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Section 2: Response

2.1 Mobilization of MLOs and Initial Response Actions

On declaration of a Major Emergency by any one of the Principal Response Agencies (PRA), that agency and the relevant other PRAs will activate their individual Major Emergency Plans.

The Inter-agency Public Communications Plan is an integral component of the Major Emergency Plan and becomes active automatically once the Major Emergency Plan is activated. This will result in the mobilization of Media Liaison Officers (MLO).

Appendix 1 on page 13 sets out a sample Action Card for MLOs with a simple format for three essential components:³

- I. Mobilization and initial Conference Call procedure (See Section 2.3 below)
- II. Key actions on receiving a Major Incident Alert
- III. An Agenda for the initial Conference Call
- IV. Contact details for Garda Press Office

Appendix 2 on Page 15 provides an emergency contact lists for all nominated MLOs in the ***** Region.

For the purposes of this plan it is necessary that each PRA has an established method to designate a Senior MLO authorized to lead the nominated MLOs of that particular agency.

2.2 Initial Holding Statement(s)

Following the declaration of a Major Emergency, An Garda Síochána (in consultation with the National or Lead agency as required) will:

- I. Issue (an) initial holding statement(s) from Garda Press Office in the format contained in Appendix 3 (See reference to Appendix 3 below) pending the establishment of the Local Co-Ordination Group
- II. Inform the Government Information Service through the Garda Press Office

Appendix 3 on Page 16 sets out a recommended template for an initial holding statement. The Appendix also sets out:

- Guidance for an accompanying „Note to the Editor’
- Brief guidance for MLOs preparing an initial holding statement and
- Guidance on issuing updates to the media

This action will take priority, irrespective of the Lead Agency designated and potentially prior to the establishment of either the Local Co-ordination Centre or any presence of MLOs at the emergency site.

The purpose of these initial holding statements will be to meet immediate operational requirements and to:

³ It is a matter for each PRA to design MLO and/or other Action Cards.

4 Information Processing

4.1 Preparing and issuing joint press statements

Joint or agreed press statements should be prepared following completion of the „likely media questions’ templates (see reference below to “PRA QUESTIONS & ANSWERS CHECKLISTS” distributed under separate cover) by each MLO. Each statement should indicate approximately when the next statement will be issued.

The “QUESTIONS & ANSWERS CHECKLISTS” template provides specific checklists for:

- a) All Agencies – Generic checklist
- b) City or County Council (including MLO and Special Services)
- c) The HSE
- d) An Garda Síochána

All press statements sanctioned for release should be copied to the MLOs of the three PRAs, at the Local Co-ordination Centre and, where practicable, at the Scene.

When information is ready for dissemination to the media it should simultaneously be circulated to all key Stakeholders

Appendix 7 on Page 22 sets out a list of Media Print and Broadcast Media contacts. This is populated with all relevant Local & National Newsdesks in Print, Broadcast & Digital Media

4.3 Holding joint press conferences

Appendix 6 on Page 22 provides Press Conference guidelines. The Appendix sets out:

- a) The Role of the Lead or Designated MLO in charge
- b) Managing the Venue
- c) The role of the Spokesperson(

4.4 Provision of joint information on websites

If appropriate, information on the incident should take precedence on the homepage of each PRA website, showing links to the other PRA websites, if possible.

In the interests of those affected by a disaster event, branding and advertising should be relegated, if practicable, from the homepage for the time being.

Any Inter-Agency information appearing on a PRA website should only contain information which has been approved for publication by the Local Co-ordination Centre.

4.5 Casualty Bureau Casualty Information Telephone Help Line

A dedicated Casualty Bureau Help Line may be set up by An Garda Síochána and the number will be released via the media through the Garda Press Office, in conjunction with the Casualty Bureau Supervisor.

There is normally a time lag between the activation of procedures to establish the Casualty Bureau and activation of the dedicated call centre.

An Garda Síochána will request that families with missing relative(s) should nominate one family member to contact the help line / casualty bureau, in order to minimise the number of queries and duplicated records.

Appendix 8 on Page 25 provides a schematic diagram of INFORMATION FLOW - CASUALTY BUREAU

Releases to the media should contain general information on casualties, as well as on any injuries sustained by staff and/or members of the public, including up-to-date numbers, but not names.

At this time also, information on where the injured (and/or the bodies of the dead) are being taken may be publicised, along with contact numbers for family and friends to call.

