

EATM European Air Traffic Management

Just Culture Guidance Material for
Interfacing with the Media

Edition 1.0



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<p>Unless journalists can understand the concept and purpose of a Just Culture in relation to Air Traffic Management (ATM), they will be unable to report on ATM incidents in a balanced and non-judgmental way. As a result, a critical part of the total strategy for creating and maintaining a Just Culture where one does not currently exist will be missing.</p> <p>This document examines the options for creating an environment in which journalists are better informed about ATM in general, and which provides them with easily accessible, compelling ways to achieve that improved awareness. It also examines how the Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs), National Aviation Authorities (NAAs) and Aviation Accident Investigation Boards (AAIBs) can ensure that information they provide to the media has credibility. Without credibility, nothing they say is of any use, including arguments as to why a Just Culture is a vital component of a safe ATM system.</p> <p>An environment that enables the media to comprehend the nature and purpose of a Just Culture in the ATM industry will encourage the media to voluntarily play their part in making ATM safer in the long term.</p>		
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Executive Summary

This document examines the options for creating an environment in which journalists are better informed about ATM in general, and which provides them with easily accessible, compelling ways to achieve that improved knowledge. It establishes that the sheer complexity of the ATM system makes media reporting on the subject difficult for all, except for highly specialised journalists, and that when mis-reporting occurs it is often the result of a combination of deadline pressures and lack of knowledge. We need to be able to answer their five key questions:

- **Who?**
- **What?**
- **When?**
- **Where?, and**
- **Why?**

... in an open and coherent way.

This document also examines how the Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs), National Aviation Authorities (NAAs) and Aviation Accident Investigation Boards (AAIBs) can ensure that information they provide to the media has credibility. Without credibility, nothing they say is of any use, including arguments as to why a Just Culture is a vital component of a safe ATM system.

An environment that enables the media to comprehend the nature and purpose of a Just Culture in the ATM industry will result in more accurate, balanced reporting by the media that will keep the general public, the Government and the Judiciary better informed about ATM, improving the image of the Just Culture system and thus making ATM safer in the long term.

Despite findings at the EUROCONTROL Conference on Just Culture held in Belgrade in September 2007 indicating that only two per cent of ANSP employees think that the media are an impediment to implementing a Just Culture, it is a fact that the most high profile media news stories about ANSPs are based on incidents and accidents. Where ANSPs, NAAs and AAIBs embody best practise, a Just Culture defines corporate behaviour when dealing with mishaps and unintentional mistakes, so it is essential that the press understand why the system does not immediately search for people to blame, but instead searches for the underlying cause. Unless the press fully understand the purpose of the Just Culture system, there is a risk that they might see it as a system for covering up mistakes and protecting individuals.

This document adopts the meaning of Just Culture from the EUROCONTROL/SAFREP definition:

“A culture in which front line operators or others are not punished for actions, omissions or decisions that are taken by them that are commensurate with their experience and training, but where gross negligence, willful violations and destructive acts are not tolerated.”

A key issue that is often discussed is who gets to draw the line between what is an honest mistake and what is unacceptable behaviour. An overview of the characteristics of a system that applies a Just Culture, the benefits that flow from its application, and the dis-benefits of failing to apply it, can be found in Chapter 2 (What is Just Culture?). Further reading on this subject can be gained from EUROCONTROL's Just Culture Guidance Material on Interfacing with the Judicial System (Document Reference 08/02/06-07/ISBN 978-2-87497-011-5).

If the media are to be successfully persuaded of the need for a Just Culture in ATM, they have to understand at least the fundamental principles of ATM operation, of what an ANSP's tasks, purposes and responsibilities are, how its people work, and what kind of tools they have to help them. They also need to know what its limitations are – especially human limitations. If they understand this, they will be able to understand the part that incident reporting plays in ATM Safety, and therefore the need for a Just Culture to encourage reporting.

ANSPs vary in size and therefore resources. But in all cases, management needs to acknowledge the importance of having a system that enables them to interface effectively with the media. Whether large or small, an ANSP, NAA or AAIB needs a Corporate Communications Office and/or a Press Office (or function). Its purpose is to create media trust by demonstrating openness and transparency at all times. This will serve the organisation well during difficult times following an incident or, in worst case, after an ATM-related accident.

Importantly, the Corporate Communications function must be integrated into the business, and should not be on the periphery of the organisation. Part of its day-to-day business should be in fostering good relations with the media. Being regarded as part of the business will help in providing those working in the Corporate Communications function valuable insight into how best to deal with the media.

Finally, there is a legal framework in most European countries that may require public authorities (e.g. like public-owned ANSPs) to give information to the press and the public. This entails having a proactive policy for interfacing with the media, and incorporating in the company policy a detailed internal and external communication system and structure.

The most compelling reason for an ANSP to run a competent media relations organisation is the need to deal with legitimate press interest in an incident or accident, i.e. a crisis. This document gives you the rationale behind this and guidance on what needs to be included in a Corporate Communications system, together with some tools and techniques you can use.

As demonstrated in this document, well managed Corporate Communications and Media Relations can enhance the perceived image of an ANSP among its employees, its customers and its stakeholders.

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1 - Introduction

This document aims at helping you build a Just Culture as a main support for the establishment of the ATM incident reporting and data collection, which should become the main source for information regarding ATM safety improvements, instead of accident data as it is now – a difficult task, but there are small, local steps that you can take.

Working towards a Just Culture means trying to change some key practices, some key roles, and perhaps some key relationships between stakeholders, so that, eventually, slowly but surely, a Just Culture may emerge.

There are many facets to building a Just Culture, but one such improvement is the interaction with the media so that they are able to report on ATM incidents in a balanced and non-judgmental way.

The aim of an organisation that faces an emergency situation is to deal with it in such a way as to be able to get on with the business of ensuring there is no recurrence of the cause. The media plays a critical role in how an incident is covered, and hence, how an organisation is perceived by the public, both in times of emergency and on a day to day basis. You could therefore say that the media is the gateway to the public. Failure to co-operate with the media can be seen by the public as a lack of concern by the organisation, or that the organisation is trying to withhold the truth.

This document examines the options and provides guidelines for creating an environment in which journalists are better informed about ATM in general and which provides them with easily accessible, compelling ways to achieve that improved awareness.

The document forms part of a suite of documents and information relating to interface activities to promote a Just Culture. In particular, EUROCONTROL has developed a document called '*Just Culture Guidance Material for Interface with Judicial System*' (Document Reference 08/02/06-07/ISBN 978-2-87497-011-5), which can be found on the EUROCONTROL website: www.eurocontrol.int/esp

2 - What is JUST CULTURE?

Just Culture explained

Just Culture has been defined as a culture in which front line operators or others are not punished for actions, omissions or decisions taken by them that are commensurate with their experience and training, but

where gross negligence, wilful violations and destructive acts are not tolerated. This is important in aviation, because we know we can learn a lot from the so-called 'honest mistakes'.

A concise representation of where to delineate the Just Culture was defined by the SAFREP TF¹ and is represented in Figure 1 below.

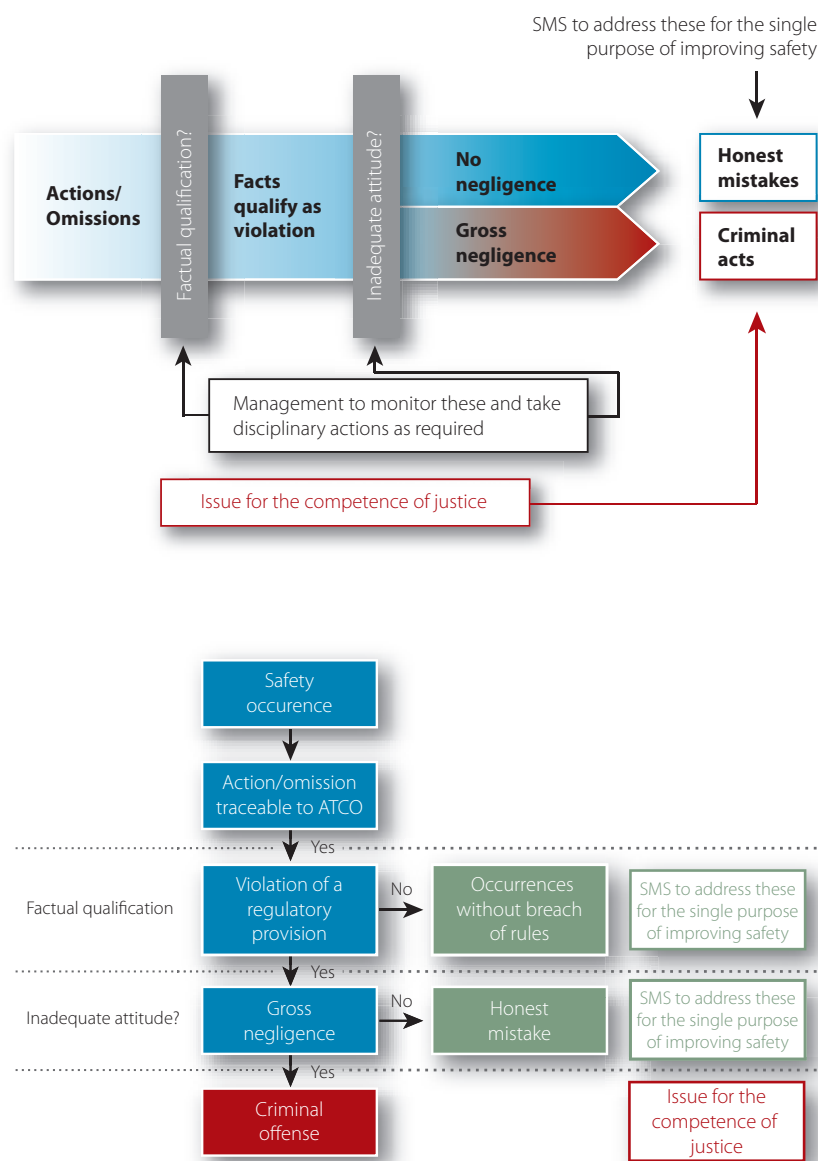


Figure 1 – Just Culture Concept Definition

1- SAFREP TF = The Safety Data Reporting & Data Flow Task Force established to respond to the Director General in addressing the priority areas of safety data reporting, legal constraints and safety data flow in the ECAC area within the context of the Strategic Safety Action Plan (SSAP), and more latterly, within the context of the European Safety Programme for ATM (ESP).

ESARR 2, the EUROCONTROL Safety Regulatory Requirement addressing reporting and assessment of ATM occurrences in ATM, requires all safety occurrences to be reported and assessed, all relevant data to be collected and all lessons learnt to be disseminated. But if no data is received because people are afraid of the consequences, this entire process stops. Reasons for this may come in the form of:

- **Legal;**
- **Organisational;**
- **Managerial;**
- **Cultural, and**
- **Media:** Journalists need to be constantly on the lookout for news. When they find it, they want to be the first to report it, and they want to have more details and information than their rivals. Some types of media are also sensationalist by nature – because this is what their public is looking for. As a result, the stories that go out can influence the public’s perception of incidents reported and create a need to want to ‘blame’ someone.

However, if we blame people for honest mistakes, they may stop reporting them, and we won’t learn from those mistakes. Indeed, ideas about Just Culture, most prominently, feature openness and information sharing.

What is an honest mistake?

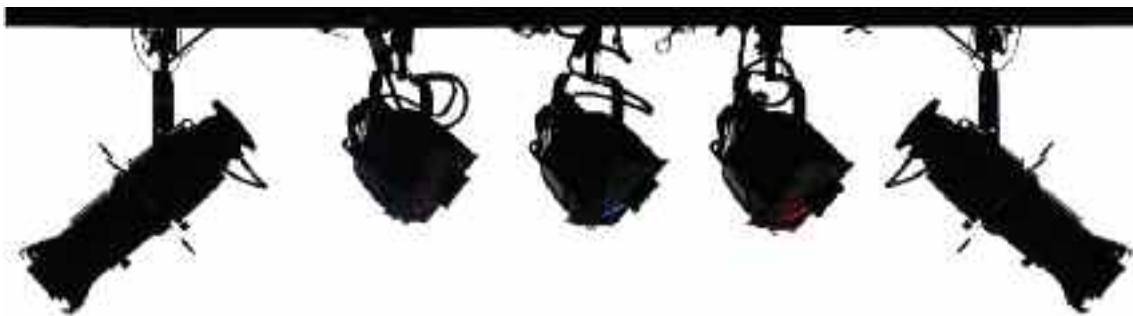
An honest mistake, according to EUROCONTROL, is one that is in line with people’s experience and training and, particularly in the case of Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs), can stem from working under pressure or even from periods of under-stimulation when traffic is light. Gross negligence, wilful violations, or destructive acts are not honest mistakes.²

Controllers have a professional and legal obligation to report honest mistakes. But some fear that if they provide information about what they see as an honest mistake, then this can still end up being used against them as some people may view an honest mistake as gross negligence or wilful violation.

