

“DEALING WITH A MAJOR INCIDENT”

GUIDELINES FOR EVENT ORGANISERS

- * Each press officer or senior event official acting as ‘event spokesperson’ should establish personal contact with the police before the event, making it far easier to deal with the police during the all-important period immediately after any serious incident.
- * Journalists must be convinced very quickly that their best source of information is the event press officer; otherwise they will feel obliged to seek information elsewhere, which means that the event spokesperson no longer controls the flow of information. It is therefore important that the event spokesperson issues a statement of some kind as quickly as possible after an incident, even if that statement does nothing more than confirm that an incident has taken place, where and when it occurred, how many vehicles were involved, and so forth. As further non-controversial facts (the race or stage has been stopped or abandoned; one driver is being attended by doctors at the trackside, etc) become available, they can and should be issued as quickly as possible.
- * As soon as possible, some kind of statement should appear from a senior official (preferably the Clerk of the Course). It is the duty of the event spokesperson to arrange (and probably to write) this statement.
- * It is almost always possible to find something positive to say: how fast the medical team reached the scene, how the debris fencing prevented any injury to the crowd, etc.
- * If a driver is seriously injured and has been transferred to hospital, that fact can be published, and effectively ends the press officer’s involvement. Subsequent enquiries about the driver’s condition should be directed to the hospital (be helpful - find and publish the relevant telephone number).
- * If a driver dies, it can be difficult to name him or her until the police permit it. It is important that the police notify the event spokesperson as soon as a name can be published, which highlights the need for good liaison with the local police.
- * If a non participant (a spectator or an official, for example) dies, his or her name equally cannot be released until the police have notified next of kin.
- * Accidents and incidents on public roads (circuit approaches, rally road sections, etc) are generally matters for the police, so enquiries should be referred to the relevant police officer to obtain and publish any relevant police statement(s) in the press office.
- * Circuit and event managers must understand that a rapid and accurate flow of information to the media is actually to their benefit. When information is not available or (much worse) is suppressed, the image of motor sport in general and of the event in particular can be severely damaged. Trying to hide things in this situation simply brings out the ‘investigative journalist’ lurking in every reporter.
- * For the protection of everyone involved, all statements about any accident **MUST** be written down and should only be issued in writing. Every person who might come into contact with the media must be issued with that statement, which can also be read verbatim in response to telephone enquiries. This must be put in place as soon as it becomes clear that an incident is serious: the first statement might only say: “we have received reports of an incident at xyz. The situation is being urgently investigated and further details will be supplied as soon as possible. We have no further comment at this time.”

TYPICAL SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

Pre-Event

1. Agree membership of primary Incident Management Team

This might typically include, but not be limited to:

Clerk of Course or Deputy ; Chief Medical Officer ; Event Press Officer/Spokesperson ;
Event Safety Officer ; Radio Controller

as considered appropriate for the grade and type of your event.

2. Include a Serious Incident Telephone Number (SITN) in the Safety Plan.

A sensible step is to ensure that this number can be used for incoming calls only.

On-Event

1. Issue the SITN to key event officials for them to call if they witness a serious incident involving a competing or official vehicle, spectators and/or Marshals.
2. Have a room or area available in or near to event headquarters for the Incident Management Team to meet in privacy

as considered appropriate for the grade and type of your event

When an incident is reported

1. **Establish all the facts as soon as possible**

Name and status of person(s) providing information – and their mobile telephone number(s)

Time and precise location of incident

Competition numbers of car(s) involved and/or further identifying information

Is anyone (vehicle occupants, spectators, marshals) injured?

If so, ages, gender, extent of injuries – whether conscious or unconscious

Have emergency/rescue services been called/are they already at the scene/ is there a trained first aider or doctor there

Is an event official managing the incident at the scene, and if so, who are they and what is their mobile telephone number

2. **Simultaneously begin preparing the official incident statement**

Agree on only one official statement

Establish what is known of the incident

Alert all event media representatives to incident. Give anticipated time for issue of an official statement

Ask everyone not to make any comment

Alert MSA Steward or senior Club Steward as appropriate

Consider alerting sponsors and other event partners where appropriate.

3. **Issue the first and subsequent official statements with the facts of the incident**

Time and location of incident

Where possible and permitted names of crew involved and car competition number (or refer to such as 'Driver of Car 99')

Comment on severity of injuries from event chief medical officer (medical/patient confidentiality issues may restrict this possibility)

Details of emergency/rescue services involved and their actions, including response time

Contact name and telephone number for any concerned family/friends

Name of person issuing statement, with reference telephone numbers for event headquarters

Ensure as far as possible that what is posted on event or other websites is identical to the written official statement.

Any updates on the official statement must be timed and dated – it is an idea to highlight any new information in bold print

All persons who received the first statement should also receive subsequent updates

4. **Keep records**

Keep accurate records of where the official statement was distributed

Name(s) of person to whom sent and/or who requested it (not necessarily the same person)

Method of distribution – fax, e-mail, read over the telephone etc

Fax number, e-mail address, telephone number etc to whom it was sent and the time sent

PLEASE ALSO REFER TO MSA AIDE-MEMOIRE REGARDING SERIOUS / FATAL ACCIDENTS