Section 5 Stand Down and Protocols following Stand Down

5.1 Standing down the status of the emergency

A great deal of activity may continue at locations other than the site (such as the Hospitals, Temporary Mortuary, etc.) after the major emergency is stood down at the site. The Local, Regional or National Co-Ordination Groups may need to continue their work after activities at the site have closed.

This plan will be stood down by the Lead Agency MLO at the Local Coordination Centre only when stand-down has been approved by the Local Coordination Group.

A press release will normally be issued when stand-down is taking place.

5.2 Protocols following stand down

After every response to a major emergency:

- Each PRA MLO will *participate in a “hot debrief” at the Local Coordination Centre or On-site Coordination Centre respectively, and any subsequent debrief with their own PRA*
- The Media Liaison Groups of the LCC and the Emergency Site will carry out a separate operational MLO debriefing and document outcomes in a report
- Review the inter-agency media-liaison and public communications co-ordination aspects of the response with the other PRAs. This review will document the lessons learned in a report on media-liaison and public communications co-ordination.

All internal PRA media liaison and public communications reports and the report on media liaison and public communications coordination, will be compiled by the Principal Response Agency that was the initial lead agency. This report will be submitted with the post response reports

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RESTRICTED SECTION

Appendix 1: Sample Action Card for Media Liaison Officer:

Note: This is a sample format for the three essential components of an MLO Action Card:

- I. Mobilization and Conference Call procedure
- II. Key actions on receiving a Major Incident Alert
- III. An agenda for the initial Conference Call

The design of the card and the entry of agency-specific detail is a matter for each PRA

MLOs Group Text Messaging

If the internet IS NOT available to you contact MLOs individually by mobile, home or office phone

If the Internet IS available and your PRA uses an internet-based texting facility (e.g. Saadian SMS Paging system) use the system to alert MLOs by group text on mobile phone

Pager SMS User URL: *****

User Name: ***** **Password:** *****

To Organise a Conference Call

- advise the participants of the meeting time
- tell them the dial-in number and the Participant Pin only
- start the *Conference Call* by dialling in yourself and entering the Organiser Pin

Direct Dial Telephone Number: (e.g. Eircom Teleconference is **01-6647777**)

Organiser Pin Number: ***** Participant Pin Number: *****

Key actions on receiving a Major Incident Alert:

1. Commence a personal log. Capture an initial METHANE brief and build your assessment of the situation thereon. Maintain your personal log thereafter.
2. Be in possession of ID, appropriate PPE, and essential personal items (e.g. medicines)
3. Proceed to appropriate Co-ordination Centre, make yourself identifiable and inform the Co-ordination Centre chair of your arrival. Use correct I.D. Tabard in accordance with your own agency's Major Emergency Plan.
4. Support the MLO of the Lead PRA to set up the Media Centre or Media Reception Point(s).
5. Commence liaison with MLOs from the other PRAs and Co-ordination centres.

Initial Conference Call - agenda

In order to meet the requirement for An Garda Síochána to prepare and release the initial holding statement the MLO of the Lead PRA will initiate a teleconference with the

MLOs from the other PRAs and Notify Garda Press Office immediately. Garda Press Office may contribute to or join the conference call. Contact details for Garda Press Office are as follows:

- 01 666 2072 / 32 between 07:30 and 23:00 daily
- 01 666 3108 / 09 between 23:00 and 07:30 (c/o Garda Communications Centre, Harcourt Square)

The following points should be covered at such a teleconference

- Summary of the essential details of the incident: (The METHANE facts – essentially What? Where? When? And Who?).
- Which PRA declared the Major Emergency?
- Are there critical public information messages that are to go out from: An Garda Síochána, the Local Authority, and/or the HSE?
- What has gone out to the public/media already? (Control rumour and miss-information)
- Who is the Local Co-ordinator? Who is on-site co-ordinator?
- Is a Media Reception Point identified at the site? What is the route for the On-site Media Liaison Team to the site?
- What are the arrangements for meeting(s) of the MLOs?
- Is there essential information required and from whom? Who may possess key knowledge or information?

RESTRICTED SECTION

Appendix 2: Media Liaison Officers Emergency Contact List

The following staffs are designated by their respective agencies to be responsible for Media Liaison in the event of a declaration of a major emergency.

Name	Mobile Number	Landline No.	E-mail
An Garda Siochána _____ Division			
An Garda Siochána _____ Division			
An Garda Siochána _____ Division			
Health Services Executive			
_____ County Council			
_____ City Council			
_____ County Council			

Please note: The distribution of this appendix of the Inter-Agency Communication Plan is restricted, as it will contain personal information.

