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Risk and Crisis Communication:
77 Questions Commonly Asked by Journalists during a Crisis

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Journalists are likely to ask six questions in a crisis (who, what, where, when, why, how) that relate to three broad topics: (1) what happened; (2) What caused it to happen; (3) What does it mean.

Specific questions include:

- 1) What is your name and title?
- 2) What are your job responsibilities?
- 3) What are your qualifications?
- 4) Can you tell us what happened?
- 5) When did it happen?
- 6) Where did it happen?
- 7) Who was harmed?
- 8) How many people were harmed?
- 9) Are those that were harmed getting help?
- 10) How certain are you about this information?
- 11) How are those who were harmed getting help?
- 12) Is the situation under control?
- 13) How certain are you that the situation is under control?
- 14) Is there any immediate danger?
- 15) What is being done in response to what happened?
- 16) Who is in charge?
- 17) What can we expect next?
- 18) What are you advising people to do?
- 19) How long will it be before the situation returns to normal?
- 20) What help has been requested or offered from others?
- 21) What responses have you received?
- 22) Can you be specific about the types of harm that occurred?
- 23) What are the names of those that were harmed?
- 24) Can we talk to them?
- 25) How much damage occurred?
- 26) What other damage may have occurred?
- 27) How certain are you?
- 28) How much damage do you expect?

- 29) What do you doing now?
- 30) Who else is involved in the response?
- 31) Why did this happen?
- 32) What was the cause?
- 33) Did you have any forewarning that this might happen?
- 34) Why wasn't this prevented from happening?
- 35) What else can go wrong?
- 36) If you are not sure of the cause, what is your best guess?
- 37) Who caused this to happen?
- 38) Who is to blame?
- 39) Could this have been avoided?
- 40) Do you think those involved handled the situation well enough?
- 41) When did your response to this begin?
- 42) When were you notified that something had happened?
- 43) Who is conducting the investigation?
- 44) What are you going to do after the investigation?
- 45) What have you found out so far?
- 46) Why was more not done to prevent this from happening?
- 47) What is your personal opinion?
- 48) What are you telling your own family?
- 49) Are all those involved in agreement?
- 50) Are people over reacting?
- 51) Which laws are applicable?
- 52) Has anyone broken the law?
- 53) How certain are you?
- 54) Has anyone made mistakes?
- 55) How certain are you?
- 56) Have you told us everything you know?
- 57) What are you not telling us?
- 58) What effects will this have on the people involved?
- 59) What precautionary measures were taken?
- 60) Do you accept responsibility for what happened?
- 61) Has this ever happened before?
- 62) Can this happen elsewhere?
- 63) What is the worst case scenario?
- 64) What lessons were learned?
- 65) Were those lessons implemented?
- 66) What can be done to prevent this from happening again?
- 67) What would you like to say to those that have been harmed and to their families?
- 68) Is there any continuing the danger?
- 69) Are people out of danger? Are people safe?
- 70) Will there be inconvenience to employees or to the public?
- 71) How much will all this cost?
- 72) Are you able and willing to pay the costs?
- 73) Who else will pay the costs?
- 74) When will we find out more?

- 75) What steps are being taken to avoid a similar event?
- 76) What lessons have you learned?
- 77) What does this all mean?