



CORPORATE PROCEDURE

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA DURING AN EMERGENCY SITUATION.

Setting the Scene

This document is written to complement the Neath Port Talbot Emergency Control Centre Plan and the Neath Port Talbot Council Media Protocol.

In the twenty first century, we live in a 24-hour rolling news environment where there is a demand for a flow of constant information from all news organisations.

Where ever and when ever a major incident happens you can guarantee that within the first hour the local media will be on the scene, within 90 minutes the national media will be there and if it is an incident that has a world wide significance the worlds media will be there the same day.

It is the role of the Councils Communication Officers within the Communications and Marketing Team, to provide fast, accurate information to the public, the Council and the media.

The Civil Contingency Act 2004 places the Council at the centre of the statutory obligation to warn and inform the public in partnership with other agencies that are designated as Category 1 responders. These include all three emergency services.

Aim of the procedure

The aim of the plan is to ensure that Neath Port Talbot Council (NPTCBC) provides an effective and efficient response to the media in any major incident.

This Media Plan for Emergencies complements the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Emergency Control Centre Plan.

It outlines the way that the Communications and Marketing Manager (CMM) will liaise with the emergency services and other agencies to ensure a swift and effective response is provided to the media.

Planning Objectives

This plan will outline in detail: -

- The team of people who will work as part of the media response team and their duties.
- It will define the relationships between the local authority, emergency services and other agencies to ensure a coordinated approach to media calls.

The Process to follow

If an emergency situation should occur then the Swansea based Emergency Planning Duty Officer, through a mutual aid agreement, will be paged by Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service to be briefed on the incident.

They will contact the Chief Executive (CEO) of NPTCBC, or a nominated representative to alert them. They will assess the situation and consider whether to declare a major incident.

If one is declared the CEO will instruct the support team coordinator to notify the emergency management team and the control centre will be established.

The control centre for NPTCBC is Port Talbot Civic Centre. The Emergency Control Centre Plan for NPTCBC complements this plan and sets out the detail for the set up of the command and control centre rooms.

All emergencies on a large scale, where the Police are the lead agency, will be run using the South Wales Police Media Protocol. This names the Police as the lead agency, but whilst the Council supports this theory we still reserve the right to make press statements regarding the Councils actions that will be shared with partners.

The CMM as part of the emergency management team will be notified and will evaluate the situation from the information provided and ensure that members of the press and media team are notified, briefed and called out. The Support Team Coordinator will ensure that the green room is set up as the press and media enquiry room and all the telephone lines and PC's are set up and working.

A decision will be needed on the necessity of providing a Council press liaison on site in conjunction with the lead emergency service. If this is the case then the CMM has to ensure that a press officer¹ is available to cover the press and media enquiry room (green room) as well as any other day-to-day press calls on

¹ The Press Officer will be Pam Crecraft, Corporate Communications Officer, if Pam is not available then it will be Sian Jones, Corporate Marketing Officer

the press office phone number in the Corporate Communications and Marketing room.

If required an external press briefing centre will be established. This will be decided and organised by the lead agency. The centre should always be a site in close proximity to the incident that has power supplies, kitchen and bathroom facilities and have good communication facilities including mobile phone reception.

If NPTCBC are not the lead agency they still reserve the right to make statements about their own response to any incident. All statements will be shared with all agencies involved in the incident through the central media point (Press briefing centre if one is established).

NPTCBC will provide a lead spokesperson to take part in the press conferences as appropriate. *In most emergency cases it would be the Chief Executive or the Leader of the Council (to be decided on the day, depending on the circumstances).*

Local elected Members can call the member enquiry helpline for up to date and accurate information on the incident. It is likely that the media will call the relevant councillors for a comment on the incident.

Every effort will be made to provide up to date and regular information to the media. All media enquiries and statements will be approved by Command and Control and shared with the agencies involved. This will ensure the agencies are giving a single clear and consistent message to the media and the public.

The lead agency will be responsible for making sure that the media response teams of all organisations involved are kept up to date and informed of progress and the changing situation

As the incident progresses the lead agency will inevitably change. The Local Authority may take the lead in the recovery phase.

