



Primary Communicator Protocol

The Department of Labor Office of Public Affairs
and
The Department of Labor Mine Safety and Health Administration

Section 7 of The Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act of 2006 (MINER Act) requires MSHA to serve as the "primary communicator" with the press, the public, the operator and miners' families following a mine tragedy involving multiple deaths. By Department of Labor Secretarial Order 17-2006, the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (OPA) in consultation with the Assistant Secretary for Mine Safety and Health (MSHA) will provide direction to the "primary communicator" following a mine tragedy involving multiple deaths.

Accordingly, OPA and MSHA agree to the following protocol.

1. Upon notification of a mine accident where multiple miners are trapped, unaccounted for, or multiple fatalities have occurred, MSHA will notify OPA and will provide all pertinent information regarding the incident.
2. OPA should dispatch personnel to the accident site as soon as possible to provide support to MSHA's "primary communicator."
3. OPA and MSHA should jointly develop briefing outlines that will serve to brief the press and the public on a scheduled basis.
4. Briefings with the press and public shall be conducted by the "primary communicator" after the family briefings have been conducted.

This Protocol may be modified at any time by mutual agreement of MSHA and OPA.

This Protocol is agreed to this 22nd day of December, 2006.

Handwritten signature of Richard Stickler in cursive.

Richard Stickler
Assistant Secretary for
Mine Safety and Health

Handwritten signature of Randy Clerihue in cursive.

Randy Clerihue
Assistant Secretary for
Office of Public Affairs

Family Liaison/Primary Communicator

Accident/Illness Investigation Handbook, HQ Mine Emergency Handbook

Upon notification of any mine accident involving multiple deaths or where multiple miners are unaccounted for, the Administrator or his deputy will assign and immediately deploy to the accident site MSHA personnel to serve as Primary Communicator and Family Liaison.

Family Liaison (Liaison)

- Each MSHA District will maintain one or more persons to serve as Liaison to address the needs of a miner's family following a mine accident.
- These persons will be specifically trained to deal with families following mine accidents.
- The Liaison is not a counselor but may be required to coordinate support for family members with crisis management professionals such as the American Red Cross.
- The Liaison will establish a 24 hour a day schedule rotation that ensures that they are available at all times for family members throughout the rescue/recovery operation at the site.
- The Liaison will establish a schedule to brief family members on new and emerging information prior to its release to the public.
- The Liaison will be responsible to coordinate with the Primary Communicator to ensure identical information is released during their respective briefings.
- The Liaison may be responsible to interact with local officials to establish a facility where families may be centrally located.
- Upon completion of the onsite rescue/recovery, the Liaison will ensure that family members continue to be informed regarding status of the Investigation Report and significant issues.
- The Liaison will remain accessible to family members by telephone, cellular phone, email, and conventional mail until the report is delivered to each family.
- The Liaison will maintain a written log that documents all significant events.

- Upon request for Agency documents from family members, the Liaison should coordinate with SOL to ensure the release is appropriate.
- This assignment should be the Liaison's highest priority responsibility from the beginning of the assignment until the investigation is complete and a final report is issued.

Primary Communicator

- Each MSHA District will maintain one or more persons to serve as Primary Communicator to brief representatives' of miners, the mine operator, media and state agencies.
- The Primary Communicator will be responsible to brief Office of Public Affairs (OPA) personnel upon their arrival at the site.
- The Primary Communicator, Liaison, and OPA personnel will jointly develop briefing scripts.
- The Primary Communicator and Liaison will coordinate to ensure that identical information is released to all parties.
- The Primary Communicator and Liaison will ensure that sensitive information is released to family members prior to the public.
- The Primary Communicator will establish contact with representatives of State Agencies, the mine operator, miners' representatives, and the media to facilitate briefings.
- The Primary Communicator will develop a cooperative protocol with State officials to ensure conflicts are avoided.
- The Primary Communicator will establish a 24 hour a day schedule rotation that ensures that they are available at the accident site.
- The Primary Communicator will share new and emerging information with the Liaison at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The Primary Communicator will maintain a log that documents all significant events.
- The rules of FOIA apply to all requests for Agency documents.