As a result, some controllers admit that they will only file a report when there is a chance that other parties will do so too (e.g. a pilot)³. So controllers sometimes face a choice:

- either report an incident (because of the obligation to do so) and risk the consequences of it not being seen as an honest mistake, or
- decide not to report an incident, and risk the consequences of being found out later.

Some controllers have indicated that, without Just Culture, they will likely go for the second option: i.e. not report and hope nobody else will find out either.



2- SAFREP TF Report to PC – November 2005 - Report on ATM Incident Reporting Culture: Impediments and Practices Brussels: EUROCONTROL

3- EUROCONTROL Performance Review Commission (2006). Report: Legal and cultural issues in relation to ATM safety occurrence reporting in Europe: Outcome of a survey conducted by the Performance Review Unit in 2005-2006. Brussels: EUROCONTROL

The line between honest mistake and unacceptable behaviour

Because of the problem outlined above, many people think that the most important consequence of a Just Culture is being able to draw a clear line between honest mistakes and unacceptable behaviour — mistakes that are not honest⁴. That way controllers know, supervisors know, managers know, prosecutors know and even the media (and hence the general public) know what is acceptable and what is not.⁵ The idea, of course, is that if having a Just Culture means that people are protected against being blamed for honest mistakes, then there must be a line for mistakes that are not ‘honest’ (the ‘gross negligence or destructive acts’ in EUROCONTROL’s definition, for example).

The line is also important because if ‘anything goes’ (that is, all behaviour is acceptable), then controllers may not feel that they have to report anything at all. Another argument for the line is that the public must be protected against intentional misbehaviour or criminal acts, and that the application of justice creates such protection.

Drawing a line is difficult

But drawing a line is difficult. It is actually the hardest part of building a Just Culture.

Judgment can be clouded significantly by the effects of hindsight. With knowledge of outcome, it becomes almost impossible for us to go back and understand the world as it looked to somebody who did not yet have that knowledge of outcome.

Further information on this subject can be found in EUROCONTROL’s document ‘Just Culture Guidance Material for Interface with Judicial System’ (Document Reference 08/02/06-07/ISBN 978-2-87497-011-5), which can be found on EUROCONTROL’s website www.eurocontrol.int/esp.

Who gets to draw the line?

What matters in building a Just Culture is not to come up with a definition that leaves a number of labels (‘wilful violation’, ‘negligence’, ‘not prudent’, ‘normal’, or ‘reasonably skilled’) on the wrong side of the line and the rest on the right side. Because those labels are far from clear. Almost any mistake can be seen as wilful disregard or negligence, if this comes from somebody with the power and authority to do so (a manager, or a prosecutor).

What matters in building a Just Culture is to consider very carefully who gets to draw the line. In fact, it is best to make clear arrangements about who gets to draw the line (and when). This is more important and more useful than actually trying to define the line.

Air traffic controllers are responsible professionals who accept they are accountable for their work

Do controllers not want to have, or take, responsibility for their actions? Actually, most controllers even want, and expect, accountability. It gives their job meaning. The possibility of blame is the other side of the feeling of control that their work otherwise gives to them.

At first sight, it is so easy to claim that the individuals in question should have tried a little harder, should have looked a little better, should have been more motivated, or should have concentrated more. But on closer inspection, we can discover a context that conspired, in various obvious and less obvious ways, against people’s ability to do a good job. Even if they came to work to do a good job, the definition of a ‘good’ job may have shifted towards production and punctuality, towards customer service and efficiency, towards attaining or even beating production targets. This happens in a typically incremental, drifting fashion that is hard to notice.

4- GAIN, Op. Cit., p. viii
5- Ferguson, J., & Fakelmann, R. (2005). The culture factor. *Frontiers of Health Services Management*, 22(1), 33-40

Responsibilities for Just Culture

Figure 2 below depicts:

- stakeholder responsibilities for the creation of a Just Culture,
- what their relationships are,
- what enables a Just Culture to work, and
- what influences can destroy it.

It makes clear the process by which an organisation with a healthy Just Culture-based safety reporting system encourages the feed of information that can be used directly to change practices and thus improve ANSP safety.

As you can see, the media awareness and understanding of issues plays an integral part in having an effective Just Culture due to the level of external influence they have.

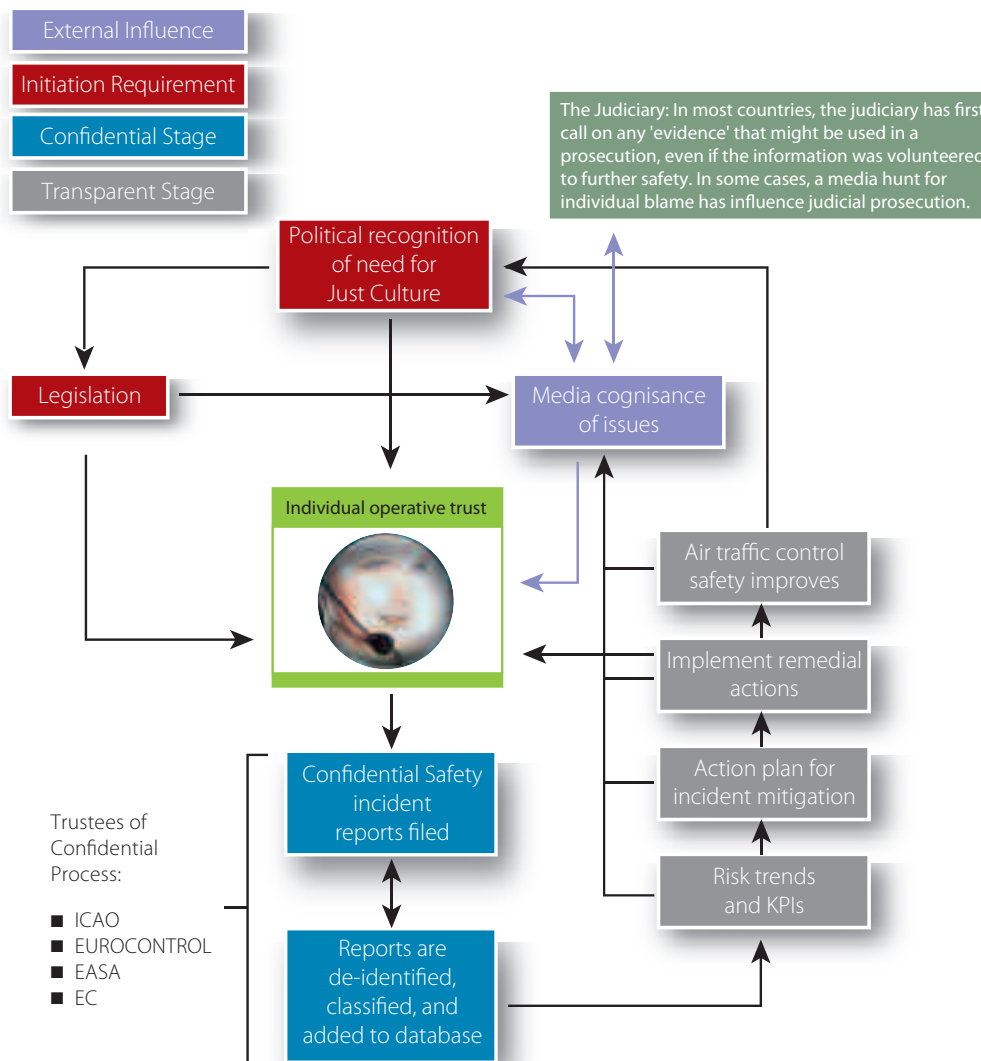


Figure 2 – Responsibilities for Just Culture

3 - Interfacing with the Media

Media and ATM

Media and Air Traffic Control (ATC) share some similarities: both operate in a high workload, time-critical environment, and decisions taken in both areas may have severe impacts on groups or on individuals.

But there is also a significant difference: while in aviation most of the relevant jobs are strictly regulated (training and licensing of pilots, ATCOs, engineers, dispatchers), the media do not operate any set standards except the requirement to remain within the general law. To become a reporter is relatively easy for a person with a good general education and reasonable communication skills. But it is a highly competitive industry, and deadline pressures are intense.

While aviation employs many specialists, most journalists are expected to report on a wide range of topics. For a long time there have been no specialist aviation correspondents working for either newspapers or the broadcasting media news channels. However, some quality news media employ Transport Correspondents, who are normally the journalists who can be expected to deal most competently with aviation subjects; but they also have to report on road, rail, and marine transport as well.

Even when a media organisation does employ a Transport Correspondent, unless he/she remains in that role for a long time he/she is unlikely to gain anything more than a rudimentary understanding of ATM's complexities. But it is common for Transport Correspondents to remain in that post only for a short time.

Legal framework plus voluntary objectives

In Europe, public institutions or organisations like ANSPs, NAAs and AAIBs have no choice but to deal with the media – if they don't, the media will report the story anyway. In addition, in some countries in Europe there is a freedom of information act which means that journalists have the right to access information, including incident reports, from public institutions or organisations. A journalist from a country with a freedom of information act will find it hard to understand why in another country, information is being withheld – and this could impact how he reports on an incident and how he portrays the organisations concerned.

Meanwhile, well-managed Corporate Communications and Media Relations can enhance the perceived image of an ANSP among its employees, its customers and its stakeholders. This enhanced image may even have a beneficial impact on safety, because an ANSP with a good image and reputation will find it easier to attract the best staff and to improve employee morale, which is conducive to a Just Culture and improved safety.

The most compelling reason for an ANSP to run a competent media relations organisation is the need to deal with legitimate press interest in an incident or even an accident, i.e. a crisis. Organisations or companies that ignore the need for media relations until a crisis occurs, risk suffering unnecessary damage to their credibility and their reputation for competence. It could take years to repair the damage. For all these reasons, a media relations office for public utilities like ANSPs – whether state-owned or shareholder-owned – are not merely nice to have, but are essential. The Corporate Communications department or Press Office may appear on the company balance sheet as a cost, but the cost of not having one is climbing as the modern news media move beyond the now-familiar 24-hour news channels onto the World Wide Web. This creates demands for immediate, searchable information on all subjects at all times.

4 - Media relations - the basics

What to expect from journalists

The core task of the news media in societies with a free press is to find out and report on what is happening. Given any subject, their task is to answer the following questions - the '5 Ws':

- **Who?**
- **What?**
- **When?**
- **Where?, and**
- **Why?**

Press people are permanently under pressure to meet tight deadlines. Since the advent of 24-hour news channels the deadline is 'now', and the increasing use of news websites is intensifying the pressure for instant information on breaking news items.

Quality assurance in reporting has traditionally relied primarily on the 'four-eyes' principle; that means every line leaving the news room should be double-checked by another editor. This principle doesn't work during live broadcasting on TV or radio, and increasingly is either not applied at all or is carelessly applied on news websites. The factual error rate in these cases depends on how well the moderator/reporter is prepared for the subject matter, and on how much pressure the employer exerts on the reporter to be accurate as well as fast.

What do the media know (or don't know) about ATM?

Most journalists begin researching a story on ATM or ATC from a position of little or no knowledge of the context. Because of ATM's complexity in technical, organisational and human terms, it should not be surprising that journalists struggle with the subject.

The lack of this knowledge is the reason why, for many years, the standard expression used by journalists to describe the moment when an aircraft has crashed or has gone missing has been to report that

it 'disappeared off radar screens at [time or place]', when often the region in which the accident took place has no radar coverage. In the case of radar, most journalists' mental picture of a radar screen is of an old primary radar display with unidentified blips on it. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2 (What is Just Culture?) what the media reports, influences the perception of the general public. The media can be seen as the gateway to the public – educating them will improve the knowledge and expectancy of the public at large.

When briefing reporters who are asking questions about an event or a new system, ANSPs' press officers or spokespeople should bear in mind the following subjects about which most journalists have little or no knowledge:

- The rules of the air (the fact that rules, standard practices and rights-of-way exist),
- The concept of airspace organisation and classification (the fact that not all airspace is controlled and even if controlled not the same type of service is provided),
- The concept of separation by pilot 'see and avoid' (the fact that this is the primary method of separation in uncontrolled airspace),
- Non-radar ATC services (the fact that radar is not the only way of managing separation),
- The division of responsibilities between Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs) and pilots (the belief that ATCOs have total responsibility for traffic separation, and the trajectory of all aircraft in the sector and the pilot has no responsibility for either),
- How aircraft navigate, and what part ATCOs play in aircraft navigation (except in terminal areas where ATC may provide radar vectors, pilots do all their own navigation according to the flight plan, unless controllers give tactical instructions to do otherwise).