Where appropriate the Council legal team will approve all statements released by the Council Corporate Communications and Marketing team relating to the incident.

Appendix 1

Working with the media

Media process for any incidents will follow a basic timetable: -

Day 1 – who, why, where, when, what will all need to be answered

They will need pictures.

Day 2 – keep the media on side by drip-feeding them information. Provide information on people stories, hero's, pets etc.

They will need up to date photographs of key people within the council – or they will use old library shots.

All spokespersons will need to look cool, calm, collected and composed.

The media have their own boundaries when it comes to decency and censoring.

Make sure that the front line staff, call centre, security guards etc are kept up to date with information. “No comment” gives the image that the organisation doesn't care and has something to hide. They will need to be told what the key messages are in case they are asked.

In every incident, no matter how big or small it is the process the media will follow will be the same: -

- **Mayhem** – as soon as it happens there will be speculation and mayhem. This will last for a few hours – at this point it is important to get the pre-prepared statement out to the media to try and minimise the speculation.
- **Mastermind** – Now the media have reported the initial facts they will start looking for talking heads. They will interview specialists in the area that the incident has occurred in. They will have a list of retired professors, chairs of committees and chief executives who are willing to speak randomly on the topic, and speculate on causes and ways forward.
- **Manhunt** – the speculation has ended and the facts are known, people now want someone/thing to blame. The media will tackle this legal minefield in different ways.
- **Memorial/Epilogue** – the story will continue to run when there are funerals, memorials, and anniversaries.

Press Briefing Centre

Establishing a press briefing centre will provide a base for the media as well as a place to hold briefings, press conferences and one to one interviews. It will also provide space to monitor the media as the emergency progresses. It will be coordinated by the lead agency.

The CMM dealing with the incident will be responsible for the collection and dissemination of information regarding the level of media interest, from the Local Authority perspective to Command and Control. He/She will be the point of contact for the Local Authority media issues relating to the incident as well as at the scene.

He/she will oversee all communications from the Local Authority, liaise with the emergency services and provide spokespeople for press conferences and interviews.

The press briefing centre will be established as close to the incident as possible, so to encourage the media to go there and stay there. It will be a base for all media communications.

On an occasion where the Council is the lead agency, the Princess Royal Theatre will be the location for all press conferences and be established as press briefing centre.

In preparation for localised emergencies standard holding press statement templates will be prepared and approved in advance, the Council can issue that immediately to the local press. This will provide a template that will provide relevant information quickly.

What to put in a press briefing centre – for the lead agency

When establishing a press briefing centre the following considerations need to be made: -

- Suitable car parking for cars, satellite vans and radio cars will be needed.
- It must have mobile telephone reception
- Heating, toilets and kitchen facilities
- Separate rooms for 1:1 interviews and private staff briefings, away from the journalists.

Press statements

Any statements that are issued to the media by the Council must go through the Council's CMM, be authorised by Command and Control and also be shared with the lead authority, i.e. the Police, Fire and Rescue Service etc. We will keep the information provided by the council to the actions taken by our selves. We will not quote casualty numbers etc or anything else that is not directly the Councils responsibility.

The information provided has to inform, reassure, educate, action, resolve.

It is important that you understand the media's needs.

If nominated spokespeople are given the option to do a live interview – do it!! It can not be edited if it is live.

Holding statements can be prepared in advance, that have blank spaces left for relevant information to be inserted. This will save time at the beginning of an incident and enables us to get clear messages out to the media straight away.

Elected Members must ensure that they are up to date with accurate information received from the established member enquiry team before making any statements to the media. They must be comfortable with 'live' interview situations and must be media trained. (In house media training will be provided)

The Council's website will need to be regularly updated with all statements and releases issued by the Council as well as all joint statements that are issued by the agencies.

Nominated Council spokespersons

The appropriate spokespersons will be nominated and fully briefed on the emerging situation.