This information will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis to ensure accuracy.

Appendix 3: Initial Holding Statements and Updates

Press Statement for Media upon activation of Major Emergency Plan – consider including information such as

An incident (briefly describe: explosion/fire/plane crash) took place/ is imminent at (location) on (day & date) at (approx time).

At (time) a Major Emergency was declared by (Agency name)

As a result of the Major Emergency Plan being activated resources of the Local Authorities, HSE and An Garda Síochána were called to the scene of the incident.

Currently there are (number of units) present at the scene at this time. (Give specific numbers of how many units of each service are present where appropriate).⁸

At this early stage all our energies are concentrated on bringing the situation under control.

We wish to convey the following key information to the public.

(Expressly state key messages)

- At this point we are urging members of the public **not** to attend the scene of the emergency;
- (If appropriate) Members of the public in the area are advised to go indoors and remain indoors for now;
- Access to the site is restricted and emergency; vehicles are currently entering and exiting the scene. It is vital that all roads in the vicinity are kept clear;
- Alternative routes and diversions are in operation and we would ask the public to observe and obey road signs in the vicinity and to listen to radio news bulletins for updates;
- Public transport routes are effected / unaffected;
- Members of the media should go to the media centre located at XXXXXXXX;
- We are not in a position to comment on any medical details as yet and no interviews can be given at this time;
- Further updates will be issued as soon as possible but not later than XXXX.

End.

Sample Note to the Editor

A Major Emergency is declared when an event takes place, usually with little or no warning, causing or threatening death or injury, serious disruption of essential services or damage to property, the environment or infrastructure beyond the normal capabilities of the principal emergency services in the area in which the event occurs.

⁸ Information on the number of resources deployed should only be given if it is verified.

When a major emergency is declared, Agencies such as An Garda Síochána, HSE, Local Authorities and other groups are immediately informed and work off their Major Emergency Plan, which details a co-ordinated response to such incidents, and outlines areas of responsibility for each agency.

Please note that this is **not a training exercise**. The cooperation of the media and the community with the emergency services is essential at this time.

End.

Notes for MLOs when preparing initial press statement(s)

The Lead MLO should consider providing a spokesperson to reassure the public as soon as possible.

Additional Information to be added to Press Releases as necessary may include:

1. Concerned members of the public who wish to make contact with the emergency services may contact the following number: *****
2. Residents and members of the public currently in the ***** area are advised to stay indoors and close their windows and tune into news bulletins.
3. Residents and members of the public currently in the ***** area, are asked to immediately leave the area for their own safety. A resting area, providing food and drink, is being provided at *****.
4. Those living in the ***** area are advised that there is no immediate danger to their health and safety, but in the interests of ensuring clear and swift access by emergency services to the site, they are asked to stay in their homes.
5. A further statement will be issued no later than (*State time*).
6. A contact number may be made available for concerned relatives. This information will be posted on the following website(s) *www.xyz.ie*
7. MLOs to ensure that all communication to the media should be circulated to both Local and National Media Outlets.

Providing updates to media

The updates to be provided to media in later releases should contain information on injuries sustained by members of the public and / or staff, including up-to-date numbers, but not names.

At this time, information on where the injured (and/or dead) are being taken should be publicised, along with phone numbers for family and friends to contact. Details of reception centres for friends and families should also be given out at this time, where applicable.

Such details should be continually repeated in all press releases and at all press conferences.

As the incident progresses, more detailed information about the location and lay-out of the site, and a description of where on the site the accident took place, should be provided.

Great care should be taken that no information on individual casualties is released to the media. Similarly, premature or uncorroborated estimates of the numbers of casualties should not be released, until details have been confirmed.

Information on individual casualties will only be provided by An Garda Síochána, who may establish a Casualty Bureau to collect and collate the details of all casualties and survivors. Once it is operational, the telephone numbers to contact the Casualty Bureau will be issued to media by the Garda Press Office.