If any of these issues appear relevant to the subject under discussion, it may be worth the press officer asking the journalist whether he/she is aware of the background.

There are other important, but less basic, pieces of information that the press officer cannot assume the journalist knows. These include:

- Who owns and operates the local ATC, and what agency is responsible for its safety and standards oversight,
- Technical tools are available to controllers today, like Short Term Conflict Alert (STCA), and solutions for the future, like Medium or Long Term Conflict Alert and Automatic Dependent Surveillance - Broadcast (ADS-B),
- The rationale behind programmes like the Single European Sky (SES), including the requirement to restructure airspace into Functional Airspace Blocks (FABs).

ATM is the only part of the aviation system where all the players meet – the airlines, the military, general aviation, airports, and ATC. It is the responsibility of the aviation community to set up a user friendly system to help journalists learn how the system as a whole is designed and how it functions.

Appendix E of this document (Tutorial on Basic ATM for Journalists) contains details on how to access an outline PowerPoint presentation intended to provide an understanding for journalists about how ATM works and its part in Communications, Navigation and Surveillance (CNS).



5 - The need for a media relations function

The media reach

The media today is more than just newspapers, magazines, radio and television.

Web-based media are rapidly a dominant source for information. As this process develops, news media are becoming more interactive, and media companies' methods of operating may drift in the Wikipedia direction, tapping into information sources beyond the formal media organisations. This is already happening, with the news media using specialist expertise volunteered by the public, and by encouraging comment. Companies have to get used to the fact that their own employees may be among those who comment via email to the news media or via forums and blogs etc.

Freelance journalists have the same rights to information from public companies as those employed by media organisations, if they are able to prove themselves as media people with appropriate commissions.

The importance of good Corporate Communications at ANSPs, NAAs and AAIBs

An essential component for influencing beneficially the quality of media reporting on ATM is the quality of briefing and information that Corporate Communications and Press Offices provide to journalists. Failure to make the best possible use of this resource by educating Press Officers about how best to present both ATM itself, and a Just Culture as it applies to ATM, would be to miss a major opportunity.

Which size, which people?

It would not be feasible to have a Europe-wide common plan regarding the implementation of an ANSP, NAA or AAIB Corporate Communications and/or Press Office, but it should be accepted that all organisations should have one, or, at least, have the function or role. This function/role may not be the sole responsibility of persons in the organisation – the key thing to note is the fact that the activity is needed. The size of a Corporate Communications and/or Press Office will depend on the size and resources available within the organisation.

In the modern 24-hour media environment it is no longer acceptable to tell the media to wait until a formal report on an event has been completed, and to issue no guidance in the meantime. If an ANSP/NAA/AAIB fails to provide accurate official information, the press will go to unofficial sources for it, which means the industry loses the chance of influencing the accuracy of what is reported in the news.

Integrating Corporate Communications into the business

Corporate Communications should be an integral part of the ANSP/NAA/AAIB's business plan. It should not be 'bolted on' at the periphery of the organisation. Company aims, objectives and methodology related to internal and external communications should be set out in corporate mission statements, and there should be action plans aimed at the different stakeholders, including internal employees and the media. The communications policy should be reviewed yearly or more often, if required, because the media industry is moving very fast.

Most industries have understood for decades that Corporate Communications is a crucial component in economic success, but government-owned organisations and public utility companies have been slow to recognise this because they have, in the past, been

allowed a degree of immunity from having to explain or justify their actions. That situation has changed radically. ANSPs today should recognise the part Corporate Communications can play in enhancing the company's reputation and culture, the beneficial effect this can have on safety, and the fact that it gives them at least a degree of control over the information the media receive. The latter includes transmitting to the press an understanding of sophisticated concepts like the reasons for operating a Just Culture.

Best practice in media relations in a crisis -

an example from the real world: In January 1989, a British Midland Boeing 737-400 crashed on the final approach to East Midlands Airport, UK, killing almost half the people on board. The broken wreckage of the aircraft came to rest on an embankment at the side of the M1 Motorway, one of England's major auto routes. Television access was guaranteed by the nature of the site and was fully exploited by the media. Within little more than an hour of the accident, the airline owner and chairman Sir Michael Bishop was standing in front of the television cameras at the accident site answering questions. An analysis of his replies shows he provided very little information because so much about the cause of the event was still unknown, but the fact that he cared enough to attend the crash site and talk to the media was a successful exercise in corporate damage-limitation, and has since been hailed by PR consultants worldwide as the ideal way to handle media relations in the public relations crisis following a serious disaster.

Fostering relations with the media

Dealing with the Press in general

If we are to influence the way in which the media report ATM related news, which could in turn influence our perception of the media, we need to change the way in which we deal with the media.

Press Officers must be trained to deal with the media. Communicating is all about getting a message across to an audience in the way it is intended. How we do this can influence greatly how the message is received. As such, training in how to communicate effectively is a fundamental requirement in any organisation, yet is one that, very often, is not recognised or budgeted for. The best results would be obtained by employing a mixture of professional journalists and PR experts, because their training fits them for the media interface task. Unless they have specialised in reporting on aviation before, they will need to learn quickly how the ATM system works, and they must be authorised to approach specialists inside organisations for advice on technical or operational issues.

If the issue is sufficiently serious, for example after an ATM-related accident, the CEO or the head of Corporate Communications should make themselves available for interview to high profile media. This is an established practice among airlines involved in an accident, and the signal it sends to the public is that the organisation cares about the event and its consequences, and does not try to avoid responsibility for its actions. Because of the importance of this function, all senior managers who might be called upon to be interviewed live by the media must undergo training in how to handle journalistic questioning.

Appendix C (Communications Working Arrangements) provides more details regarding recommended working arrangements when communicating in a crisis situation.

Best practice in controlling the media output by introducing transparency - an example from the real world: during the mid-1980s: the UK print media very much liked stories of 'near-misses' (what were believed to be near-collisions).

Detail was invariably vague, but the stories frequently made the front page of major newspapers. The sources that the journalists quoted for the 'facts' they provided ranged from airline passengers who saw another aircraft out of the window, to stories provided by witnesses on the ground who may have been looking at aircraft in a holding pattern, and probably a few of them came from leaks from ATCOs about real near-misses.

UK CAA, at that time, gathered statistics on what are now known as Airprox reports, but the reporting system was not as good as it is today, and the resulting figures were not easily accessible to the media or the public. A new UK CAA chairman (who had - early in his career - been a journalist) was appointed, who decided that, every time an Airprox report was filed by a pilot, a Press Release announcing the fact and giving the details of the date, time, place and aircraft types involved would be sent to all the major media, with the announcement that the results of the inquiry would be made public within 6 months.

This stopped the 'near miss' stories completely, as individual newspapers were deprived of 'exclusive' stories - everybody received the same press release; and the fact that the 'mystery' had been taken out of the issue of Airproxes.

They were clearly catalogued by UK CAA, investigated by an independent agency, and published, so they became non-stories. That is the way the situation remains today.

Where media relations are today

Understanding the lack of knowledge among most journalists about how ATM works, is an essential starting point for any organisation that wishes to influence media reporting on the subject of Just Culture.

In a country where a Just Culture does not exist - in any industry, not just ATM - the organisation should ideally declare its intention to operate a just internal culture, and make public its policy for administering a Just Culture within its own organisation. An ANSP must, however, be confident that it will be permitted by the Government, the Judiciary, the NAA and the AAIB to protect the confidentiality of individuals who report incidents; otherwise the company's Just Culture programme might be discredited.

Operating a Just Culture should be used as a management technique - one that is associated with modern companies that use the very latest business philosophies to produce optimum results in everything they do, including the management of safety. Just Culture, as a cutting-edge management technique, enhances an organisation's image.

Organisations must be prepared to take the time to explain to the Press what the essential components of a Just Culture are (see Chapter 2 - What is Just Culture?), and what benefits it brings. This is necessary because, in most states where the Government and Judiciary operate a traditionally punitive system on the basis that deterrence through the criminal justice system is the most effective way of preventing accident recurrence, the journalists usually display the same philosophy in the way they investigate a story and report it.

It is essential that an understanding of the logic behind the operation of a Just Culture has been embedded in the media before an accident or incident occurs because, after the event, the media competition to get the story out first means there is no time for journalists to fully understand such concepts when they are in search of a good story.

The key to success in any communication method used is to keep information regarding ATM as uncomplicated as possible, and to use plain language in all communications. Chapter 7 (Communication Tools) in this document provides a Corporate Communications 'Toolkit' that summarises the key tools used in fostering good relations with the media.

In any type and level of communication, the approach should be based on honesty - journalists equate transparency of information with honesty. But being perceived as transparent is difficult for ATM, as the system's complexity has the effect of confusing those who do not understand it. Lack of comprehension can create misunderstanding, and since journalists are under intense pressure to deliver stories quickly, they often begin to construct a story before they fully understand the issues or the context. The resulting story can disappoint the ANSP, and a mutual mistrust can begin to develop.

Mistrust is a disaster for an industry like ATM that is trying to persuade journalists to believe that the media can depend on it to operate a Just Culture in an honest way, rather than as a system for protecting individuals and the organisation itself.

If the major tools are available and the Press spokesperson is proactive about fostering good relations with the media, this should result in an increasing number of contacts and trust.

Key tasks for the Press Office include answering enquiries, managing visits, organising interviews for senior journalists with the organisation's top management. This topic is covered in more detail in Appendix C (Communications Working Arrangements).

Using media relations as a corporate instrument also entails networking throughout the industry. It is essential to have contacts at Press Offices in the airlines, airports and other aviation organisations that the ANSP/NAA/AAIB works with. Ensure you know whether these companies and organisations also operate a Just Culture. Persuading the media of the validity of operating a Just Culture is much easier if all

sectors of the industry operate the same philosophy. Some events for the media can be organised more efficiently in collaboration with customer or partner companies.

The complexity issue

The only way of defeating the confusion and risk of misunderstanding created by ATM's complexity is to provide simple and straightforward information about its basic principles and modus operandi (See Appendix E: Tutorial on Basic ATM for Journalists). The resulting knowledge and understanding in the media will provide the foundation of trust and understanding on which to build the argument for a Just Culture in ATM.

Limits of enquiries/other considerations

There are limits on the obligation to cooperate with media. For instance if a pending investigation or legal case would be affected, or a journalist's inquiry is an 'unreasonable demand'. There are detailed limits in some countries as to what is unreasonable and what is not. If there are any doubts, ask your legal service.

It is advisable to operate an 'Issue Management' policy. This is a strategy that identifies potential issues for an organisation or company by systematically scanning the media landscape for new trends or popular issues, to assess whether they are potentially threatening or favourable for the organisation. An example would be to monitor the degree of concern that the media shows about aviation's effect on the environment, both locally and globally. If the interest in the subject is high, the Press Office should be ready to present - in detail - the policies it operates that improve flight efficiency, reduce aircraft fuel consumption, reduce noise and pollution, and cut its own company carbon footprint. It should also issue press releases whenever a new policy is implemented that is environmentally beneficial. Another example of reporting that should be tracked is the subject of this paper: a Just Culture. The media's attitude to a Just Culture in ATM, and the media's level of knowledge of it should be tracked so the organisation knows how to brief the press effectively on this subject.

Options for when the media make mistakes

If the media do not report correctly, there are potential sanctions. These vary from country to country, but basically they focus on publishing corrections, or withdrawal of statements and compensation. Indictment for slander might be an option, but the public perception of such an action, and also future relations with the media, must be taken into account.

If the media make technical mistakes in their stories there are remedies available, but it is important to decide whether it is worth applying them. That may sound like strange advice, but the reasons are presented below. If you decide to demand a published correction, the following guidelines will help you choose the best method for making the correction effective. Remember, a correction is only useful if people read it, so you have to ensure that they do.

