

DO talk, saying little is better than saying nothing. Explaining why you can't talk is better than stonewalling. If you want your side of the story told, you must tell it. If you don't, reporters will get a version elsewhere... perhaps from a disgruntled employee that was laid off last week, or a worker who has just witnessed his best friend getting hurt or killed.

DO tell the truth. Reporters will find it out anyway so be honest and accurate when giving information. This doesn't mean you have to give every detail, but be truthful.

DO respond quickly. If you don't, the wrong story may be told and that is tough to erase.

DO emphasize the positive and communicate your corporate message. Remember to emphasize the good safety measures taken, the minimal damage because of good teamwork by your employees, and what the company is doing to minimize the effect of the incident.

DO stay away from liability issues. Don't talk about who is responsible, don't make any accusations, and don't give out company or individual names. Whatever you say may become part of a legal issue, so be as general as possible.

DO take control. If there's bad news, release it yourself before a reporter digs it up and tells the world.

DO make sure your information is accurate. It should be from a reliable source and you should understand the details thoroughly.

DO make sure the reporters know who the spokesperson is. The corporate spokesperson should be the only one authorized to disseminate information to the outside world. It is very important that you "speak with one voice". Keep in mind that no information should be released without being approved by upper management and legal counsel.

DO NOT say anything that is "off the record." If you don't want it used, don't say it.

DO NOT say "no comment," this statement implies guilt. If you don't know the answer tell the reporter you don't know but will try to find out. If the question may lead to an embarrassing answer, give as much information as you can in as positive light as possible. If you make a mistake, admit it and avoid excuses. Explain how you're planning to make things right.

DO NOT be trapped into predicting the future. If the situation is complex and will take days to determine the full extent of the damage, tell reporters that the company will resume full work on the project as soon as possible.

DO NOT wear sunglasses when being interviewed. You will be perceived as being "shifty" and hiding something.