

## MEDIA ENCOUNTER GUIDELINES

### Absolutes

1. Have a reason for being interviewed.
2. Be prepared.
3. You cannot win a fight with the media.
4. Don't bluff or lie.

**Control:** A successful media interview is about control. It's about making happen what you want to happen, rather than hoping it will happen by itself. **Have an agenda:** Come to the interview with several points you want to make during the interview.

**Q = A + 1:** Use the technique of bridging to move the conversation to your agenda. *Q* represents the reporter's question, *A* represents your answer to the question, and *+1* represents the bridge to your point. For example:

Q: Do you expect any lawsuits as a result of the accident that occurred at your facility today?

A: I have no way of knowing . . .

+1: What I do know is that we are very concerned about the employee who was injured, and we are cooperating fully with the authorities who are helping us to investigate the matter.

**Listen – Think – Respond:** Listen to each question. Pause briefly to formulate your answer (5-8 seconds of silence is perfectly acceptable, and positions you as thoughtful). Then respond.

**Interruptions:** Expect reporters to interrupt you. If this happens, continue talking or ask the reporter to allow you to finish your answer.

### Beware of Traps

- Personal opinions: Don't give them; you are there to represent your organization.
- Speculation: Limit your responses to what you know for certain. Avoid "What if" questions.
- Third-party discussions: Speak only on behalf of the organization you represent – not former employers, competitors, customers, suppliers, etc.
- Blind source: Don't respond to comments from unnamed sources, or to reports, memos, documents, news stories you haven't seen.
- "No comment": Avoid this phrase; it implies that you are evading, hiding or guilty.
- Off-the-record: Assume everything you say in the presence of a reporter will be used.
- Negatives: Don't repeat (reinforce) negative words used by a reporter.
- Filling silence: Remain quiet once you have finished your statement.
- Losing composure: Don't respond emotionally by getting angry, crying or touching a reporter.

### Remember your goals in a crisis

- Be a credible source of information – speak early and frequently.
- Put a caring and compassionate face on the name of your company.