Maritime & Coastguard Agency

Spills are Black Gold - for journalists anyway

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

April 2010 USA: Deepwater Horizon

- Huge explosion on BP's Deepwater Horizon oil rig killed 11 people on 20 April 2010
- Initial efforts were to rescue 115 workers from burning rig but as the platform collapsed in to the sea, environmental disaster became apparent
- Estimates of oil discharged vary between 73m and 126m gallons
- Has eclipsed other major oil spills including the Ixtoc in Mexican waters in 1979 and the Gulf war oil spills in 1991

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

It's ok it's the middle of the night

- In a major incident the attention is likely to be immediate, regionally, nationally and internationally
- Sheer numbers of press involved and their demand for information can place great strain on all involved
- It is vital to prepare for the influx of media representatives
- It is vital for press officers from each organisation to make rapid contact
- It is vital to prepare for the rapid number of postings on social media

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

In the midst of chaos

- Failure to consider the media response at an early stage may have serious implications for the management of the whole incident
- Identify agencies involved
- Ensure media activity does not interfere with operational activity
- Ensure media do not harass human casualties
- Identify partners / stakeholders
- Establish hotline numbers

Safer Lives, Safer Ships, Cleaner Seas

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

Liaison, liaison, liaison

- All organisations must see/agree all press releases before they are issued
- Agree a core script. Maintain Q&As
- Identify key spokespeople from each organisation and the areas of responsibility
- Agree or turn down interview bids
- Develop a social media presence
- Monitor social media and respond where appropriate

Safer Lives, Safer Ships, Cleaner Seas

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

Facing up to questions

- Who will talk to the media?
- What can you say?

- Press conferences- when, where?
- How often will you update?

- What access / pictures can you offer?
- What background can you give?

- What can you post on social media?

Safer Lives, Safer Ships, Cleaner Seas

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

What the traditional media want

- Pictures – from nearest location (safe place to be identified)
- Interviews – live and pre-recorded
- PR contacts - accessible, informed
- Frequent updates
- Video footage

- If access, interviews and info NOT forthcoming, media WILL hunt them and grab them off social media postings

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

The news process

- Rethinking the 'inverted pyramid'

- Speed
- Interactivity
- Control & depth

- Willing to publish first drafts and refine later

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

Media – so much more social

http://garstontowers.blogspot.co.uk/2013/04/graphs-of-uk-newspaper-circulation.html

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

Local rules

Safer Lives, Safer Ships, Cleaner Seas

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

OfficialTwitter; 8520

Safer Lives, Safer Ships, Cleaner Seas

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

Official Facebook; 38,731

Safer Lives, Safer Ships, Cleaner Seas

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

Unofficial Sources: 172,000

- Just hours after news broke of the Deepwater Horizon explosion the first 'boycott BP' tweets could be found on Twitter and Facebook
- In May the campaign was the fastest growing account on Twitter
- On 28th May there were 293 anti-BP campaign accounts on Twitter and Facebook. The Boycott BP Facebook page had a following of more then 172,000 people. This had grown by 54,000 since CNN reported on it two days earlier

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

Credibility Still Needed

- *Amy Winehouse has died……really?*
- *The Sun*, in common with all other mainstream media, drew short of immediately stating online that the singer was dead, while the proper editorial checks were made. Twitter meanwhile was awash with the news straight away.
- Then something very interesting happened. People began to tweet the fact that they didn't believe Amy was dead, because it hadn't been reported by the traditional news media.

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

Online reaction in a crisis

Alerting, situational awareness

↓

Emotional response, anger, empathy

↓

Investigation, understanding, research, accountability

↓

Recovery, normalisation, humour, acceptance

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

Crisis statements: key components

- 1. Details
- 2. Sympathy
- 3. Reassurance
- 4. What are we doing about it?
- 5. Our good reputation
- 6. When more info will be available
- 7. Contact details
- 8. Background information

Safer Lives, Safer Ships, Cleaner Seas

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

HOEGH OSAKA

- 224 media enquiries
- 19 press releases with updates
- held 5 press conferences
- Results - generated 15 pages of Google news results
- The story was covered on National, international and regional media
- Tweeted updates 28 times (re-tweets 509 =high level of engagement)
- no negative comments.

Safer Lives, Safer Ships, Cleaner Seas

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

Top Tips

- Start press conferences at H + 3 mins exactly
- Consider pooled interviews
- Provide TV filming opportunities
- Provide video footage
- Managed access to rescuers / survivors
- Keep HQ press offices staffed
- Stay on 24 hour call
- Monitor social media and respond

Safer Lives, Safer Ships, Cleaner Seas