- Journalists frequently make minor, usually unintentional mistakes because ATM is so complex that they often misunderstand what they have been told. The high frequency of minor errors can lead to a situation in which you find your organisation asking for corrections every time a story is published.
- So, if the mistake is a minor one and is not going to influence the readers' perceptions of ATM or the ANSP, you should consider whether it is worth the trouble of pressing for a correction to be published. Action in the event of serious errors is covered in the final bullet point.
- Corrections themselves can contain mistakes, and they are never worded the way you would wish them to be, nor are they given the prominence you would expect. A published correction is rarely noticed by the readers of newspapers or the web because it is placed at the bottom right hand corner of an internal page with a headline saying 'Correction' and these are very rarely read.
- Good relations with the press are important. Consider the potential effect of ringing a journalist with minor criticisms every time he/she writes an ATM story; this can build a degree of hostility between the ANSP and the press.
- On the other hand, just explaining to a journalist, in a helpful way, that he/she didn't quite get it right, can be wise. If handled skilfully and politely, such a personal exchange can improve the respect between the journalist and the ANSP's/NAA's/AAIB's Press Office, and can have a beneficial effect on the quality of future coverage by that journalist. But consider refraining from demanding a published correction unless it is likely to be really beneficial.
- When a correction is published, the original story is effectively being re-activated. Before asking for a correction, ask yourself if you really want additional coverage of the same subject.
- If, having considered all this, you still want a correction to be published, you want readers to see it. So consider providing the journalist with a new ATM story which will generate a new headline and asking him/her to embed the correction you want inside the new story. That way it gets a headline, so it gets more readers than a small item labelled 'Correction'.
- The letters page in many newspapers, as well as blogs and email forums on news websites, are popular with readers. Consider writing a letter to the editor for publication, or post a comment on the news website email forum, pointing out the error in the article and providing the correction yourself. That way you have more control over the words that are used. But keep it short and concise, or it will be shortened by the editor. Or talk to a web journalist about the mistake, discuss it with him/her and suggest he/she blogs on the whole subject, embedding an agreed correction. Blogs are normally linked to connected stories, so this is a good solution.

- FINALLY, if the error is serious and will harm the reputation of your organisation, advise the media outlet that they should publish not just a correction, but an apology. This demand can be made direct by the company, but your lawyers must back up the demand with a formal letter. It is standard practice, in cases like this, to negotiate exactly how the apology is published: this includes the precise wording to be used, an agreement on its prominence in the publication or website (eg: high on the front page/website homepage), an agreement for your organisation to see and approve the wording before it is published, and an agreement about how many hours or days the apology/correction would be posted on the Home Page of a website.

The 'apology' remedy is much simpler than going to Court, much cheaper, and it avoids the problem that Courts often create of forcing an organisation 'to wash its dirty linen in public'. But do not ask for apologies for minor errors, only for the kind of error that you would be prepared to take to Court.



6 - Levels of interaction with the media

Media training

The handling of a media interview (particularly during a crisis) can be a very difficult task. The right amount of information should be given at the right time.

Everyone involved in communicating with the media should receive initial training as well as regular refresher training. This also includes senior executives, as the media and general public will be expecting the involvement at this level. The public will expect to see and hear one of the most senior executives of the organisation appearing on television and on the radio to communicate the organisation's reaction to an incident.

Without the right media training, an executive or spokesperson can give a bad impression with regard to how the organisation is handling the incident which, in turn, can cause long term image problems.

Although media training can be expensive, especially for organisations with limited resources, the cost of not undergoing media training could prove to be more costly e.g. loss of reputation.

Chapter 10 (Guidelines for Talking to Media) gives you some practical tips for personal contact with journalists.

Dealing with the media following ATM incidents

An incident can become a crisis if not handled correctly.

It is essential to be prepared for incidents because they will happen quite frequently. At times, events will occur that are perceived by airline passengers to be serious incidents, and they will contact the press (eg: pilot decision to abandon an approach and go-around), whether they are or not, so the Press Office has to be ready to explain those, especially if the reason for the go-around was that the aircraft landing ahead was still on the runway, or if there was a runway incursion.

Credibility is priceless, and the Corporate Communications policy and style should have, as its primary objective, the maintenance of the company's credibility with all parties, particularly the media.

Local ANSP/NAA/AAIB Press Offices are the first points of contact for most journalists when ATM is in the news. They have to be prepared to handle emerging information on events like Airprox reports, high-risk runway incursions and even ground or airborne collisions. If Press Offices are perceived by journalists as defensive mechanisms rather than instruments of transparency, media trust will evaporate.

When trust evaporates, the media abandon the search for information in favour of searching for the people to blame. This would be a disaster for Just Culture, because an organisation that is perceived as being intent upon an information cover-up, is also seen as the type of organisation that would use the Just Culture philosophy as a system for preventing the media getting at the truth about mistakes that have been made in the past.

When an incident occurs, it is a major problem if senior Press Officers or Corporate Communications Departments feel they do not have sufficient

autonomous authority to deal with media queries about events. Unless they are kept fully briefed by management about incoming information, including details of any developing inquiry, their inability to pass information to the media – simply because they don't have any – can be perceived as a cover-up. Any perception that a cover-up is taking place will destroy the media's belief that a Just Culture has a useful purpose, and their reporting will reflect this by returning to the traditional search for people to blame.

The ANSP, NAA or AAIB management, having carefully selected, trained and briefed their Press Office or media relations employees, should trust them to use their expertise as specialists in interfacing with the media. They should be regularly consulted by the Board during any incident that has the potential to develop into a public relations crisis.

When an event occurs in which the media will take an interest, as soon as facts about the situation are established - even if the reason why the situation developed as it did is not yet fully understood - the facts themselves should be released to the media, and through the media to the public. ANSPs/NAAs/AAIBs provide a public service, and they owe it to the public to keep them informed. This is not merely an issue of moral rectitude; today it is an expectation by the media and the public.

It is also vital for the Press Office to tell the press what is not known yet, and to provide some insight into what issues are being investigated. It may seem unnecessary to say what you don't know, but in fact it is particularly important because journalists are happy to accept, in answer to a question, the reply: "We don't know yet," but they resent answers like: "We can't tell you" or "Wait for the official inquiry to report." It is unacceptable, in the age of the internet and 24-hour news channels, to argue that no information can be released until the full report is published. People's expectations of access to information now are much higher than they used to be.

Meanwhile, Press Officers should never speculate when answering questions from the media.

Press speculation should be minimised by providing the media with statements, briefings, and press conferences at which senior executives are available to answer questions. Being able to ask questions of senior executives demonstrates to the media that the company cares about what has happened. Senior executives are expected to explain what they know for certain – however little that may be - and to describe what they don't know but are investigating.

Regarding the personal rights of employees who might be implicated in an event that is under investigation, it is reasonable in many States to protect their names and all other sensitive personal data, even if the media presses for information. There may even be a legal requirement to protect the employee.



Dealing with the media following ATM-related accidents or serious incidents

Some low-profile incidents can develop into potential public relations crises unless they are handled skilfully, quickly and transparently, but if ATM has been a contributory factor in a serious accident, the Corporate Communications Department/Press Office must be ready to operate quickly and efficiently to prevent a crisis.

Exercises to test the company's crisis communications system must include worst-cases scenarios at least once a year.

A crisis involves the loss of control over internal and external information management. This can put at risk the corporate reputation, revenues or even its continued existence. The way the media report the situation has a major influence on the reaction of the public, the Government and even the Judiciary.

Media reaction to a high profile story is less predictable than to a low-profile story. Press Officers should follow procedures and policy, but be prepared for the unexpected. Good internal communications between all levels are essential.

The decision about whether to put the company on a crisis level must be taken by the senior management, preferably by the CEO, very quickly: the first 30 minutes after an accident are critical for the public image of an ANSP. In the Überlingen case it took only 45 minutes for the story of the disaster to appear in radio and TV reports, even in the middle of the night. **Normally it is via the media that personnel in the ANSP first find out that they have a problem to deal with.**

- Crisis priority: get the external communication issues under control, and also keep the employees briefed on what is happening.

- Keep track of developments and stay in control of the information stream. Control does not mean preventing information from getting out to the media, it means releasing clear, accurate information as soon as it has been checked so that the accuracy of media reporting is improved and speculation is kept under control.
- If the story is bad for the company because mistakes have been made or failures have occurred, the company image is best served by keeping the media informed of the progress of investigations that are intended to prevent a repetition of the event.
- When a crisis occurs there is no time to read and study the relevant crisis documentation/manuals.
- Have checklists and contact lists ready; ensure the CEO or senior executives are well-briefed and are on standby for press conferences and media interviews.
- **Expect the unexpected.**

7 - Communication tools

Levels of communication priority

Different communication tools can be used for different communication requirements:

1. For fostering good relations with the media on a day to day basis
2. For communicating with the media when there has been an incident
3. For communicating with the media when there has been an accident.

Fostering good relations with the media on a day-to-day basis

There are a number of basic tools that can be used to foster good relations with the media on a day to day basis. These tools, components and methodologies of a company system for interfacing with the media include:

1. **Press spokespersons/Press Officers**
2. **Press releases**
3. **Press briefings/workshops/conferences**
4. **Web based communications**

1. Press spokespersons

All organisations need a press spokesperson – someone who is authorised to speak to the media and to be quoted by them. However, many organisations also have a Press Officer whose job is to interface with the media on a regular basis and provide them with background information. These two functions can be carried out by the same person (people) or they can be different. In many cases, the main spokesperson for an organisation is the CEO and there is also a Press Officer who is authorised to act as spokesperson on certain issues. In any case, the most important factor in creating mutual trust is reliable and regular personal contacts between press staff and the media. E.g.

- Create a contact list of journalists writing or broadcasting about ATM/aviation issues.
- Observe how they perform, what their personal interests in aviation are, and call the individuals concerned, offering to set up a personal meeting. It is worth noting that most journalists prefer meeting at a location related to the issue the press spokesperson intends to speak about.
- Company spokespersons are free to choose the media they communicate with, but it is important that information is disseminated as widely as possible. News agency reporters can be useful for this, because their reports are published by all of the media.
- Maintain and regularly update a list of who the specialist executives are who may be called upon to present themselves for interview by the media following an incident or accident. All those on the list must have been trained to handle live interviews on radio, television, or by newspaper journalists.

Chapter 10 (Guidelines for Talking to Media) gives you more detail with regard to practical tips for personal contacts with journalists.

2. Press releases

Press releases relate to a news event that has the potential to generate a headline and a story. The subject could be anything from a change in company policy to the introduction of a new system, facility or technology. Examples of good press releases can be found in Appendix D (Press Release Examples).

They should genuinely meet the needs of the press. If your Press Office regularly issues releases about trivial occurrences, the press may ignore your releases when they contain important messages. What is considered to be important can vary between the detailed technical/operational information expected by the trade/specialist press, and the more general information that would interest the non-specialist news media.

Keep the press releases readable and as short as possible. Position the clear message at the top of the press release - an effective headline generates curiosity. Media people are too busy to search for the critical message if it is buried deep within detailed copy in a press release, so put the main message at the top of the document or email.

If possible press releases should be addressed to named journalists rather than media organisations. The format should include these minimum components:

- Date,
- Headline (eg: 'ABC Air Traffic Services wins legal right to confidentiality for employees who file safety incident reports'),
- Details of the issue,
- Message in the text,
- Time,
- Place,
- Venue,
- Sender,
- Contact details for further questions including e-mail,
- Telephone numbers for contacts on the scene.

3. Press briefings/workshops/conferences

Press briefings conferences and workshops may be almost any size, from one journalist (face-to-face) to groups of 50, 60 or more. A typical size should be the attendance of around 15-30 journalists in a classical press conference at which they can question executives on a panel. For a workshop it depends on whether visits to active sites are involved: for instance to an air traffic control tower and/or simulators. If yes, 8-10 attendees would be manageable.

Be sure that the issue is sufficiently interesting or newsworthy to invite the media. They are happy to be provided with an educational or informative visit that will help them understand better the ATM context for future stories, but normally they want to be presented with a story that contains news. This could be news about a completely new development or a different angle on an existing subject.

■ Face-to-Face Press Briefing

Face-to-face meetings with individual journalists or small groups of the most influential journalists are time consuming, but it is an efficient method for keeping them well-briefed and helps to set up a good relationship with them. This will serve you well when things go wrong. *It is also an ideal opportunity, in a friendly but professional environment, to introduce and discuss issues like operating a Just Culture reporting system, which have a cultural and even philosophical dimension.*

The list of media people should include:

- Senior journalists or transport correspondents with the most influential media, including press agencies, and
- Journalists from specialist media like Flight International/flightglobal.com, which other media frequently approach for independent comment on aviation occurrences.

Early details regarding events should be sent to established reliable contacts in the media as soon

as it is available. But sooner or later the Press Office will have to deal with approaches by all media types.

Prepare your message well. Your organisation should ideally be represented by the CEO, another Senior Manager and/or the Head of Corporate Communications.

Depending on who the media person is, it can be useful to separate papers into three categories:

- Must tell,
- Can tell - if asked,
- Must not tell.

Providing 'off the record' briefings can be useful for explaining the context of what has occurred, thus helping the journalist to understand the issues surrounding it. Make clear what is 'on the record' and what is merely background briefing and not for quoting or attribution. More detail regarding what is meant by 'off the record' and 'not for attribution' can be found in Chapter 10 (Guidelines for Talking With Media).

