



# External Communications Guide

*Guidance on communicating with media and other external stakeholders before, during and after a disaster.*

## Know your audience and communication outlets

- » You will be responsible for communicating with a variety of audiences. It is important to be aware of the various messaging styles and priorities of each.
- » To communicate effectively with each of your audiences, you will need a multi-pronged strategy using traditional and social media outlets.
- » Consider these communication outlets and develop contact information and an appropriate messaging style for each. Customize this list based on your organization.



An emergency phone number for your organization.



An emergency webpage within your organization's website.



Email address(es) for media inquiries.



Social media accounts including Facebook, Twitter, and others.



An SMS group messaging service.

## Communicating with the press

### Coordinate press coverage

- » The **Incident Commander** should be aware of all information that is released, and only you or a designated spokesperson should speak on behalf of your organization.
- » Instruct staff to forward all press inquiries to you.

### Define your messages

- » Identify three to five key messages you want to communicate in advance of speaking with the press.
- » Make sure all Command Level Staff agree on messaging, coordinating this agreement during Command Level Meetings.



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## Practice

- » To best represent your organization and its needs, practice communicating your messages with senior leadership and staff.

## Respond quickly and calmly

- » Respond to inquiries in a timely manner. That way you'll be able to control key facts being communicated about your organization.
- » Times of emergency can be stressful. Do your best to remain calm and avoid being combative or defensive.

## Never speculate

- » Only release information you know is accurate.

## Be Consistent

- » Do not give different information to different sources. Keep your facts straight.

## Track messaging and communication

- » Be sure to track all your communication efforts with the press. Use a spreadsheet or other method which can easily be shared with Command Level Staff and others as needed.
- » Include contact names, numbers and emails, days and times to contact, and follow-up items.

## Communicating with residents

Though residents will primarily be communicating with the **Resident Engagement Team Leader** and other building staff, you should be prepared to respond to resident inquiries. In doing so, be timely, patient, transparent and sensitive to resident concerns.