

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

THE NEED

As most recent disasters have shown, the response of the news media is likely to be quick with a large number of personnel and equipment. It is usually the police who are responsible for coordination of the emergency service response to a major incident and managing facilities for dealing with the media. However, not all emergency scenarios will involve the police to any great degree. In this event, the media should be provided with facilities, which will allow them to gather authoritative information and pictures whilst allowing emergency operations to continue unhindered.

SUPPORT

Communication Unit Officers from Ealing Council should be asked to advise and support major media events at the school. It is strongly advised that the Communications Unit manage media issues related to a critical incident.

OBJECTIVES

The school needs to co-operate effectively with the media to achieve some of its own objectives, whilst assisting journalists to achieve theirs'. The schools key objectives are:

- To show it is controlling the incident and doing all that can be done to minimise the consequences
- To set minds at rest as far as possible and counter dangerous rumours
- To establish itself as caring, responsible and competent

CO-OPERATION

Reasonable co-operation with the media is advised wherever possible. Journalists barred entry may use gossip and speculation instead of facts in what they write. The school therefore needs to:

- Establish itself as an authoritative source of information
- Control the flow of information
- Ensure information is consistent
- Retain the media's good will by providing as much legitimate information as possible

CONTROL MEDIA POINT

There are benefits in setting up a central media point if possible. This needs to be a large space with basic facilities that might include: tables, chairs, stationery, school fact sheet, flip charts, wipe boards. Light refreshments might be appreciated.

MEDIA STATEMENT

There will be a need for statements to the media during the crisis and these will be prepared at the time by the media team. There is merit, however, in preparing a first, or holding statement as part of the emergency preparation process. For credibility, all statements should be on headed notepaper and contain the following information:

- Date, number and time of issue
- School contact telephone number, name and address
- Subject heading
- The basic facts as confirmed
- The number of an enquiry bureau for next of kin
- Notes for editors such as key data on the school
- 'More' or 'End' should appear at the end of each page