■ Interviews

Interviews are also a good way of building relationships with journalists – either face-to-face as mentioned above for Face-to-Face Briefings, or by phone, or occasionally, in writing. Some journalists are happy to provide questions in advance of the interview and to allow you to see the final article before it is printed, but some are not. If you are asked to do an interview, it is important for you to be clear under which conditions you will do the interview. You should discuss this with your Press Officer beforehand so that you know what to expect – they should be able to help you prepare for interviews by giving you basic media training and preparing a Q&A of likely media questions.

Some interviews will result in direct quotes from the person interviewed. Other interviews will only be used as background information for journalists. In both cases, this kind of media contact is impor-

tant, as it establishes your organisation as a media friendly one that is a good source for the press. While this does not mean that you should comment on anything and everything, the willingness to help the press and to provide them with a spokesperson on a wide range of issues does mean that this journalist is more likely to come back to you in the future.

■ Press Workshop

A Press Workshop can include selected journalists – ideally the transport correspondents or those who report on aviation - from the general press, the broadcasting media, and the trade press. Limit the number of attendees according to the location and human resources devoted to the workshop.

A Workshop is the most effective tool for improving media understanding of ATM and how it works, and is an ideal platform for introducing the media to more sophisticated concepts like a Just Culture-based safety management system. The justification for a Workshop is that ATM is complex, and if journalists are provided with some insight into the system, it will help them create more effective reports when the ATM or ATC is in the news.

A Workshop is not normally intended to create news in its own right, but it can be combined with a news-generating event like a system inauguration or the opening of a new facility. Adding a Press Conference to the Workshop has the benefit of persuading editors that it is worth releasing their journalists for a day or two because at least they can get a headline story out of it. But it is important not to let the news event dominate the Workshop – the reverse should be true. A Press Conference is fundamentally different from a Workshop, being focussed on a specific event or news item, but Workshop organisers may consider ending the day with one because it provides a news incentive for the journalists to stay on.

During the Workshop, there must be rules for television journalists about what - if anything - may be filmed. Filming during what is effectively a seminar

can be distracting for the participating journalists, and it limits open discussion and questions. Filming during visits to facilities as a part of the Workshop might be permitted at the discretion of local managers.

Finally, a Workshop is the ideal venue for combining an instructional seminar with personal networking and building good media relations based on knowledge and trust.

■ Organising a Just Culture Workshop for the media

The primary objective of the Workshop is to explain the purpose of a Just Culture.

But it can most effectively be done by first providing the journalists with some insight into the context in which this culture operates. This entails providing a basic briefing on the way ATM works (an example of how this could be done can be found in Appendix E (Tutorial on Basic ATM for Journalists)).

General format of Workshop: attractive combination of an ATM site visit with presentations in a seminar format.

Location: Control Tower (preferably at a second- or third-tier airport, with sufficient activity for participants to see the system working, but not so much traffic as to confuse them), an actual Area Control Centre (ACC), or ATC simulators, and a room in which the seminar material may be presented.

Participants: Selected and individually invited journalists, no more than eight, and ideally the trade media and transport correspondents.

Typical workshop content:

- Welcome and Introduction,
- Briefing: overview on the air travel system (airlines, airports, ATC),
- Basics of ATC, including rules of the air (See Appendix E),
- Questions and answer session,

- Visit to the Control Tower,
- Lunch break/opportunity to meet the ATCOs In the ACC/Simulator,
- Just Culture (for a diagram of all the stakeholders with influence on the success or failure of Just Culture - showing where the media fits into the picture – see Chapter 2, Fig.2 (What is Just Culture),
- Questions and answer session.

Note: It can be helpful to invite an appropriate specialist from an airline to be present especially during the Just Culture session, as airlines have operated these systems and principles for a longer period (this promotes a collaborative approach).

■ Press Conference

Press Conferences are usually organised when there is a major event to publicise. They can also be used on a corporate level to give journalists background briefings on a range of subjects.

They need to be well organised. Have a registration system for the journalists as they arrive, badges identifying them and their media organisation, and a list of participants.

Prepare a Press Kit to hand to each journalist.

Apart from the actual Press Release about the focal news item, the Press Kit usually includes:

- Company profile,
- Company brochure,
- Short biographies of the panellists,
- High quality photos of panellists and the subject matter to illustrate the story,
- Facts and figures,
- Company annual report.

Be aware that a well-run Press Conference is more likely to be successful. Ensure in advance that everything works well: that the presentations on the laptop are prepared and tested, that the microphones are ready to use, and so on. At larger events there may be additional demands like simultane-

ous translation, proper seating, badges, buffet etc. Consider using attractive banners near the presenter which reinforce the message (eg: 'Launching a Just Culture safety reporting system at ABC ANSP'), especially if television journalists with a camera team are present.

Provide refreshments according to the time of day.

The Press Conference should be moderated by the Head of Corporate Communications or by external PR support, who would introduce the panel and tell the journalists what the format of the press conference will be (presentations followed by questions etc), and ask the journalists to state their name and publication when they ask a question.

4. Web based communications

Every company/organisation has a website today. There are specialised agencies that can design and create them, but the content must be agreed by the company itself, and the company must take and retain direct control of all the material that is released onto the web. Make sure that the web-pages are sufficiently interactive to involve media as well as customers and other stakeholders. The website should include a proud statement of the organisation's policy on Just Culture, and an explanation of the benefits it brings.

The next section provides guidance on what should be communicated by Corporate Communications in the event of an incident. These details should also be placed on the organisation's website.

Communicating with the media when there has been an incident

In all the cases described above, Corporate Communications should use the organisation's web-page to issue a statement in the 'news' or 'Press' section of the site describing the situation. The statement will, ideally, include:

- Date/time of statement (this must be precise so the frequent updates can be distinguished from earlier statements),
- Can answer media questions,
- Established facts about the incident, which should include:
 - Date/time/place of event,
 - Aircraft/airline/operator involved,
 - Nature of incident (this need only be generic at first: eg 'An airprox report has been filed'),
 - Statement by CEO if appropriate,
 - Latest status of investigation, and which agency is conducting it.

Take every opportunity to explain the open nature of the investigation process, and what it entails. Also, if appropriate to the event, proudly report the fact that the organisation operates a Just Culture internal safety reporting system to ensure that potential systemic problems are identified before they become a safety issue.

Communicating with the media when there has been an accident

This is a crisis situation. Best practices for handling these are elaborated in Chapter 8 (Principles of Crisis Communications) and in Appendix A (Accident Crisis Management).

8 - Principles of crisis communications

Introduction to Crisis Communications

The Crisis Communications Process should form part of the overall Crisis Management System (see Appendix A: Accident Crisis Management). It is a dedicated section with detailed descriptions and checklists on how the Corporate Communications department should deal with all internal and external stakeholders (management, employees, NAAs, AAIBs, airlines, airports, and media).

This chapter contains recommendations with regard to helping you:

- Develop your crisis communications plan, and
- Develop a checklist to log communication actions during a crisis.

The process

The impact of a crisis is a direct function of the way its communications are handled. Although a local incident in national airspace may seem to only affect the State and aircraft operation in question, the way in which an organisation reacts could make a difference to the whole outcome. Mishandled communication can result in serious damage to both the organisation's image, and to the whole ATM industry.

Figure 3 below provides an outline of the key components of a crisis communications process.

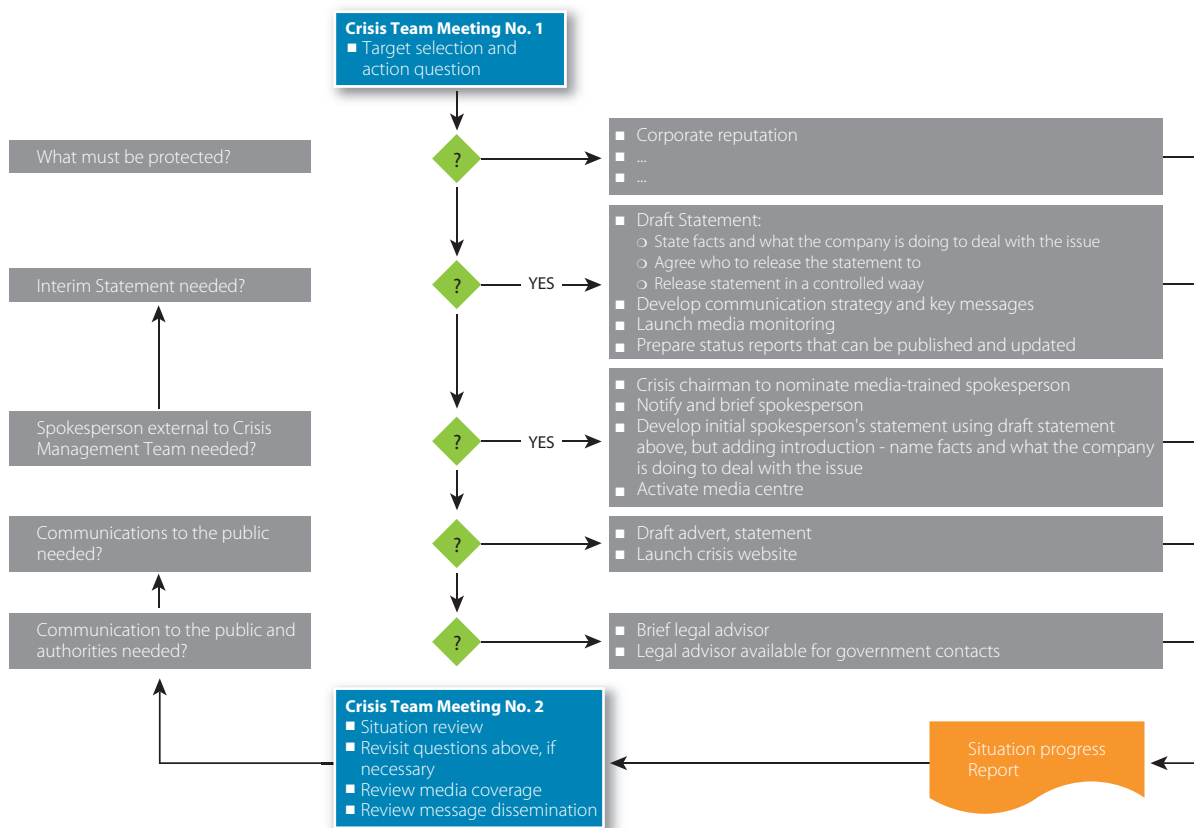


Figure 3 – Crisis Communications Process

Both parts of the system (Crisis Management and Crisis Communications) must practice at least once a year for a worst-case scenario. A protocol for operating a practice exercise must be set up in such a way that it can be initiated with very little notice, yet there should be no chance that anyone in any of the organisations should believe that the mock emergency is a real one.

For the purpose of dealing with the media in a manner which reflects a Just Culture, here is a list of the key considerations:

- The Crisis Communications Manual must be ready and updated. It should include checklists covering:
 - Notification procedure,
 - Launch of the crisis management process and first steps, including first interim statement,
 - First Board/Corporate Communications meeting (and plan for follow-ups),
 - Communications process including operation of the Crisis Communication Centre.
- Special points:
 - Responsibilities of individuals, departments and units are clearly defined, and coordination ready with customers and partners regarding communications.
 - Technical communication capacity has been checked. This includes: Press Office human resources are sufficient; web-site staff are fully briefed and recognised as the centre of the communications system - able to provide frequent updates via the company website; telephone lines at the Press Office are open and fully manned – there should be a system for calling Press Officers back from holiday or days off in emergency.
 - Top executives are fully trained to deal with media interviews.
 - Media monitoring system is operative, with a system for determining reporting trends and acting accordingly.

Elements for communications crisis

A crisis has some of the following elements:

- Fast decisions are required,
- No action may result in serious consequences,
- Possible lines of action are limited,
- Communication decisions may have serious consequences,
- Wrong decisions could be disastrous,
- Involved parties could have opposing interests,
- The crisis has developed as a result of a rapid succession of events and/or series of mistakes,
- Delay in response may damage the image of the organisation,
- The news is of interest to the media,
- Rumours and speculations develop and could be perceived as truth.

An approach to handling crisis communication

In any type and level of crisis, the communications approach should be based on **honesty**. If information cannot be provided, you should say so. The aim is to be clear and to emphasise the key focus – safety. In all cases, communication should focus on the human aspect of the crisis and concern should be expressed for people and their safety.

In general, it is always better to provide stakeholders and the media with information. The more you tell people, the less they think you are hiding and the earlier they will lose interest.

Also, in general, it is better that stakeholders and the press receive information directly from the organisation involved rather than from someone else. The organisation should aim to cooperate with the press, knowing what they want and giving them as much as it can – while keeping their promises.

Remember: a crisis can still be news when it is over – there are always anniversaries, inquests, reports etc.

