, the same personnel should be involved at each briefing. This helps to build a relationship with the media and re-assures the public that the incident is being effectively managed.

5.8 Information on Casualties

Great care should be taken to ensure that no information on individual casualties is released to the media. Similarly, premature or uncorroborated estimates of the numbers of casualties should not be released, until details have been confirmed.

Information on individual casualties will be provided only by An Garda Siochana, who will establish a Casualty Bureau to collect and collate the details of all casualties and survivors. Once it is operational, the telephone numbers for the public to contact the Casualty Bureau will be issued to the media by the Garda Press Office.

5.9 Sustainability

Media interest, particularly if the incident has an international element, can create pressure on a Media Centre throughout the 24-hour day and careful planning of staggered handovers is essential. The pooling of resources by the principal response agencies should be helpful in this respect.

5.10 Anniversaries

Experience has shown that media interest is revived on the anniversaries of events and relevant principal response agencies may wish to consider how these occasions should be handled.

5.11 The Government Information Service

The Government Information Service (GIS) plays a key role in preparing and projecting the Government's message on emergency management and response issues. An Emergency Planning Media Unit, chaired by the GIS, promotes and coordinates this work. This group, comprising Press and Information Officers of Government Departments and other key public authorities, continues to update and coordinate arrangements for handling enquiries from the media, as well as providing information and advice to the public.

APPENDICES

Appendix One

The following are designated by their respective agencies to be Media Liaison Officers in the event of the declaration of a major emergency.

Name	Mobile Number	Landline Number	E-mail Or fax	Comment
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Garda Siochana AAAA Division				
Health Services Executive BBBB Area				
AAAAA County Council				
BBBBBBB City Council				
CCCCCC County Council				

Appendix Two

Lessons Learned Checklist

Message Preparation

- Did you **mobilize resources** and staff quickly?
- Did you recognize that **public perceptions** sometimes matter more than facts?
- Did you **coordinate efforts** with other responding organizations?
- Did you enlist support from **credible third parties**?
- Did you **monitor** and listen closely to what the **news media, public officials, and other important players** were saying and the questions they were asking?
- Did you **refrain from trying to control** the flow of information?
- Did you **withhold names of injured or deceased** until next-of-kin were properly notified?

Message Content

- Did you express and show **concern, empathy, and compassion** consistently for damages, injuries, and any inconvenience?
- Did you emphasise **dedication, commitment, and social responsibility**?
- Did you provide an early or immediate **apology**, where applicable?
- Did you provide a list of **facts and an action plan**?
- Were you **open and honest** about capabilities, needs, and problems?
- Did you **know exactly what you wanted to say** to the media and did you use two key messages each time?
- Did you **acknowledge responsibility**, where appropriate, but avoid placing blame?
- Did you indicate that **investigations** are under way to determine the cause?
- Did you **tell the truth** as best you knew it?
- Did you use examples, human-interest stories, and concrete analogies to establish a **common understanding**?
- Did you use **simple visuals** and graphics as much as possible?
- Did you **test your message content** prior to delivery?
- Did you **refrain from going “off the record?”**
- Did you **avoid saying “no comment?”**
- Did you **avoid evasive statements** and shifting responsibility?
- Did you **avoid** statements that imply that **cost is more important** than public safety, health, or the environment?
- Did you **avoid** the use of technical **jargon**?
- Did you **avoid** providing too much technical **detail**?

Message Delivery

- Was top **management involved and visible**?
- Did you **go immediately** to the scene?
- Were you **easily accessible** to the media?
- Did you **stay calm**? (not lose your temper)
- Did you **practice** what you planned to say to the media aloud and did you test it?
- Did you indicate that you would **get back by a specific time** with an answer if you did not know an answer to a question?
- Did you **avoid conjecture** and speculation ("What if" questions)?

