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## Tell the media you will call back

■ *"Listen, I don't want to mislead you. I want to give you the exact facts. What is your deadline? I will get back to you."*

Remember this phrase. Jot it down. Keep it handy. It might keep you from saying something to the media you'll regret, says John D. Fox of Strategic Communications, Riverside, Calif.

Keep your promise, though. Return the call.

"You can make a friend out of that reporter. You can even build a pretty good image for yourself and your organization by being an expert, a good source," says Fox.

Here are some other crisis communication tips Fox gave golf course superintendents at the GCSAA Convention in Anaheim, Calif., this past January:

- Review the types of crises that might affect your business or vocation. "Most can be anticipated, not in particular, but in general," he says.

- Develop a plan ("a crash book") to deal with crises. Your staff should help you put it together.

- Keep internal communications healthy. "The worst thing that can happen in any organization in a crisis is to have everybody running off in all directions," Fox says.

- Appoint someone that is knowledgeable and articulate—it could be yourself—to be the spokesperson for your organization. "Then, ask your people, 'Please, don't talk to other people until you've told me, and let me decide on it,'" advises Fox.

- Be aware of what's going on around you and your company: environmental, political, social and economic. "Right now the public is in a pretty grumpy mood," he says.

- Keep your message simple and positive. "The media are not experts," says Fox. "They are generalists. They react to

situations very much like the public."

Fox has been a reporter, photographer, news director, and he most recently worked in communications with the University of California Division of Agricultural and Natural Resources.

—Ron Hall

**The media are looking for an excuse to give you some bad publicity. Don't give them one.**

