



National  
Multiple Sclerosis  
Society  
Greater Illinois  
Chapter

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## Crisis Plan and Media Guidelines 2013 Walk MS – Greater Illinois Chapter

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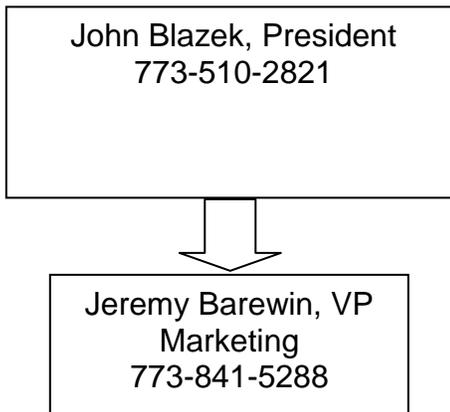
The media have been invited to cover festivities during the Walk MS. This type of coverage places the Chapter and our mission in a positive light in front of important audiences. It gives us the opportunity to talk about the good things that the National MS Society does to create a world free of MS.

The point person for general media interview will be different for each site. **However, in the case of an emergency at any walk location the only people to address the media are John Blazek - (773) 510-2821 and Jeremy Barewin - 773-841-5288.**

For **general** media inquiries the Media Point person is listed below:

<u>Bloomington:</u>	<u>Nicole Campen: 309-303-5877</u>
<u>Chicago Lakefront:</u>	<u>Jeremy Barewin: 773-841-5288</u>
<u>Joliet:</u>	<u>Jorge Zendejas: 773-750-5684</u>
<u>McHenry:</u>	<u>Meagan Kehoe: 847-271-4990</u>
<u>Naperville:</u>	<u>Zachary Cheek: 312-402-3812</u>
<u>North Shore:</u>	<u>Coleen Friedman: 847-533-3033</u>
<u>Northwest:</u>	<u>Erin Bickus: 630-740-4204</u>
<u>Rockford:</u>	<u>Crystal Sewell 630-995-1970</u>
<u>South Suburbs:</u>	<u>Nicole Sammartino 630-415-8003</u>
<u>Springfield:</u>	<u>Anne Abbott: 217-493-8747</u>
<u>St. Charles:</u>	<u>Elle Ullum: 310-913-3175</u>

# CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS TEAM PHONE TREE



## **Fatal or Catastrophic Event:**

John Blazek (773)510-2821 or Jeremy Barewin (773)841-5288 to call home Office Staff via emergency number:

***1-888-NMSS-911 (1-888-6677-911)***

Liability Insurance Provider: Marsh USA, Inc. – 213-345-6000

## **Walk MS Safety/Crisis/ Inclement Weather Plan**

**This plan details the course of action to be taken in the event of a serious incident or crisis during Walk MS**

### The goal of the plan:

- To react to incidents in a professional, timely and safe manner, regardless of the level of severity
- To preserve the reputation of the National MS Society, Greater Illinois Chapter
- To provide accurate, appropriate information to audiences, control the message and maintain effective relationships with those audiences

### The objectives of the plan:

- Deliver appropriate, timely information to chapter staff
- Deliver appropriate, timely information to non-staff members who are affiliated with the National MS Society, GIC, including board members, volunteers and national office staff

- Deliver appropriate, timely information to other concerned audiences, including family and friends of the victim, sponsors, and event participants
- Limit media coverage to one news cycle

#### Key messages to impart:

- Safety is our number one priority at the National MS Society. We provide participants with support throughout the event. We want participants to have a positive experience as they do their part to create a world free of multiple sclerosis.
- *Director of Communications to develop other messages when specific events or crises occur.*

#### **What is a Crisis?**

A crisis is an event that occurs suddenly and unexpectedly, and often creates stress and uncertainty. It interferes with normal routines and *demand*s a quick response.

A crisis can be a natural event, such as an earthquake or hurricane, or it can be man-made, such as a terrorist attack, scandal, protest or accident. Ultimately, all crises can threaten the reputation of an organization. However, if a crisis is well managed it not only can preserve reputations, but may even enhance them.

