Any event that disrupts your workplace can be newsworthy and attract media attention. Being unprepared to manage media requests is a common misstep made by many organizations. The following guidelines can help you successfully manage media requests.

* **Know the journalist/media outlet**. There are many types of media outlets and any one of them might decide to make your organization an area of focus. Bloggers, podcasters, writers, X (formerly Twitter) or Facebook – the list of journalists is long and continues to grow. If someone contacts your organization, begin by gathering some information on the reason for their interest. Explain that as a member of the media, they can be put on a distribution list to receive ongoing information about the situation.
* **Establish some ground rules**. Provide the media with contact information for your identified spokespeople, including cell phone numbers, office extensions, and email addresses. Advise the media outlet to follow up with the identified spokespeople for a quick and accurate response.
* **Orient your Personnel**. Train your personnel in how to deal with inquiries from the media. Rather than responding “no comment”, they should direct the journalist to an authorized spokesperson for your organization. Counsel that they should not give out personal information such as the home address of anyone involved in the incident. Point out that only certain people should participate in an interview to ensure the media gets accurate, consistent, and complete information.

If the incident is sizable, it might be best to proactively contact the media. Take time to prepare a statement for use in a press release or at a press conference/interview that follows the seven rules of a media briefing:

1. Start by expressing genuine regret and concern for those affected by the incident.
2. Simply and clearly state what happened, without exaggeration.
3. State the organization’s commitment to getting to the root cause of the incident.
4. In a factual manner, discuss the implications of the event to operations, personnel, and clients.
5. Indicate management’s position on the long-term impact of the event on the organization (if applicable).
6. Explain when, where, and how they should contact a spokesperson with further questions.
7. Schedule a time for a follow-up release of information.

Given that a lot of information gets exchanged over the web, consider the following:

* Put a tracking system in place that lists all inquiries including the time they arrive, how they arrive (phone call, email), and how to respond.
* Ask if the reporter has a deadline and strive to meet that deadline.
* Try to respond to inquiries in the order they were placed but no longer than one working day unless a shorter deadline is indicated.