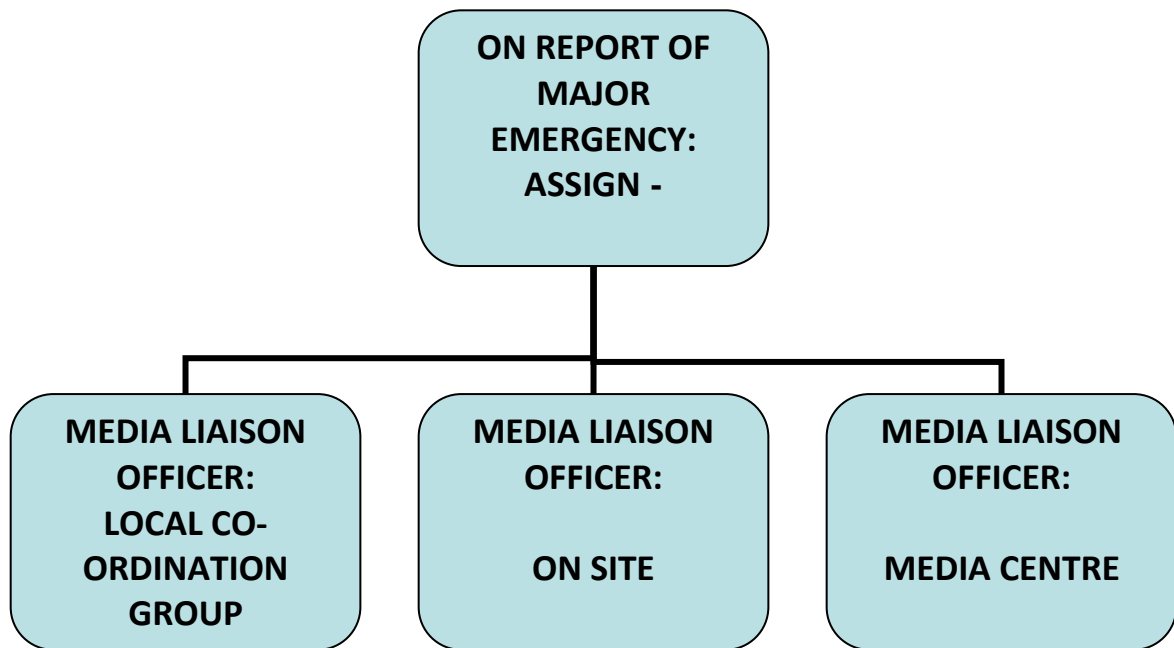
In addition, as the emergency plan continues to be implemented, and the immediate threat reduces, a greater emphasis should be placed on the aftermath, clearing up / recovery of bodies if necessary, re-locating the public, and re-opening roads.

Communications surrounding all of these actions should be focussed on reassuring the public that the situation is under control, and that the authorities are managing the situation well. Re-building confidence is essential at this time.

MLOs should review the Media Strategy on an on-going basis and consider providing additional information as appropriate.

Such releases should also look back at the actions carried out by the emergency services and the PRAs since the declaration of the Major Emergency, and offer a summary of the work carried out by the emergency services and other agencies involved, including voluntary groups.

Appendix 4: Initial Responsibilities of Lead Agency's Senior MLO



1. Notify Garda Press Office at: (Contact details See Appendix 1 Page 13)
2. Establish contact with other agencies / organisations implicated (e.g. The Plant Operator / The Company involved or their own nominated MLO)
3. Determine place and time for Off-site and On-site Media Liaison Groups to meet
4. Identify a Media Reception Point and approach route
5. Establish communication between the Off-site and On-site Media Liaison Groups.
6. Develop an initial joint media communications strategy. Develop a timeframe as soon as practicable.

Appendix 5: Aides Memoires on the Duties of Media Liaison Officers

These lists of duties are not exhaustive and further or different responsibilities may emerge during an emergency. The lists should serve the Media Liaison Group as „Aides Memoire’ only.

Media Liaison Officer at the Local Co-ordination Centre

- Designate one MLO to check the accreditation of attending media and record all such attendances
- Compile a list of locations and other agencies (Non PRA) affected.
- Inform all locations of initial Media Strategy once signed off by the Local Coordination Group.
- Collate and manage all information from respective PRAs that will form part of media releases, or, to be used in press conferences/briefings as required
- Ensure that the Lead MLO On-site is kept fully briefed of developments Off-site at all times. This will include all press releases, schedules for press releases, press conferences and handover of Lead Agency, where appropriate
- Ensure that all press and media releases have been sanctioned before release
- Complete respective agency Media Question & Answer Sheet. Liaison with respective MLO On-site would be useful at this stage
- Ensure 2-way communications link exists at all times with the Lead MLO on-site
- Ensure that PRA websites are updated with the latest information
- Establish a system for the continuous monitoring of media coverage (print and broadcast). All issues should be referred to the established media liaison group.

