

Assignment Sheet

CONTENT AND CLEARANCE

Assigned To: _____

Tasks:

Done

1. Determine your **key messages** and information based only what is currently known about the event. Use these as the basis for all communication materials. _____

2. Express **empathy and caring** in the first lines or first 30 seconds of your communications. _____

3. **Answer what the public wants to know:** magnitude, immediacy duration, control/management of emergency, timely/accurate information _____
 - Are my family and I safe?
 - What have you found that will affect my family and me?
 - What can I do to protect my family and me?
 - Who (what) caused this problem?
 - Can you fix it

4. **Prepare to answer** what media and communities want answered: _____
 - Who is in charge here?
 - How are those who got hurt getting help?
 - Is this thing being contained?
 - What can we expect?
 - What should we do?
 - Why did this happen? (Don't speculate. Repeat facts of the situation, describe data collection effort, and describe treatment from fact sheets).
 - Did you have forewarning this might happen?
 - Why wasn't this prevented from happening (again)?
 - What else can go wrong?
 - When did you begin working on this (e.g. were notified of this, determined this had occurred)?
 - What does this data/information mean?
 - What bad things aren't you telling us? (Don't forget to tell them the good things.)

5. **Create an information sheet** on the event that can be used for public, public health partners and stakeholders. _____

Have it ready within the hour. It doesn't always have to be a press release. If it's quicker issue a press statement of facts and what's currently being done.

6. **Line up your clearance personnel** and give everyone the ground rules. _____

If you are the main clearance officer, be sure that you are set up to get clearance from your higher authority if that is required. But, be certain that they know you must release within a set period of time (usually if the event is critical, you have a one to two hour time frame before you should have information released).

7. **Prioritize incoming information** for clearance and dissemination. _____
Activate your three people to clear information. Clear simultaneously and in person when possible.

It is best if you can get the primary clearance authorities in one room with the door closed and no interruptions allowed. This allows for questions/comments about the information, discussions, and resolutions quickly. Make sure everyone would be comfortable seeing this information as the headline of the local paper the next day or on CNN within the hour. Remind everyone that the information you've compiled and are attempting to clear either: (1) answers important questions from the public, media, and partners; or (2) is in response to troubling trends from your own analysis about where the event is heading and that you are trying to mitigate effects.

8. Develop a **quick fact sheet** or Q&A sheet on the event based on what is currently known. _____

You will update this constantly in the next 48 hours. Pull any fact sheets on the incident that have been prepared in advance and are in your database (e.g. on the disease, on the type of crisis, etc.).

9. Make sure all **communications functions** (e.g. web team, hotline personnel) have the communication material and key messages. _____

10. **Get information out** as soon as possible. _____

Explain to responsible authorities that "no release" is worse than an "incomplete" release. Get "need to know" information out the door fast. Get "want to know" information released as soon as possible without straining relationships with authorities who must clear new information.