

## **NEWS 12 NEW JERSEY BREAKING NEWS PROCEDURES**

It is inevitable that we will have to respond to breaking news and cut into programming. Emergency response could be for a plane crash, the weather or anything in between. This document serves to answer questions about the levels of our response and to what extent and how we report breaking news in the most efficient and fastest way possible. The plan assumes we are not in a live newscast. We have developed color-coded condition classifications indicating the degree of breaking news importance and the subsequent response. The three conditions are as follows.

**Green:** This is the minimum response condition. Weather in the area might be causing problems, or a major traffic event could be tying up the highways affecting the normal commute. The response is to direct or re-direct an existing crew to gather tape, information, or set up live coverage, if warranted. Most likely immediate on-air response is a crawl generated in Master Control.

**Yellow:** This is a higher level of response. The weather might be getting worse; highways are icing up or rising flood waters are affecting roadways; a multi-alarm fire breaks out, etc. We respond with one or two crews to focus on the primary event and people affected stories. We break into programming from the newsroom flash cam, when we have confirmed information. We provide updates including live shots tossed to field crews from the flash cam. We provide viewers more information through periodic crawls.

**Red:** This is the highest level of response requiring multiple layers of coverage. An event occurs which warrants extensive live and continuing coverage...commercial airline, train or ship incident, major explosion or incident affecting many of our viewers. We gear up for wall-to-wall coverage...direct as many crews needed to cover every possible aspect of the breaking story; route Chopper 12 and live trucks; activate traffic cameras where appropriate; mobilize internal staff to handle research, graphics, telephone contacts of eyewitness phone reports; studio crew is alerted; anchors and producers directed to handle information flow. We start with reports from newsroom flash cam as soon as we have confirmed information and move to the studio when ready.

## **PROCEDURES**

**In all of these situations it is important to provide information to our viewers as quickly and accurately as possible. We must guard against misinformation and be sure of the facts. It is vital to inform the appropriate staff of the breaking news condition. Use all tools necessary to make them aware using internal and external paging and communication systems.**

### **Who Decides?**

The News Director, Assistant News Director or Managing Editor decide the appropriate level of response, when to break into programming and to what degree. (Note: If breaking news occurs on the weekend, the manager on call makes the call in collaboration with the weekend producer and assignment editor.) Once the response decision is made, the information is put on the air as accurately and quickly as possible.

### **Action Steps**

Decide if story warrants breaking into programming  
Determine response condition (green, yellow or red)  
Send out a page with color condition for yellow or red only  
Dispatch Crews/Chopper 12/Satellite trucks/Book windows for condition yellow or red  
Advise Master Control  
Assign Producers and Associate Producers  
Gather information and develop content elements (graphics, phoners, guests)  
Communicate with everyone who needs to know

### **Crawls**

Normal response for condition Green. Alert the Master Control Operator that a crawl is needed. The Master Control Operator may not be able to stop what he or she is doing to type in the information. There is a template in the crawl computer in Master Control to help walk you through the information loading process.

### **Cut-ins**

Each live cut-in, studio or flash cam will include a Special Report open and close. Locator maps used to let people know where breaking news is happening. Get the pictures on the air as soon as possible, live helicopter or traffic cam video when available. Live shot tosses through double boxes. Once field crews are in place, ready to go live, communication shifts to the control room Producer.

### **Wall-to-Wall**

Wall-to-Wall coverage maintains continuous information and video flow. Our Anchors guide our viewers through the story with the most up-to-date information available. Information is generated from the newsroom staff monitoring the story, making calls, checking wire stories, etc. Our production, technical and editing staff generates the pictures. Every tool of our business is incorporated into the process. Chopper 12 and traffic cam video, live reports from our field crews, live eyewitness phoners, guest on the set or in the newsroom providing insight and perspective, locator and information graphics, etc.

## Condition Notification/Response

A page message will be sent out in the building and through our external paging system. The message will inform everyone involved we are in a breaking news condition.

It is the responsibility of all crews (Reporters and Photographers) who received the page to respond quickly and radio into the assignment desk, preferably within five minutes. Crews will indicate to the desk coordinator their current location and status. The desk coordinator will then let the crew know how and where to proceed or to stand by for further instructions. It is the responsibility of the management and desk staff to direct news crews as quickly as possible for coverage needs.

Producers and Associate Producers will be assigned specific roles coordinating the following:

- Live coverage from the control room
- Graphic support
- Eyewitnesses for phone reports
- Live Chopper 12 and/or traffic cameras
- Incoming tape feeds
- Information flow and research

Anchors will:

- Gain full grasp of the breaking news event
- Tap into all sources of information using on-set computers
- Take appropriate position in the newsroom or studio
- Maintain clear, controlled and understandable presentation.

(Note: if an Anchor receives a page with a condition notification, it is the responsibility of that Anchor to call into the desk as soon as possible to provide current location and status and receive instructions)

Managers and supervisors will coordinate:

- Internal Technical/Engineering/Master Control Staff
- Internal Studio Production Staff

**Remember: In breaking news coverage, we effort to get accurate and credible information on the air as soon as we can to serve our viewers, but we do it without compromising the safety of our employees.**

News 12 New Jersey's crisis plan is updated periodically. This version is from 5/17/02.