Nonverbal Communication

- Were you **sensitive to the non-verbal messages** you were communicating?
- Did you **sit up straight**, showing that you were paying attention and respecting your audience?
- Did you make **eye contact**? (Avoiding eye contact can make you look deceitful. If it is very difficult to make eye contact, focus on the back of the room, not on your notes or the floor.)
- Did you **avoid defensive, argumentative, and unreceptive body language** (e.g., arms crossed)?
- Did you **avoid fidgeting**, shuffling papers, or playing with your pen? (Keeping your feet planted on the ground, sitting or standing still, will make you look more controlled and confident.)

Appendix Three

Typical Media Questions

Many of the questions that will be raised by the media during a Major Emergency are predictable, and Regional Communications Sub Groups should consider the following:

General

Who is in charge here?

Has the danger passed?

When is the situation likely to be back to some form of normality?

Casualty Information

In the aftermath of a Major Emergency, information on individual casualties will be provided to relatives only by An Garda Síochána. To assist them in this process, An Garda Síochána will establish a Casualty Bureau in accordance with Section 5.7.4 of the Framework.

General Information on Casualties

As regards general information on casualties, this is a particularly sensitive issue and information on this area must be verified before being released to the media. The following are some of the obvious questions which may be raised in the aftermath of a Major Emergency:

- How many were killed or injured?
- Of those who were injured, how serious is their condition?
- Of the total involved, how many are uninjured?
- Were there any well known or prominent persons involved?
- Where are casualties being treated?
- Where are the displaced being cared for?

Property Damage

- What is the estimated value of property loss?
- What kinds of structures were involved?
- Was damage caused to any particularly important property (e.g. historical buildings, art treasures, homes of prominent figures)?
- Was other property threatened?
- What measures have been or are being taken to protect property?
- Has the area been damaged by emergencies before?

Response and Relief Activities

- Who discovered the incident?
- Who raised the alarm?
- How quickly were response units on the scene?
- What services responded?

- How many are engaged in the response?
- What acts of heroism occurred?
- How was the emergency prevented from spreading?

Other Characteristics of the Major Emergency

- Were there any blasts or explosions?
- Was there collapse of structures?
- Were there crimes or violence?
- Were there attempts at escape or self rescue?
- What was the extent of the emergency?
- What was the duration?
- Were there any crowd problems?
- Were there other unusual happenings?
- What accompanying accidents have occurred?
- What were the resulting effects (e.g. anxiety, stress) on the families and survivors?
- Will this effect day to day services?

Causes of the Major Emergency

- Were there any previous indications of danger
- How did the incident occur?
- Could the Major Emergency have been prevented

The causes of a Major Emergency will generally be determined by lengthy and detailed civil and, possibly, criminal investigation, followed by court cases, Inquests and, possibly, a Tribunal of Inquiry. For this reason, speculation in this regard should be avoided. Speculation can also hinder witnesses coming forward and can influence their account of what happened.

It is important to note that details, which are widely reported in the media, may or may not be accurate. For this reason all spokespersons should avoid comment on media speculation, unless to specifically rebut incorrect reports.

Spokespersons who speak to the media on behalf of the three principal response agencies should confine their comments to issues which have been jointly agreed or are within their area of expertise and avoid speculation.

Individual agencies must be careful to ensure that they release only verified information and, as far as possible, should comment only in respect of their own areas of responsibility.

Appendix Four

Draft Press Statement upon Activation of Major Emergency Plans

An incident (**briefly describe: explosion/fire/plane crash**) took place at **(location)** at **(time)** on **(day & date)**.

At **(time)** a Major Emergency was declared by **(name and title of person who declared the Major Emergency)**.

As a result the Major Emergency Plans of An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive and (name) City/County Council were activated and Garda, Fire and Ambulance units were dispatched to the scene of the incident.

Currently there are **(number of units)** present at the scene. **(Give specific numbers of how many units of each service are present)**. Also in attendance are **(give names of primary officers from each service present)**.

At this early stage all our energies are concentrated on bringing the situation under control. We are not yet in a position to comment on any possible casualties.