Media Liaison Officer attending the Scene (On-site)

- Designate one MLO to check the accreditation of attending media and record all such attendances
- Compile a list of any respective VIPs, Oireachtas Members, MEPs, etc attending the Scene
- Acquire details of initial Media Strategy once formulated and agreed. Make sure not to deviate from this.
- Ensure that the Lead MLO at the Local Co-ordination Centre is kept fully briefed of any developments On-site at all times
- Ensure that all inter-agency statements /comments made On-site are fully signed off by the Local Co-Ordination Centre (LCC)
- Advise Lead MLO at the LCC if key personnel at the Scene under Media

pressure for interviews

- Ensure that any VIPs, Oireachtas Members, MEPs etc. On-site are made fully aware of any communications sanctioned by the Local Coordination Group for public release.
- Ensure 2-way communications link exists at all times with the lead MLO at the LCC
- When Media Strategy has been revised this will be immediately communicated to the media as appropriate
- Report to the Lead MLO at the LCC on effectiveness of media strategy On-site.
- Lead MLO On-site to apprise all media in attendance at scene of media strategy once agreed at Local Coordination Group.
- Other duties as may be allocated by the Lead MLO On-site with direction from the Lead MLO at the LCC.

Appendix 6: Press Conference Guidance

The Role of the Lead or Designated MLO in charge

- Prior to the press conference (PC) an opening statement will be prepared specifically for the PC. Copies must be made available to the media.
- The speaker(s) will be briefed by the MLOs who will suggest likely questions and responses.
- The Lead or designated MLO will introduce the main speakers and will tell the journalists approximately how long the press conference will run.
- The Lead or designated MLO will ask the journalists to raise their hand if they wish to ask a question and when called to state their name and which media organisation they represent.
- When it is time to wind up the press conference, the Lead or designated MLO will announce that there is time for one final question.
- MLOs must facilitate the one-on-one television interviews that will take place after the press conference, where appropriate.
- MLOs must agree with journalists the order in which these take place. Given deadlines, this may need to be handled sensitively.
- An MLO must be available at all times during these one-on-one interviews to give support and guidance.

Managing the Venue

- Name plates should be used to clearly identify the speakers at the conference
- The venue should ideally contain two entrances, one for the journalists and one for those facing the media, so they don't have to fight their way through the media throng.
- The room must be sufficiently large to accommodate several journalists.
- Phones and faxes should be laid on, where practicable, but most journalists will use their mobile phones and laptop computers.
- A designated MLO should check the journalists press credentials as they enter.
- Security measures should be put in place to control the venue.
- There should be a stable, raised platform towards the back of the room for TV cameras, where practicable.
- Cameras must not be allowed to set up too close to the speakers, as this can be very intimidating.
- Place print, radio and stills cameras towards the front.
- The Lead Agency MLO or another MLO designated by him/her must be available to facilitate all of the above.