They will either be, depending on the scale of the incident: -

- *Leader of the Council,*
- *Deputy Leader,*
- *Chief Executive of the Council*
- *Corporate Director of the appropriate Division within the Council.*

A welsh speaking spokesperson will also be nominated to ensure that the Welsh media have equal access to the information. (If available)

They will be the named person on all releases and statements issued by the Local Authority; they will take part in press conferences as appropriate, as well as conduct interviews with the media.

When giving statements stick to the facts, if you don't know say you don't know.

The media have a duty and a right to cover the incident; we must engage with the media head on to help control the news agenda.

Prepared Council statements

There are three things to remember in the initial press statements that are made:

Sympathy, Praise and Promise

Sympathise with the situation and with those involved, Praise the hard work of the people working to resolve the incident and promise that the facts leading to the incident will be reviewed. Do not promise what can not be delivered.

All statements must be simple, straightforward and contain accurate facts. They should be written so everybody can understand them straight away. They should avoid jargon, tell people if there is any action you want them to take, e.g., go in, stay in and tune in. They must be appropriately authorised by Command and Control, and then shared with the lead agency. They must be numbered dated and timed, then issued promptly using multiple media, making sure that all agencies involved also receive copies.

Press conferences

They will be held on a regular basis and coordinated by the lead agency. When the lead is the local authority the people involved will essentially involve: -

The lead agency spokespeople,

and any other agencies that are working in the incident.

When organising the time of the conference the deadline of all interested media should be taken into consideration.

The appropriate Senior Press Officer from the lead authority will introduce the talking heads, introduce the opening statement and control the flow of questions that follow. Then bring the conference to a suitable close by saying when the next conference will be held.

Press packs should be provided with written copies of the statements that were read out, any extra information that the public will need, e.g., help line numbers, lists of rest centres etc and press contact numbers for all agencies. press team.

Things to remember: -

When answering questions, look at the person who is asking the question,

Put the TV cameras at the side, photographers at the back.

Arrange separate photo opportunities to minimise the amount of flash photography during filming.

Make sure the print journalists can see the spokespeople.

Also make sure that the floor is stable for cameras.

Media enquiries

All incident related media enquires will be logged and directed to the lead agency Senior Press Officer, who will provide a coordinated response. It is important that all information is logged so a full account of the activities can be given at the de brief session. It is also important in case any questions are asked later on.

There is a dedicated Council emergency press office number that is issued to the media to announce that there has been an emergency, the Council are involved and their emergency press office team is taking calls

This number will be 01639 763439, the fax number will be 01639 763795 and email will be emergency@npt.gov.uk

The Council's CMM will be kept up to date with all media enquires if they are off site. The enquiries will be redirected to their email account to be accessed at a suitable location near the incident site via a laptop with dial in access.

Pooling arrangements

It may be advisable to initiate the 'pooling' of media so they can get the story while you keep as much control of the situation as possible.

Let the media decide who will be in the pool.

Pooling arrangements help to manage large numbers of media representatives, they are used to them and they are used regularly to help minimise the number of intrusive cameras and people in small/sensitive sites.

The pool will normally consist of one television crew, a news agency, a photographer and radio reporter.

Appendix 2

Information to the public

It is the duty of the local authority to provide information to the public.

A dedicated public and member enquiry team will be established as soon as possible after the incident has taken place. They will provide up to date and accurate information to the public and members when they call in as well as record all information received.

The public enquiry line will be: -01639 763438.

The member enquiry line will be: - 01639 763471

These numbers will be published to the public via the media when an emergency incident has been declared.

Any published material, e.g. flyers with contact details, health and safety procedures etc, will be distributed to the appropriate places where the public will then be directed, in order to collect the material. (E.g. The Government's preparing for emergencies booklets)

Special arrangements should be made for the hard to reach groups, including the elderly, the disabled and those that cannot read so they also receive the information in a timely manner. Consideration has to also be given to people who are unable to communicate in English.

Emergency media broadcasts

The local BBC radio station has a license condition responsibility to broadcast public information announcements when major incidents occur. They have a document that outlines their planned actions called 'Connecting in a Crisis.'

The key message to the public in such cases is 'go in, stay in, tune in to local BBC radio to find out exactly what has happened, what you should do and where to go for further information.