Major Emergency Plans are activated when an event takes place, usually with little or no warning, which causes or threatens death or injury, serious disruption of essential services or damage to property, the environment or infrastructure, beyond the normal capabilities of the principal emergency services in the area in which the event occurs.

When a Major Emergency is declared, the Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive and the Local Authority are immediately notified and respond on the basis of Major Emergency Plans, which detail a co-ordinated response to such incidents, and outline areas of responsibility for each agency.

Concerned members of the public are asked not to attend the scene of the emergency. Access to the site is closed off. Large numbers of emergency vehicles are travelling to the scene and it is vital that the roads are kept clear.

Additional Information to be Provided as Necessary

1. Concerned members of the public who wish to make contact with the emergency services may contact the following number **???**
2. Residents and members of the public currently in the **???** area are advised to stay indoors and close their windows and doors.

3. Residents and members of the public currently in the ??? area, are asked to immediately leave the area for their own safety. A Reception Centre is being provided at ???
4. Those living in the ??? area are advised that there is no immediate danger to their health and safety, but, in the interests of ensuring a clear and swift access by emergency services to the site, they are asked to remain in their homes.

Information to be Provided Later on

Later on, releases to the media should contain general information on casualties, as well as on any injuries sustained by staff and/or members of the public, including up-to-date numbers, but not names.

At this time also, information on where the injured (and/or the bodies of the dead) are being taken should be publicised, along with contact numbers for family and friends to call.

Details of the Friends and Relatives Reception Centres should also be given at this time. Such details should be continually repeated in all press releases and at press conferences.

As time progresses, more detailed information on the lay-out of the site, and where exactly on the site the accident took place, can be given out.

In addition, as the Major Emergency Plan continues to be implemented, and the immediate threat reduces, there should be a greater emphasis on the aftermath, including clearing up, the recovery of bodies (if appropriate), re-locating displaced members of the public, roads re-opening, etc. . .

All of these messages should be targeted at reassuring the public that the situation is under control, and that the authorities are managing the situation well. Confidence building is essential at this time.

Later press releases should also cover the actions of the emergency services since the Major Emergency Plan was activated, and provide a summary of the work carried out by both the emergency services and any other agencies involved, including voluntary groups.

Appendix Five

Media Response Organisation Roles and Responsibilities

Media Liaison Officers

Media Liaison Officers may be required to attend at either the On-Site Co-ordination Centre or the Local Co-ordination Centre or both. They will prepare press statements, based on information available from the Information Management System, issue press statements, once these have been approved at the appropriate level, arrange interviews with spokespersons and, in general, deal with the media in a co-ordinated fashion, on behalf of the principal response agencies.

They will be responsible for recording all incoming media enquires, either electronically or on paper, and recording the response issued and the time of that response. They will also be responsible for placing press releases and other information on to websites

They will ensure that specific questions being asked by the media are fed back to the appropriate Co-ordination Centre and, where possible, appropriate responses are provided.

Lead Agency Media Liaison Officer

The Media Liaison Officer of the lead agency will chair the Media Liaison Officers Group and will have overall responsibility for the content of messages communicated to the media. S/he will also establish the timetable for any press conferences and media briefings and will act as chairperson, or, alternatively, ensure that an appropriate chairperson is in place.

S/he will be the link between the Media Liaison Officers and the On-Site Co-ordinator or the Chair of the Local Co-ordination Group, as appropriate

S/he will also have overall control of the deployment and roles undertaken by staff at the Media Centre and will be responsible for ensuring that the Media Centre is fully staffed and operational for the duration of the Major Emergency.

Spokespersons

Spokespersons will normally be senior personnel from the principal response agencies. As far as possible, they will have been media training and be experienced in both broadcast interviews and dealing with difficult questions from the media.

The Spokesperson acting on behalf of an On-Site or Local Co-ordination Group must confine their comments to issues which are jointly agreed and take care to be seen to represent the joint view of the three principal response agencies involved.

A Spokesperson acting on behalf of an individual principal response agency should comment only on issues which are the exclusive responsibility of that agency. Such a spokesperson should be in a position to speak with authority on the role being played by their agency in dealing with the emergency.