In the case of most incidents it is enough to state the date/time and generic nature of the incident (for instance: failure of a navigational aid, Airprox class B, etc), and to say that an internal or an independent external investigation will establish and report the causal factors within x months on this website or the investigation agency's website. Provide journalists with the URL addresses for the websites where the report will be published.

After high profile incidents which occurred, for instance, at an airport during the peak traffic daytime hours a Press Release should be prepared at once. It should be coordinated with other parties involved, like airlines and the airport.

Incidents that may have significant operational impacts – like flight cancellations or delays - attract media anyway. So, in principle, Press Officers should operate to the same basic rules as those that would apply in a real crisis with an accident (see Chapter 6: Levels of Interaction with the Media).



9 - Handling the crisis

Holding statement

Within 30 minutes of a major crisis, communications activities should be underway, and a holding statement should be ready. Appendix D (Press Release Examples) provides some examples of text that could be used for the holding statement.

In the case of other levels of crisis, whether to issue a holding statement should be decided during the larger strategy discussion.

Meetings of the Crisis Communication Team (CCT)

The first meeting of the CCT should take place as soon as possible keeping in mind that media works 24 hours a day. More information about the working arrangements of a CCT can be found in Appendix C (Communications Working Arrangements).

- **Crisis Communications Checklist.** In times of crisis it is sometimes difficult to remember everything that needs to be done, and whether it has been done etc. It is therefore useful to have a checklist. This checklist should be reviewed by the CCT at all of its meetings and should be kept up-to-date at all times.
- An example checklist can be found at Appendix B (Crisis Communications Checklist).
- **First meeting of CCT.** At its first meeting, the CCT should:
 - Make a proposal regarding the communications level of the crisis,
 - Put together a communications plan,
 - Complete the full version of the crisis communications checklist,
 - Prepare a holding statement,
 - Determine likely needs for shift/rota system for communications staff.

Resources for the CCT

The CCT should have access to the following equipment:

- A room with a sufficient number of computers and telephone lines,
- Access to a television with satellite news channels,
- Access to a room with one phone line that can be used for interviews,
- Access to an ISDN phone line with telephone to be used for interviews,
- Photocopy equipment,
- Email access,
- Dedicated fax access,
- TV and video recorder,
- Radio and audio recorder,
- Recording of all phone calls,
- Printer.

Monitoring the media

Inaccurate or biased reporting of an incident by the media can cause much damage to an organisation. Therefore, organisations should monitor what is being reported in different areas of the media to identify whether steps need to be taken to rectify any mis- or bad reporting.

10 - Guidelines for talking to media

Introduction

When information is requested or an interview sought, the journalist should be brought into contact with the person best informed on the subject, and preferably with someone who has already received basic media training.

In general, the journalist will first contact the Press Office, who should collect the necessary information and find the adequate spokesperson. However, if a journalist has already established a relationship with someone within the organisation, he will often contact them first. In this case, the Press Office should still be informed as the person the journalist contacts might not be the appropriate person to answer the request. In addition, it should be the Press Office's role to monitor the organisation's relationship with the media.

Rules of behaviour

There are a number of recommended Rules of Behaviour when communicating with the media. It is useful to prepare a list of information in three categories:

1. Must tell,
2. Can tell - if asked,
3. Must not tell. This will identify information which may be under investigation but has not yet been confirmed as fact.

In the case of an accident:

- Express the organisation's distress;
 - Express the concern/distress/sadness of your organisation.
 - Express the deepest regret over any loss of human life, and extend sympathy to the victims, their families and friends.
 - Confirm full support for and participation in any investigation.

- Put the accident into context;

- Like all accidents involving the loss of human lives, accidents in air transport are tragic. However, air transport is one of the safest modes of transport in the world (trains are the first).
- Statistically, the potential risk to have an accident is one in 115 million flights.
- Give other statistical details as appropriate. E.g. Safely controlled nn million flights with no accidents.
- If the organisation has an ISO9001 certification, then it is worth stating this. Mention that receiving this certification required hard work and is difficult. All procedures are reviewed and checked against precise, objective criteria. The fact that the organisation is certified testifies that the services are considered safe and efficient.
- If all of your controllers are certified, then state this. This means that they have successfully completed an extensive training programme. Mention that they receive regular re-training.

- Tell them when and where they can get more information.

- Information is available on the website at [www.....](#)
- Further press statements will be released on [Date].....

DO NOT:

- Speculate on the cause of the accident, or
- Discuss details.

ALWAYS Communicate concern and authority Keep the public's perspective in mind	
Do	Don't
Tell the truth	Lose your calm if asked a difficult or hostile question
Be consistent – give the same messages to all audiences	Speculate if you don't know the answer. Say "I don't know"
Stick to known facts – never speculate *	Place blame
If you don't know, say so	Try to be clever
Be candid and timely in your responses	Bluff
Repeat yourself as often as necessary	Fill silences. Say what you mean to say and nothing more.
Make corrections when faced with a mis-stated fact or questions	Use humour
Always provide information from a public interest viewpoint	Say "no comment". Say "I don't know, but we are trying to find out".
Seek third party support	Discuss injuries or deaths until next of kin have been notified
Return calls	Say anything 'off the record'
If you make a promise for information/updates, keep it	Give information you wouldn't want to see in public
After accidents, or serious incidents, show appropriate concern preferably expressed by the CEO	Trickle the story out

Table 1 – Rules of Behaviour

* Journalists respect your right not to speculate and the more serious the accident, the more they understand your reluctance to indulge in guesswork.

Practical tips for personal contacts with journalists

Before the interview

- A first contact usually happens by telephone. It is important to be perceived as open, receptive and to demonstrate good intentions. Ask the name (full spelling), phone and fax numbers, and E-mail address of the correspondent and what medium they work for (see the Media Enquiry Form in Appendix C (Communications Working Arrangements)).
- Do not hesitate to ask the interviewer about the subject of the interview (even some of the questions that will be asked), the context of the interview, the identity of other people interviewed and also the date of publication or broadcast.
- Avoid as much as possible agreeing to an unexpected interview immediately. Take your time in seeking advice and collecting documentation. Tell the journalist you need time to check the facts.
- Inform the Press Office immediately - they can provide information about the medium and perhaps about the journalist.
- It is always recommended to let the Press Officer and/or a colleague attend the interview. This gives a witness who can confirm what was said, which could be useful for rectification.
- Most journalists will not let you see the text before it is published. However, if this is important to you, then raise it with the journalist in advance. While some technical publications will be open to this kind of request, this is not common practice for most general journalists.
- In many cases, the interview takes place over the phone. First take down all the questions, and then take the time to think. If necessary, suggest calling back later, but do not delay too much. It is important to provide information.

During the interview

- Remember that from the moment your interaction starts with the journalist, everything you say can be used in the article (unless you specifically state otherwise – see below regarding ‘off-the-record’ and ‘not for attribution’).
- Never be afraid of the interviewer. You know a lot more about the subject than he does.
- Prepare yourself for the interview. Discuss with the Press Office what kinds of questions you could be asked, and practise answering those questions.
- Never plan to read a text. If a subject is complicated, and you don't have a clear picture of it, ask the journalist if they can wait a few more hours before you give the interview.
- Answer the question directly, even if it is not a desired one. Trying to avoid answering the question makes the journalist curious.
- Take your time explaining things. It is important that both parties understand the same thing.
- Keep messages simple.
- Use short sentences; do not use aviation or company jargon. Imagine that you are talking to a friend who doesn't know anything about your issue, and speak to them.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, you can admit it - it might not be your job to know.
- If it is your job to know the answer, tell the journalist that you will get back to them after the interview.



- Always answer; never say “no comment”.
- Be sure of what you say. If you sound doubtful this will probably grab the journalist’s attention.
- Finally, if you are doing a pre-recorded radio or TV interview, you can always ask the journalist to stop or allow you to answer the question again if you are not satisfied with how you answered.

After the interview

- Inform the Press Office about your impressions and about the contents and date of publication. This way they can monitor where the interview goes out.
- When the article is published, don’t hesitate to send the journalist an email thanking them for their piece.
- Try to keep up positive and/or interesting contacts with journalists who have interviewed you. These help to build up good press relations.

‘Off the record’ and ‘not for attribution’

Occasionally, you might want to let journalists know some extra information - but you don’t want that information to be published. This is called ‘off the record’ information. Sometimes you don’t mind if they publish the information, but you don’t want them to identify you as a source - in which case your information is ‘not for attribution’.

Both of these techniques have their value in certain circumstances, but both are dangerous. You should never think of providing a journalist with an ‘off the record’ or ‘not for attribution’ comment unless you know them well and believe that they will respect the unwritten rules that govern such comments.

The danger in using these techniques is that they are not understood in some countries, that the journalist for reasons of their own will break your trust, or that after a certain time, they will forget that this information was provided in confidence.

In addition, if you use either of these techniques too often, you make the interview uninteresting for a journalist. They will not be able to write a good story if too much of it is told to them in confidence, or can not be attributed to someone.

However, if you do need to use either of these techniques, be very clear what you are referring to. Tell the journalist BEFORE you start your ‘off the record’ or ‘not for attribution’ remarks that these are what they are. When you are happy to go back on the record again, tell them. The worst thing you can do is talk to a journalist, and at the end of the interview, try to go back and tell them what was off the record.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - Accident crisis management

Introduction to crisis management

This section does not seek to provide guidance for an ANSP to prepare a full Crisis Management procedure, because this document's primary purpose is to advise companies on the essential part a Corporate Communications system plays in ensuring that a Just Culture will be credible in the eyes of the media following an incident or accident.

ANSPs, NAAs and AAIBs need to appreciate that, when an accident or serious incident occurs, the Just Culture system will be under attack - especially if there have been fatal casualties. For this reason, the Corporate Communications Department must have a Crisis Management System that deals with this factor. The lawyers of the families involved may be looking for individuals and corporations to sue for compensation, and this rush to find people or organisations to blame could transfer to the media. Then, through the media's reports, the pressure to identify the guilty party will transfer to the Government – unless the whole communications system, from the ANSP/NAA/AAIB through the Press to the Government, appreciates the importance of a Just Culture for future safety.

Part of the Crisis Management System is a dedicated Crisis Communications Section with detailed descriptions and checklists on how the Corporate Communications Department should deal with all internal and external stakeholders (management, employees, NAAs, AAIBs, airlines, airports, and media). See Chapter 8 (Principles of Crisis Communications) and Appendix C (Communications Working Arrangements).

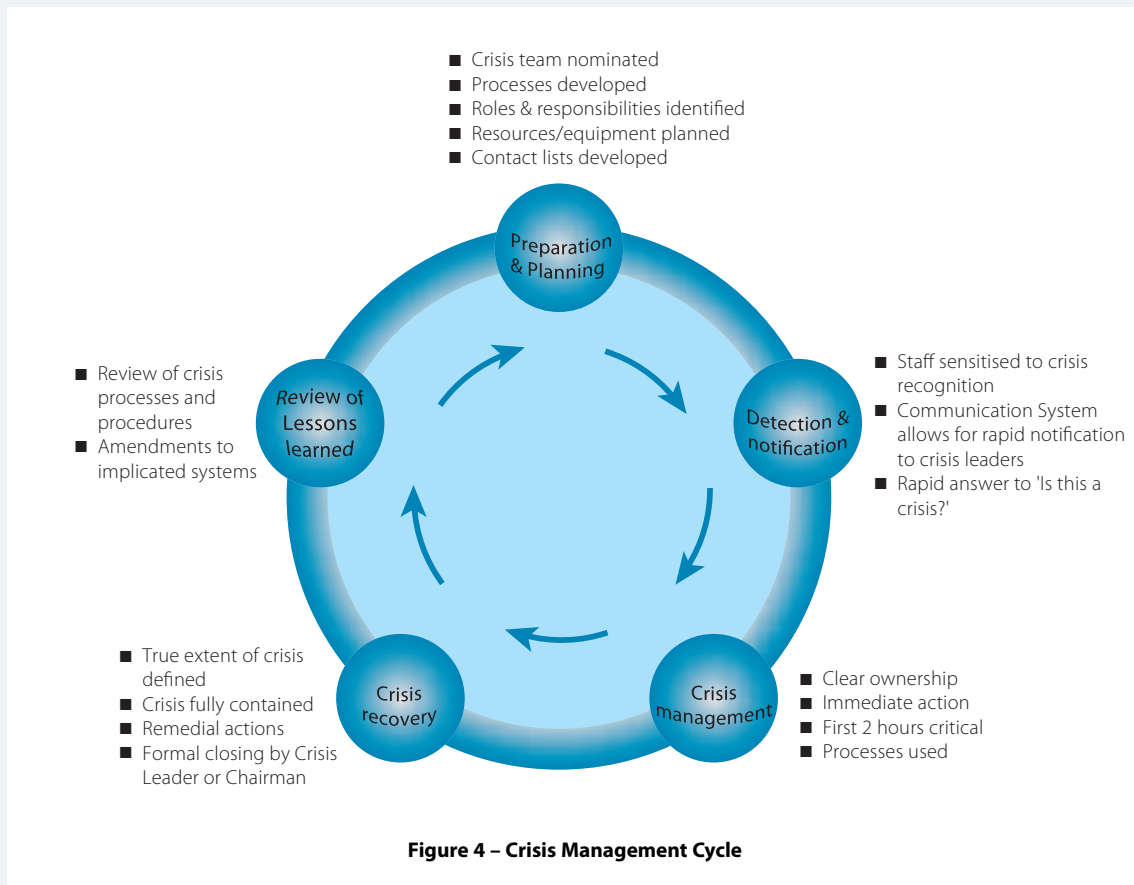
Objective of crisis management

Whilst the primary purpose of this document is to engender good relations with the media, it is beneficial to understand where Crisis Communication fits into the overall Crisis Management System.