What to put in a press briefing centre

Television (with ceefax, and satellite), radio, PC with internet access, Chairs, tables, OHP, laptop and projector, paper, pens, kettle, cups, tea, coffee, milk, sugar, food, mobile phone charger, laptop power leads,

Staff Welfare – to ensure that all staff working at the incident are working at their full potential a shift system will need to operate if the incident lasts longer than 10 hours. Consideration will also have to be given to staff counselling and their wellbeing.

Briefing for Spokespeople

All spokespeople need to be kept up to date with the changing situation.

This can be either by phone, but preferably in writing.

Regular contact needs to be maintained to ensure that the correct information is provided.

Appendix 3

Other items for consideration

VIP/Royal visits

If it is a major incident then it is quite likely that VIPs will visit. The Police will lead, but the Welsh Assembly Government can be called in to help with the media preparations and protocols. Command and Control will consider any arrangements for any proposed VIP visits.

Records

All media calls must be logged immediately by the person that takes the call, and notes made on actions taken. All enquiries should be shared with the lead agencies. All records will be essential for the debrief session and for any post incident reports. They may also be required for possible litigation.

Voluntary agencies

It is likely that external voluntary agencies will assist in some way. They include: - St Johns Ambulance, the British Red Cross Society, as well as more local agencies. Their media communication should be coordinated by the lead agency.

Appendix 4

Public Information points

Libraries

Name	Location	Phone number	Key contacts

One Stop Shops/reception areas

Location	Phone number	Key contacts
Pontardawe		
Neath Civic Centre		
Port Talbot Civic Centre		
Penllergaer Civic Centre		

List of suitable locations for Press Briefing Centres

Name	Location	Phone number
Theatres		
Princess Royal Theatre		

Day centres for the Elderly		
Community Centres *		
Afan Lido, Aberavon		
* Community Centres maybe used as a rest centre during an incident		

Appendix 5

Prepared Statements

Template – warning release fire, gas leak, general air contamination.

Ref

Title of release

Date and time

Statement from name, title, Neath Port Talbot Council: -

“We have been alerted of an incident at (name of place), we are working closely with the emergency services to ensure that we are doing everything we can at the scene.

“We, along with the Emergency Services will keep you informed of the incident as it develops.”

For further information please call

2. Press statement - flooding

Ref

Title of release

Date and time

Statement from name, title, Neath Port Talbot Council: -

“We have been alerted that localised flooding is likely in XXXX areas.

“Our depot staff are on standby and are doing all they can to ensure that gullies and drains are clear to allow water to flow away.

“Staff will be working throughout the night to help residents where they can and to minimise flooding.”

For further information please call

3. Press statement – major incident with casualties

Ref

Title of release

Date and time

Statement from name, title, Neath Port Talbot Council: -

“The thoughts and prayers of everyone here are with the families and friends of those involved in this tragic/awful incident that has happened today.

“Both the Emergency services and Council staff are on the scene are doing a tremendous job under difficult circumstances.

“Our priority is with clearing the site; as soon as this is complete we will carry out a complete review the facts that lead to this incident.”

For further information please call

Appendix 6

Main contacts for media

Local		
Western Mail	02920 223333	newsdesk@wme.co.uk
Neath Port Talbot Guardian	01639 778877	guardian@wme.co.uk
Evening Post	01792 514694	Paul.lewis@swwp.co.uk
The Neath Port Talbot Courier	01792 514694	Paul.lewis@swwp.co.uk
BBC (Trevor Fenwick)	02920 322000 02920 322099	Newsgathering.wales@wme.co.uk
ITV Wales	02920 590590	news@itvwales.com
Real Radio	02920 315000	news@realradiofm.com
Red Dragon Radio	02920 662720	news@reddragonfm.co.uk
Valleys Radio		news@thewave.co.uk

