

DON'T SAY THE WRONG THING: BEING READY WITH AN ALL-PURPOSE RESPONSE

During a crisis event, your city needs to be prepared to handle a large volume of calls from the media, as well as from the public. To prepare for the influx of calls, you will want to develop an all-purpose response that provides a uniform message from staff members who are answering these calls. An all-purpose response ensures that your city is speaking with one voice when it receives calls asking about what is happening. Without a prepared response, your city risks the possibility of one of your employees inadvertently releasing information to the media and the public or saying something that might not be appropriate or accurate.

An example of an all-purpose response might be:

“We are looking into this issue and are gathering the facts as quickly as possible. As soon as we have additional information, we will post it on our website at www.ourcity.gov.”

Your staff member can also ask for the caller’s name and phone number so someone can return the call if necessary.

In addition to an all-purpose response, you should have a tracking log for incoming calls. This will allow employees answering phones to gather the information needed in order for someone to return the calls.

A tracking log should include:

- Name of caller
- Type of call (media inquiry, citizen concern, etc.)
- If media, which outlet
- Callback number
- Caller’s question or concern

This information should immediately be relayed to the city’s Communications Director or his/her designee for handling.