



# Washington Association of **SHERIFFS & POLICE CHIEFS**

## Working with the News Media

Despite what you may think or feel, the news media is not your enemy. News is, by its nature, the coverage of controversy. Reporters are not ordained ministers of truth. They have not been called into a higher service. Most reporters and editors want to work with you. Here are a few reminders when working with the media:

In any situation but always during a crisis: all phone calls emails, texts or in-person requests from the media must be answered completely in the order in which they are received. Although it is not your job during the crisis to please the reporters, it is very important to understand their perspective. The reporters have been assigned a specific job to accomplish within a deadline. Your speed of response, openness and willingness to accommodate their reasonable requests will be appreciated and will allow you to present your side of the story.

Develop and deliver your core message early. It is important to continually express your concern and commitment. Do not segment or segregate your audience with different messages. Deliver one, repeated message to everyone.

### **Remember to:**

#### ***Be Yourself***

Avoid technical jargon or fancy, pretentious language. It doesn't impress anyone.

#### ***Be Comfortable and Confident***

Relax and remember you know more about the story than the one asking the questions.

#### ***Be Honest***

If you don't know the answer to a question, admit it. Never lie to a reporter. Your credibility is crucial, don't jeopardize it.

#### ***Be Brief***

Keep your answers short and clear. Speak simply; it is harder to quote you out of context.

#### ***Concentrate***

Put your full attention on the interviewer. Listen carefully. Avoid interruptions.

#### ***Be Personal***

Use personal stories or anecdotes. Examples are better remembered.

#### ***Be Consistent***

Keep your goals in mind and stick to them. Approach each question in a positive way.

#### ***Show Energy***

Keep your voice conversational.

#### ***Show Sincerity and Concern***

Don't say "no comment"; it sounds guilty. Sincerity is important, particularly when the subject is bad news.

#### ***Know when to quit***

Establish the length of the interview prior to the first question and then you won't feel uncomfortable ending the interview when the time is up.