Every organisation should have a Crisis Management System containing policy and guiding principles for the preparation of local crisis management plans.

Crisis management cycle

All crises, no matter their origin or gravity, follow a well-defined cycle. Thorough preparation should be made to ensure the systems, people and resources are available for a quick and efficient reaction to a crisis situation. Not all crises will be immediately obvious.



A crisis situation is the result of a major internal or external event which impacts upon the organisation in the context of public safety, staff safety, service continuity, or organisation reputation and related public confidence). In some cases, a crisis may be defined as an event that is not directly related to the organisation but is linked to its activities and that has substantial public interest e.g. failure of external supplier.

The high level objective of crisis management actions is to identify potential, impending or actual crises and to respond to these in a co-ordinated and successful manner. Effective crisis management plans will ensure that a measured response is provided to the staff, the media and to stakeholders, and, where appropriate, will ensure business continuity.

Corporate crisis management policy

The Corporate Crisis Management Policy should address the following aspects.

1. Identification and notification of crises

Identification and notification of a crisis or potential crisis may originate from almost any source. However received, this early information must be forwarded without delay to the Crisis Management Focal Point. Depending on the size of the organisation, the number of Focal Points may differ. Large organisations may have a Focal Point in each department. However, what is key is that the role of the Focal Point should be defined.

2. Preliminary assessment of the crisis

On first receipt of information, the Crisis Management Focal Point should make a preliminary assessment of the crisis, and should assume responsibility for coordinating whatever information is available and for activating the initial stage of the relevant local crisis management plan.

Not all information might be available immediately. Where doubt exists, or information cannot be verified immediately, where there is legitimate room to suspect that a crisis exists, the crisis management plan should be activated without delay as a precautionary measure.

3. Leadership during a crisis

Responsibilities and accountabilities must be defined and allocated without ambiguity in all crisis management plans and a clear chain of command (and line of communication) must be specified.

It is recommended to have a clearly established leadership during a crisis.

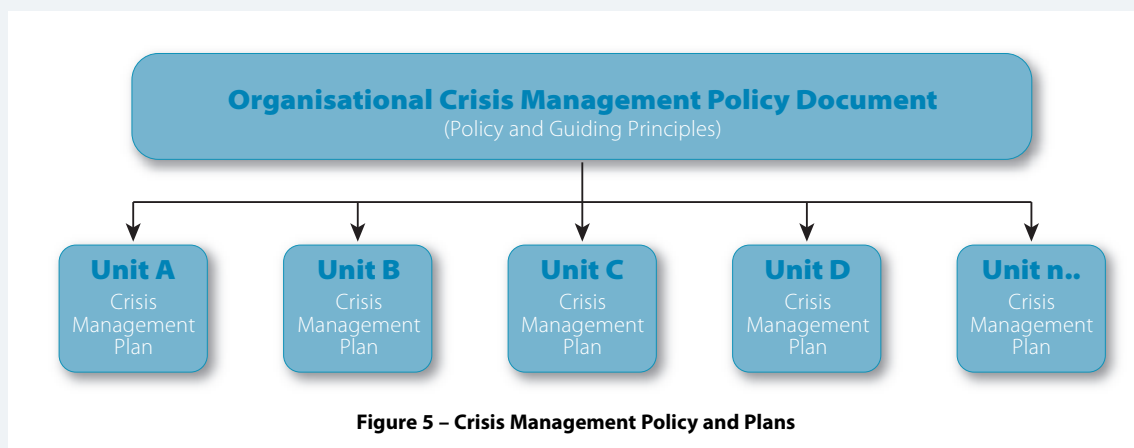


Figure 5 – Crisis Management Policy and Plans

Local crisis management plans

The different service areas of an organisation should produce local crisis management plans based upon the policies and guiding principles contained in the Corporate Crisis Management Policy.

The owners (e.g. Directors) responsible for ensuring their individual plans are current and that information contained in the plans remains valid should be clearly identified in local crisis management plans.

Local crisis management plans should all routinely contain the following:

Organisation related aspects:

- Description of local crisis management organisation
- Clear identification of management structure
- List of members (and deputies) of the Crisis Management Team (CMT) with current telephone contact details
- Individual roles and responsibilities
- Procedure for liaison with CEO
- Location: a meeting location for CMTs should be included in local CMTs. Although a dedicated location may not be required, it is essential that all facilities area available in the nominated location. Plans should also identify an off-site fallback in the event that the primary site is untenable.

Actions related aspects:

- Process for notifying activation of the crisis management plan and who to be notified
- Establishing facts: it is essential the facts are gathered promptly
- List of immediate actions with related checklist
- Business continuity plan
- Recovery plan
- Ending the crisis.

Recording and investigation:

- Details of any investigation process
- Process for recording information: an adequate record of events (i.e. a log book) should be kept, primarily to aid the CMT but also to assist with post-crisis analysis and any subsequent formal inquiry.

Communication aspects:

- Communication with staff
- A clear link to the corporate policy for dealing with media and public enquiries. Chapter 6 (Levels of Interaction with the Media) provides detailed guidelines on communicating with the media in times of crisis.

Lessons learned:

- Activities to get the lessons learned of the crisis management whenever a crisis management plan is activated – whether in practice or for real – a post-crisis audit should following to identify lessons learnt
- The lessons learnt should then be circulated within the organisation as relevant (e.g. to the owners of other units' crisis management plans).

Other aspects:

- Other aspects where relevant, e.g. legal support.

APPENDIX B - Crisis communications checklist

Event		Date	
		Time	
		Checklist number	

Information gathering	Check
Do we need to review and update our information? Yes No On what time basis? Are we doing it?	
Do we know where information comes from?	
Is all information going to the Crisis Leader / Coordinator?	
What are the information gaps we face? What is being done to close them?	
Are the feedback loops working?	
Are we monitoring enquiries to identify trends? Are we feeding the information to the Crisis Leader / Coordinator?	

Information analysis	Known	Unknown
What is the situation? - Is there a more fundamental problem – could this become a broader issue? - Is there more to come? - What is the worst case? - What is at stake now? - What are the time scales? - What is the press likely to make of it?		
Identify audiences - Who is affected by this crisis? - Who can affect us? - Who needs to know? - Who else should be informed?		
Have we involved 3rd party allies? Who?		

Messages and material	Needed?	Done?
Communications Plan		
Do we know: - What information we must tell? - What information we will tell if asked? - What information we cannot tell		
What are key message points? - Details: as much information about the incident as possible - Human face: We care - Reassurance: there is no further danger, one off etc, safety - What we are doing about it - Track record: i.e. How good we have been to date - Positioning the crisis in a larger picture - Further information: When and where it will be available - Background briefs on what we do		

Messages and material (cont'd)	Needed?	Done?
Have we done an interim internal statement?		
Have we done an interim external statement?		
Is the crisis website activated? - Does it need to be updated?		
Have we updated the Q&A for media?		
Are the spokespeople clear on their brief?		
Are there any trends in the press' questions?		

Actions	Needed?	Done?
Has the switchboard been warned?		
Have we communicated with stakeholders?		
Spokesperson updated?		
Information being shared with CMT?		

APPENDIX C - Communications working arrangements

Organisational procedures

There are a number of recommended working arrangements to be put in place to ensure a smooth communication process. This chapter provides details of the roles and responsibilities of the key players dealing with crisis level events.

First contact

When an incident occurs the first point of contact from the media can often be the Reception Desk or Telephone Operator. It is crucial that calls relating to an incident are redirected immediately to appropriate persons within the organisation as specified in the Crisis Management System.

When a media enquiry is received, the respondent should complete a Media Enquiry Form (a proposal is below) which should then be forwarded to the relevant persons specified in the Crisis Management System. In times when there is no crisis, then the form should be sent to the relevant department that the call was transferred to. It is important to have a complete picture of everything that has been said to the media. A key skill of journalists is to elicit information from people – therefore all levels of the organisation that are likely to be contacted by the media should have some form of training.

Media Enquiry Form

Name of Enquirer:			
Organisation:			
Date/Time of Call:		Taken by:	
Telephone No:		Email:	
Media Deadline:		Passed To:	
Who Spoke To Already:			
Questions Asked:			
Answers Given:			
Check Response Given:			

Figure 6 – Media Enquiry Form

Creation of the Crisis Communications Team

Once a crisis has been declared, a Crisis Communications Team (CCT) should be formed, ready to act in support of management (or the Crisis Management Team if one has been established). A named individual, possibly the Press Officer should act as a liaison between the CCT and management and should be present at management crisis meetings so that they can then brief the rest of the CCT.

Location of the Crisis Communications Team

The CCT should be located close to the senior management team dealing with the crisis (or CMT if there is one) so that there can be an adequate flow of information.

Special case: However, it should be noted that in the event of a crisis involving an accident/incident, it may be advisable from a public relations perspective for senior management (or CMT) to be present at the relevant location at least for a short period of time. Given the extensive media presence that could be expected at the location, especially at the beginning, it could be advisable for a part of the media handling team to go to the location.

Composition of the Crisis Communications Team

The CCT should comprise of communications experts who can support senior management (or the CMT) in the event of a crisis. The membership of the CCT should be defined in the light of the crisis involved.

The CCT should be supported by administrative staff for each 12-hour period that it needs to operate.

In the event of a Level 1 crisis, the team may need to function over a 24-hour period, which will need to be resourced accordingly.

Roles in the Crisis Communications Team

A number of different functions should be carried out within the CCT. These fall into a number of categories. Depending on the nature of the crisis, some roles may need to be split.

- Internal and external Communications coordination:
 - Formulates the communications strategy/makes strategic decisions,
 - Mobilises necessary resources,
 - Acts as main organisation's crisis spokesperson where appropriate,
 - Approves all communications,
 - Ensures legal, financial, technical and public affairs implications are considered prior to public statements,
 - Briefs and rehearses any management representatives in advance of media interviews,
 - Assesses media and public reaction and informs management,
 - Coordinates media monitoring,
 - Leads communications team,
 - Drafts key messages, statements etc.,
 - Centralises information,
 - Coordinates with support staff.

- Media handling:
 - Senior: deals with major national / international media,
 - Junior: deals with telephone enquiries, trade media.

- Support / admin:
 - Initiates media monitoring as required,
 - Centralises and logs all media calls,
 - Ensures information is logged, processed and given to appropriate staff,
 - Allocates requests for interviews,
 - Arranges security,
 - Sets up press facilities / briefings.

Resources for the Crisis Communications Team

The CCT should have access to the following equipment:

- a room with a sufficient number of computers and telephone lines,
- access to a television with satellite news channels,
- access to a room with one phone line that can be used for interviews,
- access to an ISDN phone line with telephone to be used for interviews,
- photocopy equipment,
- email access,
- dedicated fax access,
- TV and video recorder,
- Radio and audio recorder,
- Recording of all phone calls,
- Printer.

Crisis support areas

These need to be defined as a requirement, but the location may be different depending on where a crisis happens and is managed.

Crisis contact lists

The members of the CCT should carry details of their fellow team members and alternates with them at all times. There should be a clearly defined process for who is responsible for contacting members of the CCT to ensure that no-one is missed.

External enquiries

Once the CCT is established, the switchboard should be alerted about how to treat enquiries and informed of the number for the crisis secretary. Information should be given to the switchboard regarding the nature of the emergency, names of support teams, security arrangements and procedures. They should also provide callers with the direct number of the crisis line.

If calls from the media come in before crisis arrangements have been made, the Press Officer or assigned spokes-people should handle all requests.

Crisis Materials

- Media materials: Media materials should be readily available in case of a major crisis. This should include:
 - The facts of the accident,
 - A basic fact sheet about the organisation,
 - A map (in case of an accident, where relevant),
 - Facts on the safety of the aviation industry.