PA news (Tomos Livingstone)	02920 898106	pacardiff@pa.press.net
National press		
The Sun	020 77824000	news@the-sun.co.uk
The Mirror	020 72933000	mirrornews@mgn.co.uk
The Daily Mail	020 79386000	news@dailymail.co.uk
The Express	0871 4341010	newsdesk@express.co.uk
The Guardian	020 72782332	home@guardian.co.uk
The Independent	020 70052000	Newseditor@independant.co.uk
The Times	020 77825000	<i>name</i> @thetimes.co.uk
The Telegraph	020 75385000	dtnews@telegraph.co.uk
The Observer	020 72782332	news@observer.co.uk

Out of hours contacts

Contact numbers for staff

Name	Title	Work	Work mobile	Out of hours
Rhian Davies-Moore	Corporate Communications and Marketing Manager	01639 763207	07733 303065	01792 863845
Pam Crecraft	Corporate Communications Officer	01639 763308		
Sian Jones	Corporate Marketing Officer	01639 763307		
Jonathan Wilsher	Part time journalist	01639 763359		
Natasha Williams	Administrative assistant	01639 763307		

Emergency Management Team

Ken Sawyers	Chief Executive		07768 568836	
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Graham Jones	Head of personnel		07778 573091	
Philip Graham	Head of Corporate Strategy and Improvement			01639 700586
Peter Davies	Admin & Electoral Services Manager			01639 793053
Peter Moran	Head Of Democratic Services			01792 864152
Rhian Davies- Moore	Corporate Communications and Marketing Manager	01639 763207	07733 303065	07192 869845

Other key numbers

Peter Grant	Security for all civic buildings		07747 868237	
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Contacts for Cabinet Members

Name	Home	Mobile
Cllr Derek Vaughan, Leader		

Cllr Ali Thomas, Deputy Leader	01639 642740	
Cllr Paul Thomas (Corporate Services)	01732 864193	
Cllr A Woolcock, SSHH	01269 825767	
Cllr O Jones, Children & Young People	01639 884368	
Cllr John Rogers, ELLL		07734 960598
Cllr Colin Crowley, Comm & leisure	01639 775103	
Cllr D Lewis, Econ Development & Property Services	01792 864006	
Cllr P G Lloyd, Environment & Transport		07712 324408
Cllr P A Rees, Street care & Highway Services		01639 636204

Press office contacts for other agencies

Agency	Lead	Email	Telephone
Police	Sarah Cosgrove Media Manager		01656 655555
Fire	Rebecca Griffiths		0870 6060699
Gas	Sian Callaghan	Pressoffice.nwyprydain@centrica.co.uk	0800 111 999 02920 584003 Pager – 07699713263
Electricity	SWALEC		02920 555505
Water	Warwick Emanuel PR		02920 556140
Welsh Assembly Government	Linda Simmonds	newsroom@wales.gsi.gov.uk	02920 898099

Appendix 7

Action Plan

When the CMM is alerted to a major incident taking place in Neath Port Talbot, they will: -

1. Establish the initial facts, get as much information – find out who else knows, the location, the possible cause, if there are any initial press enquiries. Find out what other agencies are involved and evaluate whether an initial holding statement for the local media should be produced – share it with the Police press office in Bridgend and any other agency involved.
2. Liase with Support Team coordinator to decide where the SPO should be located – either at the scene or at the Council's press and media team base and go there.
3. Ensure there is adequate cover for the day-to-day press office activities (if required).
4. Contact other agencies involved to coordinate response.
5. Brief the command and control on the emerging media situation and keep them up to date. Keep up to date with the emergency situation through the command and control centre
6. Coordinate media enquires and organise and manage media requests for interviews and statements.
7. Ensure the appropriate spokesperson takes part in relevant media interviews. Ensure they are fully briefed and understand and are prepared for the scope of the interview.
8. Supply accurate, up to date, referenced statements to the media in response to their specific enquiries (share with all agencies).
9. Ensure regular, timely proactive statements are issued to the media providing information from the council to residents (share with all agencies).
10. Liaise with all service managers involved in the emergency to ensure the media team are up to date with the situation as it emerges.
11. If the incident lasts through the night, ensure cover is available and introduce a shift pattern. The news doesn't stop just because its night time!

Actions

