

The Threat to the CNI: The Media, Crisis and Security

Adrian Van Klaveren
BBC News

What are we worried about?



Why the media matters

- The main source of information for most people
- Trusted – especially broadcasters
- Immediacy – minute by minute updates
- Can bring the nation together – or reach specific local audiences
- If the media is getting it wrong, everyone is affected

How the media thinks

- Speed matters – competition
- Different roles of media and government: need to maintain editorial independence
- Separation of news reporting and delivering essential information
- Scepticism/challenge
- Public service responsibilities

Working with the media

- Ensure the public are informed and warned
- Recognition that in a vacuum, speculation flourishes
- Obligations imposed by Civil Contingencies Act
- Clarity on who is taking the lead
- Regional Media Emergency Forums and regular joint exercises

The BBC's role

- Obligations imposed by parliamentary charter and licence fee funding
- The UK's national multi-platform broadcaster – television, radio and the web
- Public service ethos and responsibilities



The BBC in an emergency

- Trusted broadcaster who the nation turns to during emergencies
- Information about what has happened and the consequences
- Allow audiences to make rational decisions about their safety
- Can reach the whole UK at once but also target local and regional services
- Battery powered radios are most robust form of communication
- Local and national liaison with authorities
- Internal communication is vital – conference calls, emergency teams, rehearsed emergency plans

Connecting in a Crisis

- Guide to working with the BBC during an emergency
- Warning and informing in interests of public safety
- A structure to develop relationships
- Who to contact and key information needs
- Good practice and partnership ideas
- Encourage planning and preparing together

Speed of Response



- Coverage of disasters and emergencies in real time on continuous news
- The public now report as much as journalists
- Media often know about an event first
- Golden Hour of response – for media and emergency services

Flash Floods in SW England



- Communications an early casualty – failure of phone networks
- Travel disruption – difficulty of moving people around
- Helped reunite families and keep people safe

Lessons learned

- Timely flow of information especially about schools and transport
- Accuracy is paramount – at stake is audience trust and staff safety
- Constant need to update and repeat information – people tune in/log on all the time

An Avian Flu outbreak?



- Potentially the biggest test of any emergency planning
- Worldwide consequences
- Prolonged time period

An Avian Flu outbreak?

- Fear a pandemic could sweep the UK
- Mass panic and failure of public services
- Safety concerns
- Detailed planning with desktop rehearsals, equipment purchases
- Clear framework for dealing with government, agencies and other broadcasters

Issues

- Fragmentation of the media – rumours and wrong information can spread very quickly
- User generated content – danger of overloading our systems
- How to use eyewitness accounts – are they true and responsible

Conclusions

- Time to connect is before a crisis – not during one
- Good planning saves time to deal with the unexpected
- Usually impossible to hold back the news – it has to be managed but not censored
- Service provided by media can only be as good as information the media is given
- More information at:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/connectinginacrisis>