The key to effective crisis communication is to be prepared before one occurs. During an emergency, there is little time to think, much less to plan. That is why it is imperative that *YOU* become familiar with the following information. This plan includes information on managing accidents and injuries, inclement weather and protests.

#### **THE SITUATIONS TEAM(S)**

Two Situations Teams have been identified to handle emergency situations at each Walk MS site. Team 1 should be used first, and Team 2 should be used if Team 1 is already dealing with an emergency or is otherwise not immediately available. Each team includes a PR/Chapter Spokesperson and Hospital Liaison (to accompany or meet a participant/volunteer/staff to the hospital if necessary).

**Event /  
Situations  
Team  
Assignments**

Site	Event Leadership	Situation Team 1	Event Leadership 2	Situation Team 2
Bloomington	Nicole Campen	Hospital liaison	Get from Nicole	
	Jayne Carlson	Site Lead	Get from Nicole	
	Michael VanOost	Registration / Accounting Lead	Get from Nicole	
Chicago	Monica Eiden	Site Lead	Adam Disler	Site Lead
	Jocelyn Cheng	Hospital liaison	Tarin Lorenz	Hospital Liaison
	JoAnn Fisher	Registration / Accounting Lead	Jesse Aynes	Registration / Accounting Lead
Joliet	ABI	Site Lead	Lori Julen	Registration / Accounting Lead
	Jorge Zendejas	Hospital liaison	Hospital liaison	Steve Williams
	Steve Williams	Registration / Accounting Lead	ABIL	Site Lead
McHenry	Kendall Hugel	Site Lead	ABI	Site Lead/Registration
	Meagan Kehoe	Hospital liaison	Kelly Boyd (Committee)	Hospital Liaison
	Sue Jennings	Registration / Accounting Lead		
Northwest	Erin Bickus	Site Lead	ABI	Site Lead/Registration
	Shannon Turner (Committee)	Registration / Accounting Lead	Cie Pace	Registration / Accounting Lead
	Melissa Gonzalez	Hospital liaison	Karie McClure	Hospital Liaison
North Shore	Samantha Edidin	Site Lead	Kelley Moran	Site Lead
	Coleen Friedman	Hospital liaison	Jill Robisch	Hospital Liaison
	Nedra Bell	Registration / Accounting Lead	Sandra Bronson	Registration / Accounting Lead
Rockford	Charlie Blazeovich	Site Lead	Christine Gillete	Site Lead
	Crystal Sewall	Hospital liaison	Mark Seeberg	Registration / Accounting Lead
	Danae Wothe	Registration / Accounting Lead	Charlie Blazeovich	Hospital Liaison
South Suburbs	Nicole Sammartino	Registration / Accounting Lead	Lori Carroll	Registration / Accounting Lead
	Vanessa Jackson	Hospital liaison	ABI	Site Lead
			Mike Carroll	Hospital Liaison
Springfield	Anne Abbott (Site Lead)	Hospital liaison	Kathy Chatterton	Registration / Accounting Lead
	Ruth Blaskovich	Registration / Accounting Lead	Sister Marie	Hospital Liaison
St. Charles	Melissa Foley	Registration / Accounting Lead	Matt Mahina	Registration / Accounting Lead
	Elle Ullum	Hospital liaison	Joe Siok	Hospital Liaison
	ABI	Site Lead	ABI	Site Lead
West Suburbs	Zachary Cheek	Site Lead	Laura Begley	Registration / Accounting Lead
	Marlene Pagan	Registration / Accounting Lead	Mary Ellen Meisenheimer	Hospital Liaison
	Chris Collins	Hospital liaison	ABI	Site Lead

## Handling Inclement Weather

- Only the Chapter President (or most senior member of the on-site staff), can authorize the postponement, re-locating, or cancellation of the event due to inclement weather.
- Our event does not have an alternative date. As long as there are no dangerous conditions preventing the event from starting on time because of transportation system issues (severe rain emergency, lightning, tornado, etc), participants will be expected to start at the assigned start time.
- In the event of an event cancellation due to severe inclement weather, we will do the following to notify event participants:
  1. Inform them over the PA sound system (as well as using bullhorns) from our event stage.
  2. Event staff/volunteers will roam the site informing participants with Bull Horns.
  3. Event staff will be on golf carts (where available) notifying participants who are walking along the route.
  4. Participants will be directed to covered shelter at the following parking garages:

