

## OC COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST FOR MANAGING A MAJOR INCIDENT

This checklist is designed to guide your actions in the event of the most serious type of incident that may happen at your event, such as a major fire, terrorist attack, grandstand collapse or any other catastrophic incident that may result in mass fatalities/injuries.

Such events are extremely unlikely to occur, however, in the event of a major emergency the public will expect us to communicate rapidly. We recognise that OC press officers may have limited resources and this checklist is designed to support you and help you act strategically when faced with a potentially overwhelming situation.

**It is the role of the police and other authorities to communicate on the incident itself and on any fatalities or injuries. We must not attempt to take over that role and must never speculate about the cause of the incident or any other matter.**

In addition to expressing on behalf of the OC feelings of sympathy and regret, while there will be an expectation that we will make particular mention of any horses that have been killed or injured, this must never be done in isolation from any human consequences.

The FEI Communications team is always available to support you in the event of such an emergency, including assistance in the drafting of statements and setting up of a press conference or interviews.

*Members of the media will be contacting you for information as soon as news of the incident gets out. Do not be distracted by these calls and do not give any information until you have full details for a written statement. You must focus all your attention on verifying the facts and on your duties as a member of the Crisis Management Team (CMT), so simply tell media that a statement will be issued shortly and do not engage in further conversation. Tell your team members to do the same.*

### Immediate actions to be undertaken when a serious incident occurs

1, You will be contacted by an OC member about the incident. If you are not immediately contacted, you should proactively call a member of the OC to get confirmation and details of the incident. Ensure that you are included in the CMT meeting.

2, Contact the FEI Communications team to advise them of the incident and provide any details that you have.

3, Draft, for OC approval, a holding statement giving a brief outline of the incident and expressing concern. Only deal in facts. This must be signed off by a senior OC member and published on the event website and social media channels before the CMT meeting.

An example statement might be:

*There has been a serious incident at xxxxxx event in xxxxx today. The emergency services are in attendance. At this stage, our only concern is for the safety and welfare of all those who are at the event, including our horses. A further statement will be provided as soon as we have additional information.*

4, Put in place media and social media monitoring if this is possible. It will not be possible to do this yourself, so call on your National Federation communications team to help you.

5, Draft a second statement which must be approved at the CMT meeting. **(NB: References to fatalities/serious injuries can only be made after the police have officially confirmed fatalities/serious injuries. Do not include numbers in your statements)**

An example statement might be:

*We can confirm, with the deepest regret, that there have been a number of fatalities and injured people and horses following the very serious incident today at xxx event. All of our thoughts are with the loved ones of those who have died and also with those who have been involved in the incident. We are in close touch with the emergency services.*

*(If emergency number available): If you are concerned about a loved ones at the event the police in xxx have issued an emergency number to call, which is xxxxxx*

*Further updates will be issued as soon as we have further information.*

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In the event of a catastrophic event at your venue, it is likely that the venue will be evacuated. It is the role of the CMT to establish a secondary location for the meetings.

You must at all times ensure your own safety. You must never put yourself at risk.

#### **At the first CMT meeting (which may be via conference call)**

- 1, Obtain approval for second statement
- 2, Identify the spokesperson
- 3, Emphasise to the other CMT members that they must not speak to the media. There must be only one spokesperson
- 4, Assess – together with the police and any other relevant authorities - whether a press conference will assist in managing media enquiries and agree OC representation at that
- 5, Gather as much information as possible, as you will need to draft a question and answer document. This will also need to be signed off by a senior OC member, and will be used to provide answers for the press conference and any interviews
- 6, Agree with CMT other communication needs: sponsors, event staff, athletes, Officials must all kept fully informed, but only with verified facts

#### **After the CMT meeting**

- 1, Issue the approved second statement on all channels, including the website and on social media
- 2, Begin compiling a list of interview requests for consideration
- 3, Consider how you can get additional resources to help you, for example administrative staff not being used elsewhere who can help with phone calls. Anyone involved in such communications should only direct callers to the statement on the website and must not make any additional comments. They can take a note of their enquiries.

#### **Ongoing**

- 1, Update statements when new information is available
- 2, Continue to express sympathy
- 3, Arrange media interviews
- 4, Suggest hospital visits or meeting relatives by OC members
- 5, Ensure you have enough help
- 6, Keep the FEI Communications team updated

#### **GUIDANCE ON DEALING WITH EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS**

In the extremely unlikely event that a catastrophic incident occurs, you are likely to feel anxious about your ability to deal with the communications around it. Please remember that very few people have experience of this kind of incident.

These notes are designed to guide you and to help you get it right.

When giving statements about a major incident, the spokesperson must always restrict themselves to speaking about the areas for which the OC has direct responsibility. These include the nature and history of the event, who was taking part, what activities the event involves. The spokesperson may also talk in general terms about the OC's values, such as *the safety and security of our audiences, athletes and horses is always our primary concern. We will never compromise on safety.*

The spokesperson must not talk about matters for which you do not have responsibility or expertise. In particular these include the rescue operation, what the consequences of the incident have been (eg fatalities) or who might have been responsible. These are very important matters for the police. If the spokesperson comments, it may harm the search for who is responsible.

The spokesperson must only deal in verified facts. Facts must be verified through the CMT or a senior member of the OC, or through the relevant authorities. You must never speculate.

You must ensure that everyone at the OC is clear that there must be only one official spokesperson to the media.

### **What you CAN talk about**

- The sentiment at the OC - e.g. With deep regret we have to announce; all of our thoughts are with everyone who is affected; we are deeply concerned to learn that there may be people trapped in the stand etc
- The event
- Who was taking part (eg number of participants, where they are from)
- The history of the event
- The team behind the organisation of the event
- The values of the OC e.g., the safety and security of our audiences, athletes and horses is always our primary concern
- What the OC is doing to support anyone affected
- In general terms, what happened e.g. there was an explosion (NOT there was a bomb); a stand in the stadium appeared to collapse; there was a serious fire.
- That the OC is fully co-operating with the authorities, including in any investigations which may follow
- Your additional distress that horses have been killed or injured (always in association with deep regret about the human cost)
- Your gratitude to the emergency and medical services for what they have done

### **What you CAN'T talk about**

- The precise details of the incident
- Who might be responsible
- Any claims of responsibility that you become aware of
- Security, except to say that it is your highest priority. You must not comment on precise security arrangements or on whether the event had heightened security
- Whether or not you think there was a security failure
- Whether or not you had any threats before the incident
- Whether there have been any fatalities

- How many people are injured and the nature of their injuries. You must never refer to injuries as “minor”
- The names or anything that may identify someone who has been killed or injured
- What the authorities are doing at the event venue
- You must not release pictures of athletes or others who were involved at the time of the incident
- Whether other equestrian events in coming weeks might be affected
- Anything related to the financial cost of the incident
- The number and nature of any venue inspections before the event.
- Your reaction to criticism of safety or security at the event by “experts” in the media

If you come under pressure to issue statements which are not in accordance with the above guidance, it may be helpful to contact the FEI Communications Department for advice.