

What I Need to Know

- At your next incident, you could be asked for information by the media and your audience may be in the millions. Without preparation, you cannot expect to respond well to their questions.
- The media provides us with the most effective way of communicating with the public. It has a powerful influence over public opinion and is capable of negatively affecting public respect for any organisation including Emergency Services.
- The media can promote the good things we do. In the same way, it can tell the world when things do not go well. The media relies on people like us to provide accurate information.
- Managing our part well reduces the potential for conflict with the media and opens the door to a most effective and timely way of communicating with the public.
- Without the cooperation of the media, how quickly could we distribute evacuation warnings or other essential advice during a major incident? There are occasions when there is a need to be proactive and engage the media to provide information about an incident or bushfire preparedness to the public.
- The public can be informed in several ways: by newspapers, radio, or television, and the media can be informed by electronic mail, facsimile, telephone or face-to-face contact.
- Good media liaison can assist with the management of some major fire events. Good media liaison will help generate a positive public profile for Emergency Services. Media liaison needs to be established and maintained using a clear process to avoid mis-information.

QFRS Media Liaison Policy

- The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) Media Liaison Policy applies to all QFRS personnel and volunteers. This policy is designed to allow responsible officers the widest possible opportunities to liaise with the media to the benefit of the organisation. However, the following guidelines should be followed:
- Providing information that could identify a patient: As a rule of thumb, QFRS may confirm numbers of fatalities and injuries to the media, but may not release any identification details. QFRS should refer further questions of this nature on to the Queensland Police Service.
- Speculation on the cause of an incident: Unless the cause of an incident has been determined beyond doubt, you should not speculate on why or how it occurred – even “off the record”.
- Commenting on incidents that involve serious injury to or death of an Emergency Services member: The death or serious injury of a firefighter is a very serious occurrence, and any public media comment should come from the Commissioner or Minister.

QFRS collaboration with ABC Radio

- QFRS and the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) collaborate to inform the public during critical incidents, including bushfire.
- ABC Local Radio Queensland will broadcast an emergency message immediately in order to notify listeners that a significant emergency is occurring in their area. It will broadcast to all target audiences in areas requested by QFRS.

How I do it

- At an incident, all QFRS personnel, including volunteers, must follow the chain of command and refer the media to the highest ranked officer present or the Incident Controller.
- These officers are authorised to talk to the media about operational matters within their sphere of responsibility and provide factual details of events that positively describe the efforts of Emergency Services.
- If in doubt about who should handle a media enquiry, refer the media to the *QFRS media officer* on 07 32478186. This is a 24hr on-call number.

Reference Materials

- Area Reference Manual - Business Rule: A3.6 Manage Media Activities
- DES Media Training Handbook
- Field Incident Guide (FIG)
- Code of Conduct
- QFRS Media Liaison Policy