## Chicago - Shelters

**Grant Park North Garage:** The two automobile entrances for the Grant Park North Garage are on North Michigan Avenue between Monroe Street (from the south, heading north) and Randolph Street (from the north, heading south). The garage has a height clearance of 6'6" and a total of 1,850 parking spaces.

**Grant Park South Garage:** The automobile entrances for the Grant Park South Garage are on South Michigan Avenue between Congress Parkway (from the south, heading north) and Jackson Street (from the north, heading south). The garage has a height clearance of 6'8" and a total of 1,350 parking spaces.

**East Monroe Street Garage:** The automobile entrance for the Monroe Garage is on South Columbus Drive between Monroe Street (from the south, heading north) and Randolph Street (from the north, heading south). The garage has a height clearance of 6'8" and a total of 3,850 parking spaces.

**Millennium Park Garage:** The automobile entrance for the Millennium Garage is on South Columbus Drive between Monroe Street (from the south, heading north) and Randolph Street (from the north, heading south). The garage has a height clearance of 6'8" and a total of 2,126 parking spaces.

## OVERVIEW – IMMEDIATE STEPS TO TAKE DURING A CRISIS

## NON-SERIOUS INJURY GUIDELINES

For injuries like skinned knees, twisted ankles or tired walkers; if participant is on route please communicate to ABI staff member via walk talkie or cell phone that assistance is needed on the route – ABI will arrange for a vehicle or golf cart to transport participant to First Aid tent. If participant is on site – please escort to First Aid Tent.

### **SERIOUS INJURY GUIDELINES**

If you witness a **SERIOUS INJURY**, or are the first person on the scene of a serious injury, please follow this procedure:

1. Secure the scene. **DO NOT MOVE** the person(s) involved. Do not touch, change or move the scene. Freeze-frame the scene.
2. **CALL 911**. Administer emergency/first-aid care **IF AND ONLY IF** you are qualified. There will be a CPR certified Nurse at each Walk MS location. \*Refer to your site's First Aid list
3. **CALL Site lead** and report:
  - A. Your name
  - B. Your location
  - C. Severity of incident
  - D. Number of people involved
4. Provide crowd and traffic control. Designate a person to direct traffic away from the area and keep crowd from gathering.

### **KEEP YOUR OWN SAFETY IN MIND AT ALL TIMES.**

**DO NOT ASSUME ANYTHING. Do not disclose any information (type of injury, names, etc.) to the media or anyone else. Do not disclose participants name or communicate any information via text.** This leads to liability problems, rumors and misinformation. There are National MS Society officials designated to handle emergency situation information and the media.

### **IN THE EVENT OF DEATH OR SERIOUS INJURY CALL 911**

1. First Responder will alert all key staff onsite: Make sure to turn off public radio communications and talk only via cell phones or private radio lines – not through text messaging. Alert the following staff members immediately, and Chapter President will inform Home Office staff:
  1. Call John Blazek – 773-510-2821
  2. Call Jeremy Barewin 773-841-5288
2. Staff Lead will work with appropriate authorities to inform family of accident and have someone available to offer support, express concern and to advise that a police report is being filed. There will be a registration report that provides each registered participants contact information, and emergency contact.
3. Find out when the police will release information.
4. Talk to family about what will be publicly released and also what the family wants released from the Society.

