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# Patterns of Media Response to a Crisis: The First 72 Hours

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## 10 – 12 hours

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- Reporters hear police radios and are often the first on the scene of a critical incident.
- Reporters will grab anyone willing to talk.
- Media tries to answer, *“What happened?”*
- Results are incomplete and conflicting stories will emerge.
- Media can interfere with police and rescuers responding to the scene.

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## 12 – 24 hours

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- Media tries to answer, *“Who?”*
- Authorities always try to notify the families of the victims before this information is released to the media.
- This effort usually causes conflict with the media’s doing whatever is necessary to find out everything about the victims.

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## 24 – 36 hours

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- Media tends to focus on, *“Why?”*
- Natural reaction in the aftermath is to look for blame.
- Unfortunately, people have their own ideas on this, whether they have the facts or not.
- Facts aren’t always corroborated.
- Victim confusion often leads to stories that are sensational, but the critical incident may not have happened as they initially recall.

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## 36 – 72 hours

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- Media begins more in-depth analysis with, *“What happened?”* and *“Why?”*
- A new “spin” may be put on the initial stories.
- These spin-off stories take on lives of their own.
- Media may question the efforts of law enforcement and first responders.
- Funeral arrangements and memorials occur during this time frame, offering the crisis team a chance to regroup and recharge.

*Source: Marlene Young, National Organization for Victim Assistance and Rick J. Kaufman, APR, Crisis Management Consultant*