

HANDLING THE MEDIA

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Many times in a terrible situation or incident, we are asked to respond to the media very quickly after the situation has occurred that, to the uneducated person, would seem out right wrong. In trying to protect your association or your company, we often throw out the “no comment” response. Try to never throw out that response as in the average persons mind, you have something to hide and did something wrong even if that is the farthest thing from the truth. An alternative response would be, “What I can tell you is.....” or “If I could only say one thing about this issue it would be.....”

Try to make the response about people. Humanizing, individualizing and personalizing your response will help anyone hearing the response realize that you do care and appear to not be hiding anything. The response should be about people, not houses or the corporation, which can include the people aspects vs. the policies. Helping to understand that the issue is about real people as volunteers will go a long way.

Concentrating on all you have done to keep the issue from getting to this point will help you focus in your response while focusing on the “community” vs. the “association”.

The media is going to expect you and any representatives to know the common areas very well. If you have inspectors who do that portion of your work for you, take a few minutes to drive out to the community and re-familiarize yourself with the community. If a director, they should be somewhat familiar unless a non-resident owner member of the Board. The media is also going to try to be the judge and the jury in any reporting they do while making the assumptions that the person or the organization is guilty. Remember that the media and your association have opposite goals. To them controversy makes a great story while your association wants to have no media or if it can't be avoided positive media to help protect property values. Good media does not sell from their point of view so they will continue to try to skew it from the negative point of view.

The bottom line is, never avoid the media. Having your association's media policy in place in advance will definitely help the individuals who will be interviewed ready to handle “the event” from a positive point of view taking into consideration the above points. That includes your attorney. Talking to your insurance agent on how they, or the companies covering the association expect you to handle any potential issue that could turn into a claim, would be a really good idea. Make them put it in writing as that could be one of your defenses as your legal counsel and/or insurance agent is requesting that we speak with them before the media, etc. That could sound a little scary and seem to admit wrong doing to the average person so asking them how they would like it handled would help you or the volunteers be prepared *before* something happens.