5. Identified Situations Team staff member will be with injured person or family members on-site and at hospital.
6. Make sure staff member gathers participant's personal items to bring to family.
7. Do not provide name of injured to media. The appropriate authorities (police/hospital administration) make the name public after the next of kin is informed.
8. Have talking points in-hand to respond to media, staff, event participants and volunteers.
  1. "I do not have that information, but I can refer you to our Vice President of Marketing & Community Engagement, and he will talk with you.
9. Have one or two people ready to respond to media queries. This will control the message.
  1. Direct Media inquiries to Jeremy Barewin - Do not talk yourself, please see above.
  2. Never accept responsibility
10. Submit accident/incident report to home office/risk management the first business day after chapter event.
  1. Documentation is key to any accident or injury. Given the litigious society we're living in even a scraped knee can turn into a lawsuit.
  2. One of the most important things to do is document all injuries no matter how minor they appear to be.
  3. It is important that staff persons complete an accident report form for all accidents/injuries including the form for any individual who refuses medical attention. Be specific!

### **INCIDENT - CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS Walk MS - 2013**

Event spokespeople, key volunteers and staff members should refer to these procedures in case of death, serious injury or response to negligent/property damage during the Walk MS.

- I. The media spokespeople for Walk MS are John Blazek and Jeremy Barewin. John will make all media statements; Jeremy will prepare all statements and contact the media for potential press conferences.

In an emergency, immediately notify John Blazek **(773) 510-2821**. If you are unable to get a hold of John Blazek, immediately contact Jeremy Barewin **(773) 841-5288**. John and Jeremy will work with event lead, Monica Eiden to address the crisis.

ALL DISCUSSION ABOUT ACCIDENTS WILL BE DONE IN PRIVATE ON CELL PHONES ONLY, AND NOT THROUGH TEXT MESSAGE or HAM RADIO OPERATORS.

**Note:** If a representative of the media arrives in response to an accident or injury tell him/her that

"We are currently gathering the facts and assessing the situation. Our Chapter president, or Vice President of Marketing, will be prepared to answer your questions in about 30 minutes."

Immediately place a call to Jeremy. Provide the reporter with Jeremy's cell number (773-841-5288) as well.

- II. Remember to begin documenting everything for future review and evaluation. It's difficult to remember details later so try to jot down notes for you to prepare a report after the event.
  
- II. If the event is still in progress and other participants start to hear about the fatality, it is important that chapter staff help to maintain order and a sense of stability, despite the unfortunate circumstances. Please use the same tone and language as the statement below to address participants concerns – assure them that the chapter is addressing the situation and working with appropriate authorities, while still focusing on the safety of all participants and also reaching out to comfort and assist the family involved with the tragedy.

***MS INJURY STATEMENT - MEDIA***  
**FOR GREATER ILLINOIS CHAPTER SPOKESPEOPLE**  
***(to be read to the media)***

**NOTE: DON'T RELEASE NAMES OF INJURED WALKER(S) UNLESS PREVIOUSLY RELEASED BY HOSPITAL OR AUTHORITIES.**

("We're sorry; we can't release our Walk MS participant's name until we're sure his or her family has been notified).

- We are saddened to report that [INSERT WHEN], there was a serious accident/fatality at the Walk MS, a fundraising event benefiting the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Greater Illinois Chapter. Our sympathies and support go out to the family who is coping with the grief of this unfortunate accident/tragedy.
- The Greater Illinois Chapter is working with the appropriate authorities to investigate the situation and will provide the public with additional information should it be necessary. Our primary concerns are, and continue to be, our efforts to ensure the safety of our event participants as well as helping the family through this difficult time. Please keep the family in your thoughts and prayers.
- We wish to thank the local emergency department (name the department / city /officers if known) who responded quickly to our walker's needs.
- Walk MS is one of the National MS Society's largest fundraising events and is expected to raise \$2.7 million here in Illinois and over \$55 million nationwide. The proceeds fund MS research and local programs to improve the quality of life for the 20,000 individuals living with MS and their loved ones.

**FAST FACTS TO HAVE ON-HAND:**

**About the MS Society**

- MS stops people from moving. The National MS Society exists to make sure it doesn't.
- The National MS Society, Greater Illinois Chapter addresses the challenges of each person living with MS in and raises funds for vital programs and services, as well as research for better treatments and a cure.
- The National Multiple Sclerosis Society helps people with MS move forward with their lives by supporting more MS research, offering more services for people with MS, providing more

professional education programs and furthering more MS advocacy efforts than any other MS organization in the world.