- Web activities: Web pages should be prepared for use in a Level 1 crisis and should be able to be posted within a few hours of a crisis being declared. These pages should be able to be activated in the event the servers at organisation are not available. The website should replicate much of the information available to the media.

Information to include on the website should be:

- The facts of the accident,
- A basic fact sheet about the organisation,
- A map (in case of an accident, where relevant),
- Facts on the safety of the aviation industry,
- A message to the families and friends of the victims,
- Facts on previous crashes,
- Links to external sites with useful information,
- Statements,
- Q&As,
- Who to contact.

APPENDIX D - Press release examples

An effective press release always has the same characteristics and components:

- It has an eye-catching headline that creates sufficient curiosity to persuade the journalist to read the text.
- It describes the main points of the core news item in the first two sentences or, even better, in the first sentence alone.
- The subsequent copy should be as brief as possible, and it should provide the context, explanation or rationale.
- Any other background information, such as details about the issuing organisation/ANSP, should be in note form below - and separate from - the main story.

This example mainly addresses effective style and composition. Details about the essential technical components of press releases (dates, times, the 'five Ws', contact names/telephone numbers/emails) can be found in Chapter 4 (Media Relations – The Basics), and in Chapter 7 (Communication Tools).

Address press releases to the appropriate sectors of the media: send human interest subjects, or developments that will change the nature of the air travel experience to the consumer media; send purely technical stories to the industry media; and safety/incident/accident/crisis releases to everyone.

Finally, it is more effective to produce very few press releases about genuinely interesting developments rather than many releases about trivia – the press-release equivalent of junk mail. The latter risks making journalists bin press releases with your logo on them without reading them.

Here is an example of a well-constructed press release:

HEADLINE

ABC ANSP Corporation's chief executive launches revolutionary approach to ATC safety

This press release is embargoed until 00:01h on Wednesday 30 January

FIRST SENTENCE(S) (the core message)

Air traffic controllers and pilots are being encouraged to report voluntarily any unintentional mistakes they make - however minor - that would otherwise have gone unnoticed.

ABC ANSP Corporation's chief executive John Brown explains: "This may not sound significant, but the policy will revolutionise our company's safety management system because, for the first time in our history, we will have access to information about formerly unknown human mistakes that, at some time in the future, might otherwise have led to a serious incident."

This, he points out, will enable the company to take pro-active, preventive safety actions, rather than waiting for safety incidents to bring unnoticed system imperfections to light.

EXPLANATORY TEXT (Why we are doing this)

Speaking at the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation's annual general meeting in [location] today, Brown stated that this is a radical change in ABC's safety management culture, explaining: "We call the system Just Culture Reporting. Under the old system, if controllers or pilots made an unintentional mistake and it was noticed, they would have been subjected to disciplinary action. The result was that any mistakes that no-one else noticed were kept secret. We want to know about everything that's happening, so we can identify any need for changes in procedures, systems, or training. So any controller or pilot who reports an unintentional mistake, or recognises that a part of our system could be improved, can report without fear of disciplinary action. That way we know where to direct our training resources, and where safety benefits can be gained."

BACKGROUND (Putting the issue into a wider context)

The Just Culture philosophy has been adopted successfully in many countries including Denmark, Germany and the UK but, says Brown, "it is a revolutionary idea that some people find difficult to accept. We are among the first employers in our country to adopt a Just Culture for the purpose of advancing safety performance." He explains that most countries still maintain an outdated system based on the belief that fear of discipline or legal retribution is the most effective means to keep controller and pilot standards high. Now, he explains, it is recognised that such a system is the enemy of transparency, tending to make skilled people cover up mistakes and to avoid taking responsibility. He adds: "ABC ANSP Corporation is proud to be introducing a Just Culture throughout its organisation, believing that a safer future depends on dedicated controllers and pilots making their real work experiences transparent so that we can learn from them."

Brown insists that a Just Culture is not a system for protecting careless employees, explaining: “We still retain disciplinary procedures for employees who are careless, reckless, or negligent, or those who fail to report a mistake. But our controllers are chosen for being highly motivated people who are proud of their high standards and exceptional skills, so it would be very rare for my company to be forced to resort to disciplinary measures.”

(Contact details for further journalist questions)

For more detail contact

Michelle Kracht on +33 1 12345678 or michelle.kracht@ABCANSP.com

(Information about the company and what it does)

NOTES: ABC ANSP Corporation is an ISO 9001 rated not-for-profit public company in which the state government owns 100% of the stock. Its sole purpose is to provide air traffic management services in cooperation with neighbouring ATM providers, adhering to the safety and performance standards set by the European Commission through EUROCONTROL and the European Aviation Safety Agency. ABC ANSP plays an active role in driving forward the objectives of a Single European Sky, and in the industry-wide system for sharing safety-related data so that ATM performance standards can continually be driven upward.

Full details of the audited safety and performance standards of the corporation, along with those of all the other Eurocontrol member ATM providers, can be found at the website of the independent Performance Review Commission.

The following are examples of press releases and notices placed on websites that could be used in the event of an incident or accident. It demonstrates that an organisation is communicating openly, and shows full support for the families and friends of the bereaved.

SPECIMEN PRESS RELEASE

Template for possible press release concerning: Accident with loss of life

Accident between at

[Name of organisation] has the immense sadness to report that on *[date]* at *[time]* local time, an accident took place at *[insert location and aircraft of or other vehicle etc involved including flight numbers, origin, destination where relevant]*. The tragic accident occurred in *[give details of location]*.

It would appear that *[number]* people have lost their lives in this tragic accident. Our thoughts and sympathy are with the victims, their families and friends.

The *[investigating authority]* is coordinating the investigation process in order to determine the exact cause. At this time we cannot speculate as to the cause of the accident. We will work closely with the authorities as the investigation proceeds.

More information will be available on the internet at: *[URL of website]*
For more information, please call: *[insert details]*

Template for possible press release concerning: Mid-air collision

Mid-air collision between Over

[Name of organisation] has the immense sadness to report that on *[date]* at *[time]* local time, a mid-air collision between *[insert flight numbers, origin, destination]* occurred in the airspace controlled by the *[name of control centre]*. The tragic accident occurred in over *[name of area/city etc]*.

It would appear that *[number]* people have lost their lives in this tragic accident. Our thoughts and sympathy are with the victims, their families and friends.

The *[investigating authority]* is coordinating the investigation process in order to determine the exact cause of the disaster. At this time we cannot speculate as to the cause of the accident. We will work closely with the authorities as the investigation proceeds.

More information will be available on the internet at: *[URL of website]*
For more information, please call: *[insert details]*

SPECIMEN WEBSITE PAGES

These examples are ones that have been placed on an airline website following a fatal aircraft accident.

1. [airline] aircraft crashes near [place] - no survivors

[place], [date], [time] - All the occupants of a [airline] [aircraft type] - the crew of [number] and [number] passengers - perished when the aircraft crashed near [place]. The aircraft crashed, shortly after takeoff, at [time] on [day].

[Airline] Flight No. [xxxxx] took off from [name] Airport at [time] and was scheduled to land in [place] about [number] minutes later. A few minutes after take-off, the aircraft – [registration] – disappeared from the radar screens. According to information supplied by [ATC service], weather conditions at the time were good and there was no indication of any problems given by the crew.

The [airline] has set up an emergency telephone for relatives of the passengers at: [number]. (list domestic and international numbers separately).

Note: The next press conference will be held at the [airline] Headquarters in [place] at [time].

2. Cause of [airline] accident remains unclear - search for flight data recorder continues

[place], [date], [time] - The cause of the accident involving a [airline] [aircraft type] aircraft near [place] Airport this evening remains unclear. The [number] passengers and [number] crew on board the aircraft all perished.

At a media conference held this evening in [place], [airline] CEO (or Chairman or Managing Director) [name] expressed his sincerest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the crash victims on behalf of the Board of Directors of the [airline].

[name], head of the [country] air traffic control agency [name], stated that there were no signs of trouble immediately after the aircraft took off from [place] at [time] local time. It is hoped that the evaluation of the flight data and cockpit voice recorders, once recovered, will provide clues as to the cause of the accident.

As reported by [name] of the [police force], the aircraft impacted in a field some [number] metres from a residential area in [place], a village near [place] Airport.

The names of the victims will be announced once all next-of-kin have been notified. The nationality of all passengers is still being researched. The flight's Captain was a native of [country] and had accumulated some [number] flights hours. The co-pilot was a [country] national and the single flight attendant was from [country].

At [time] a [airline] charter aircraft carrying members of the [airline] care team departed [place] for [place]. The care team will offer moral and psychological support to the victims' family members.

The [airline] has established an emergency contact number for victims' family members under [number].

[airline] operated [number] [aircraft type] aircraft. Some [number] [aircraft type] have been in service worldwide since [date]. The [airline] aircraft was constructed in [year] and had accumulated [number] flight hours.

A total of [number] [aircraft type] have been lost. The worst accident occurred in [year] in [place] when [number] people perished.

Note: the next media conference will take place on [date] at [time] at [airline] headquarters in [place].

3. Radar contact with [airline] aircraft lost after two minutes

[place], [date], [time] – The [airline] aircraft that crashed yesterday evening was airborne [number] minutes before radar contact was lost. The [number] crew members and all [number] passengers on board the [aircraft type] perished in the accident. All victims have been identified.

According to [name], head of [ATC service], [airline] flight [number] departed [place] en route to [place] at [time]. Takeoff was from [place] Airport's runway [number], heading [direction]. Radar contact was lost at [time]. The last contact with the pilot was recorded some [time] earlier. After this last radio message the aircraft executed (description of aircraft flight path and comparison with expected flight path).

The reasons for the accident remain unknown at this time. The impact site is some [number] miles ([number] kilometres) from the point of takeoff, near the village of [name]. The search for the flight data and cockpit voice recorders began again this morning at daybreak. Recovery efforts are (comment on progress of the recovery, e.g. terrain, weather, etc. and their effect on recovery).

The [number] passengers on flight [number] were (brief details of the passengers, their names, ages and nationalities). The crew members of flight [number] were (brief details of the crew members, their names, ages, nationalities and crew positions).

A [number]-person care team, consisting of [airline] staff, are looking after the victims' family members in [place]. As mentioned by [name] at a media conference this morning, [airline] is offering the families immediate aid of roughly [amount].

Since last night [airline] has conducted a special technical inspection of its remaining [aircraft type].

The aircraft that was lost had been in the [airline] fleet since [year], having accumulated [number] flight hours and [number] takeoff and landing cycles.

The pilots were both highly experienced and had completed examinations at [airline] that correspond to international standards. The Captain had accumulated [number] hours of flight duty time, including [number] on the [aircraft type]. The co-pilot had some [number] flight hours, [number] on the [aircraft type].

Note: the next media conference will take place on [date] at [time] at [airline] headquarters in [place].

APPENDIX E -

Tutorial on basic atm for journalists

Two PowerPoint presentations have been developed that, when suitably enhanced with photographs and graphics, can be used as a tutorial for the media in the basic aspects of how ATM works.

Each slide has notes attached for the person presenting the show, to provide guidance about the message that each slide needs to convey.

These presentations are available on CD (attached to this document)*

There is a full version and a short version of the presentation. The full version, in addition to the tutorial on the basic aspects of how ATM works, also provides a brief glimpse into the future of ATM. This presentation should take between 30min and 40min to present, explain, and answer questions.

The short version of the PowerPoint presentation on ATM for journalists also provides a tutorial on the basic aspects of how ATM works, but leaves out some details and does not make predictions for future ATM. It should take about 20-30min to present, including answering questions.

*If no CD is attached, send a Request Form from EUROCONTROL's website:
www.eurocontrol.int/esp/public/standard_page/documentation_dis.html

GLOSSARY

AAIB	Aviation Accident Investigation Board
ACC	Area Control Centre
ADS-B	Automatic Dependent Surveillance Broadcast
ANSP	Air Navigation Service Provider
ATC	Air Traffic Control
ATCO	Air Traffic Controller
ATM	Air Traffic Management
CAA	Civil Aviation Authority
CCT	Crisis Communication Team
CD	Compact Disc
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CMT	Crisis Management Team
CNS	Communication/Navigation/Surveillance
DAP/SSH	Directorate ATM Programmes/Safety, Security, Human Factors
EASA	European Aviation Safety Authority
EATMP	European Air Traffic Management Programme
EC	European Commission
ECAC	European Civil Aviation Conference
ESP	The European Safety Programme for ATM
GAIN	Global Aviation Information Network
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organisation
ISDN	Integrated Service Digital Network
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
NAA	National Aviation Authority
Q&A	Questions and Answers
SAFREP TF	Safety Data Reporting and Data flow Task Force
SSAP	Strategic Safety Action Plan
STCA	Short Term Conflict Alert
URL	Uniform Resource Locator

www.eurocontrol.int/safety

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