

Grieving families and media grief

Major aviation accident considerations and challenges

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Intended route

Grieving Families

- Needs reviewed
- Current developments and responses
- Challenges and considerations

Media Grief

- Emerging impact of Twitter and social media
- General media trends
- Challenges and considerations

Pre-flight

- Personal reflections from observation, research and training - not Commission policy
- Compilation rather than origination, acknowledging NTSB events and materials in particular
- Please help make this a discussion of relevance

Grieving families

- Family structure/fracture
- Cultural/religious
- Language
- Financial
- Interpersonal/coping skills
- Legal paradigms
- Political interaction
- Diplomatic overlay

Families' interactions

- Operator call centre
- Operator care teams
- Operator management
- Operator personal effects
- Police
- DVI police/coroner/team – victims and personal effects
- Hospitals, rehab and other providers
- Regulator
- Accident investigator
- Airport
- Travel insurer
- Accident Compensation Corp
- Ministry of Social Development
- Victim support and similar
- Consular services
- Funeral director and related
- Lawyers
- Other families
- Own family
- Work places / educational institutions
- Politicians
- Transport, accommodation, meals, child care, pet care
- Social media
- News media

Families' needs

- Information, explanation, accountability – accident and subsequent processes
- Remains and property – notification, location, identification, return
- Privacy, protection, grieving and psychosocial support
- Logistical and financial support – location, funeral, investigation, memorials
- Structure – “getting through”, rebuilding certainty, allowing planning, reference points, co-ordination

Families organise (associations)

- Sharing experience
- Channelling energy and emotion
- Social media enabled
- Providing confident public voice
- Honouring the dead
- Proxy / conduit for later communications
- Securing “justice” / accountability / compensation
- Delivering safety outcomes

ICAO circ 285 Guidance on Assistance to Victims and their Families

- “...to ensure that the mental, physical and spiritual well-being of aircraft accident victims and their families are considered and accommodated by ICAO and Contracting States”
- Being rearranged/updated to incorporate learnings from past decade
- Intended to influence standardisation of families support
- Committee wrapping up redraft shortly

ICAO circ 285 Guidance on Assistance to Victims and their Families

- Family assistance separate from the investigation.
- IIC must remain focused.
- IIC responsibility to provide relevant timely info.

Different models

- China - CAAC hands on, operator provides “material and mental” assistance
- USA - Specific assurances required for AOC issue (and 24hr post-x check for retention), NTSB mandated to co-ordinate, Victim Support Tasks assigned, Federal family assistance plan.
- EU - ERP at state level to include families component, airlines to have plans including psychosocial support for victims and families

Different models

- Australia - AOC requires SMS approved by CASA, SMS to include an ERP with families and media components. Voluntary Family Assistance code with airline responsibilities:
 - Appointment of Family Support Co-ordinator
 - Infrastructure requirements
 - Information management
 - Financial, logistical, emotional support

Different models

- NZ -

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Media grief

- Example media coverage

Media grief

- Cameras everywhere – Pike River entrance video
- Generational divide – Wellywood protest
- Access and immediacy
- Babes in the woods – inexperienced staff given international audience
- Babes talking about the woods – reporters in the story
- Visible, visiting political leadership
- Social media

Just what is Twitter

- Microblogging on smartphone etc
- @tweeter #tags
- Follow and followers
- Exponential sharing, amplified by main media pick-up
- Aviation uses, examples, effort

Other social media

- Facebook
 - Media post pix/vid; comments threads
 - pprune
- As these are anonymous forums the origins of the contributions may be opposite to what may be apparent. In fact the press may use it, or the unscrupulous, or sciolists*, to elicit certain reactions.*
- *"sciolist"... Noun, archaic. "a person who pretends to be knowledgeable and well informed".

Implications

- Notification / responsiveness
- Evidence
 - Witness
 - Participant
 - Physical
 - Hearsay
- Rumour, theory, herd/mob
- Media credibility/reliance
- Political pressure
- Competency to monitor and engage

Conclusions

- NZ needs to consider its readiness to cope with the families' needs from a major accident, particularly co-ordination and care responsibilities mandated of airlines elsewhere.
- SMS adoption, Circ 285 refresh, with Pike River / Canterbury experience surely provide good opportunities to update our approach.
- Accident investigation needs to consider how it will embrace and use social media.