An emergency responder who is nominated to speak to the media on behalf of a particular service, should confine their comments to issues which are within their area of expertise and avoid speculation.

Support Staff

Support staff may be required to help with the communications effort during a Major Emergency. They will normally be drafted in to perform roles which require some of the skills used in their day-to-day jobs. These can range from administration duties, such as copying and distributing news releases and making pressing cuttings, to managing the smooth operation of facilities

The main responsibility of the **Media Room Supervisor** is keeping the press in the Media Room fully informed of developments; acting as a liaison between journalists and the Media Liaison Officers, feeding specific requests through and ensuring that they are answered. This person will also be responsible for liaising with the lead agency Media Liaison Officer over matters such as media transport and the need for extra facilities

The role of the **Technical Assistant** requires someone who is familiar with operating all types of recording equipment, so as to ensure that press conferences and other media coverage of the event is recorded, and that copies are available for the Media Liaison Officers.

The **Clerical Assistant** provides support, such as taking notes at conferences and ensuring transcripts are available, copying press releases and ensuring that stocks are available in areas such as the joint press office.

Appendix Six

Major Emergency Communication Response Checklist

Best Practice for Communication

- General
 - TRUST. Trust is the goal – each communication builds or erodes trust
 - TRANSPARENCY is the tool
 - Announce EARLY – even with incomplete information, to control rumour and miss-information
 - LISTEN to the public and respond – Build messages to show that you are listening to the public concerns, even when these concerns seem unreasonable
- For All interviews
 - Before the interview, WRITE your main messages
 - REPEAT them during the interview
 - BRIDGE the messages (“what it is important to remember is . . . “)
 - State clearly what you don’t know and what you are going to learn
 - Share dilemmas with the public
 - Remember emergencies are evolving and unpredictable – always leave room for the unexpected
 - Never over reassure or mislead

Preparation

- Identify Media Liaison Officers, as well as back-ups
- Provide training for Media Liaison Officers and backups
- Prepare a list of typical key messages which could be used in a Major Emergency
- Prepare a list of common questions and answers
- Draft some typical press statements
- Identify translation services
- Prepare a list of those needed to be contacted in an emergency
- Prepare a list of key media (specialist and mainstream) contacts
- Identify (and equip) potential Media Centres
- Prepare a Media Plan and constantly update it

Event Checklist:

- Alert Media Liaison Officers
- Issue initial statements
- Prepare press releases
- Set up Media Centre
- Hold press conferences and media briefings
- Go live with website (Q and A's, situation report, maps)

After the Event:

- Hold a debriefing to determine:
 - What worked well
 - What little things really made a difference or would have if they were available?
 - How well did the Regional Communications Plan work?
 - Assess the news coverage and its impact
 - Who really stood out (positively and negatively) in terms of their contributions to the communications response?
- Integrate the lessons learnt into the Regional Communications Plan

Appendix Seven

Quick Reference Guide

Initially

- An Garda Síochána issue holding statements
- Establish which is the lead agency
- Decide if Media Liaison Officers are to be deployed to the site
- Establish how many media professionals are available and how many are likely to be needed to deal with the incident

Then

- Set up Media Liaison Officers Group at either the site, the Local Co-ordination Centre or both
- Establish Media Centre and ensure appropriate people are there to deal directly with the media
- Identify key spokespeople from the principal response agencies involved
- Establish when and where media briefing/press conference will take place. If possible time slots (e.g. every half hour or every hour) when media can be updated.
- If appropriate, set up an information board at the Media Centre, where situation reports and updates can be posted
- Establish mechanisms for briefing the Site/Local Co-ordination Group on how the media are receiving information, what the media is saying and what key messages are being picked up/ignored.

Finally

- Make sure that all media queries are logged and recorded
- Post information on appropriate websites
- Establish a “facts-file” of useful information. This will help to plug gaps in the news flow at all stages of the incident.