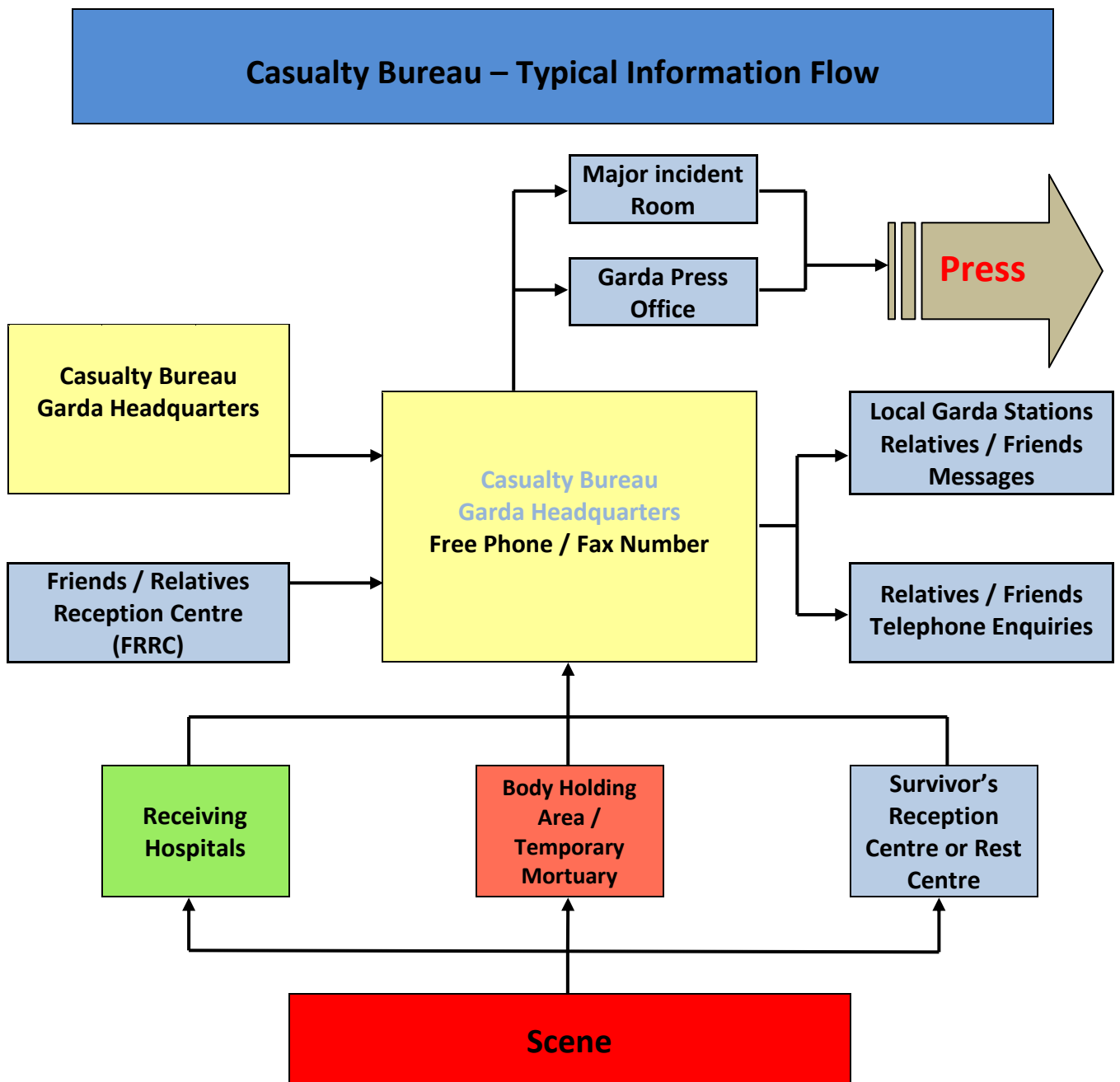
The Role of the Spokesperson

- There should be one main speaker as designated by the Local Coordination Group. Each PRA should be represented by a speaker at the conference to deal with specific questions directed at a specific PRA. The main speaker should plan and prepare carefully for the PC and establish the principal aim, or aims to be achieved by the conference.
- Prior to the PC, the main speaker will agree an opening statement with the Local Coordination Group. He/she will brainstorm with MLOs on all likely questions and responses.
- Key messages that must be transmitted during the press conference will be agreed in advance.
- The main speaker should ideally engage in a pre-interview rehearsal with MLOs and offer answers to the obvious questions as well as to the difficult ones.
- During the PC, the main speaker should listen carefully to the questions and direct the reply to the person who asked the question. The whole room should not be taken in with the reply.
- Helpline numbers should be read aloud and news reporters requested to read out numbers, instead of (or in conjunction with) saying “a number will appear on screen”.
- After the PC is over television and radio reporters may expect one-on-one interviews with the main speaker. This should be anticipated in advance.

Appendix 7: List of Media Contacts

This will be populated with all relevant Local & National Newsdesks in Print, Broadcast & Digital Media.

Appendix 8: Information Flow – Casualty Bureau



Appendix 9: Notes on Best Practice for Public Communication

Best Practice for Public Communication

The communication response will be based on the following principles.

General

- TRUST. Trust is the goal – each communication builds or erodes trust
- TRANSPARENCY is the tool
- Announce EARLY – even with incomplete information, to control rumour and miss-information
- LISTEN to the public and respond – Build messages to show that you are listening to the public concerns, even when these concerns seem unreasonable

For All interviews

- Before the interview, WRITE your main messages
- REPEAT them during the interview
- BRIDGE the messages (“what it is important to remember is . . . “)
- State clearly what you don’t know and what you are going to learn
- Share dilemmas with the public
- Remember emergencies are evolving and unpredictable – always leave room for the unexpected
- Never over reassure or mislead

Appendix 10: Distribution List

Distribution by the RSG to include (subject to appropriate document control):

- I. Each MLO of each PRA of the region
- II. NSG
- III. Garda Press Office
- IV. Manager of each Local authority and head of AGS and HSE in the region
- V. Each VES in the region

Internal and / or further distributions to be determined by individual PRAs (subject to appropriate document control)