### **About multiple sclerosis**

- Locally, the Greater Illinois Chapter serves more than 20,000 people living with MS.
- Multiple sclerosis usually is diagnosed in the prime of life, when people are building careers and starting families.
- Multiple sclerosis is an unpredictable, chronic, often disabling disease of the central nervous system. Symptoms may be mild, such as numbness in the limbs, or severe, such as paralysis or impaired vision. The progress, severity and specific symptoms of MS in any one person cannot yet be predicted, but advances in research and treatment are moving us closer to a world free of the disease.

***MS PROPERTY DAMAGE STATEMENT - MEDIA***  
**FOR GREATER ILLINOIS CHAPTER SPOKESPEOPLE**  
***(to be read to the media)***

- During the course of the Walk MS this weekend, we were notified by our volunteers of damage to property near (or in) \_\_\_\_\_ (name of community).  
(Briefly describe damage if appropriate – was it unavoidable or intentional?)  

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- Our staff leader immediately notified authorities in \_\_\_\_\_ (city), who responded quickly to the incident. We trust that \_\_\_\_\_ (city) authorities will handle the situation properly and we appreciate their quick response and will work closely with them to resolve any future problems.
- Walk MS, one of the National MS Society's largest fundraising events, is expected to raise more than \$55 million nationwide. The proceeds fund MS research and local programs to improve the quality of life for the 20,000 Illinoisans living with MS and their loved ones.
- We regret this incident and ask that it not overshadow the good and important work of the vast majority of our participants who are committed to create a world free of MS.

## **MAKING PUBLIC STATEMENTS IN A CRISIS:**

- Always show concern. This is not being defensive, it is being human. Never be defensive. This doesn't mean you admit you're wrong, but don't look for excuses.
- Always talk from point of view of public (representing the Society)
- Don't use jargon or euphemisms
- Be brief
- Be clear and consistent
- Don't speculate. "I can't answer that because that would be speculating."
- Always tell the truth from the Society's point of view
- Be sure if there are reportorial errors, to correct them if another story appears
- Never say, "No comment." If you can't say something, tell why you can't
- Never go "off the record." There is no such thing!
- When answering a question, never repeat inflammatory statements or words the reporter uses. (Rather than "I'm not a crook!" say, "I'm honest!")

### **The following statements are not for distribution publicly, but should serve as talking points and background:**

If a reporter or another event participant asks you a question about safety, you should refer them to the designated spokesperson for your chapter. You would say "I do not have that information at hand, but I can refer you to the person at our chapter, who does and he/she will talk with you."

Safety is a top priority at the National MS Society. We want to make sure participants have a positive experience walking to help end multiple sclerosis. INCLUDE ONE TO TWO SENTENCES ON SAFETY PROCEDURES, ex: "We check the route thoroughly and have trained individuals stationed..."

#### **If there is an incident or fatality:**

##### **Was there an accident?**

Yes, there was an incident.

##### **Can you tell me about it?**

At this time we cannot release any further information. It is our policy to not release specific details on any incident or on the condition of the walker without proper consent from the authorities, individual or family.

At this time, we are doing everything we can to support the walker and his/her family and ensure the ongoing safety of our participants.

Safety is a top priority at the National MS Society. We want to make sure participants have a positive experience walking to help end multiple sclerosis.

#### **If pressed about the severity of the situation:**

[if the injury is minor] I can tell you that the injuries are not considered serious at this time.

[if the injury is major and you are asked specifically] I am not a health care professional and do not want to speculate on their condition. Because of health privacy laws, the emergency personnel were not able to disclose that information to me.

## **How are other event participants dealing with this situation?**

The Walk MS participants are like a family, so our participants have been concerned. But we're all here to help end multiple sclerosis, and walkers are keeping this important cause in mind.

## **If asked how many fatalities/serious accidents have occurred at past Walk MS events in your chapter, the following statement should provide appropriate context:**

As we've been holding our Walk MS since 1988, I don't have a figure at my fingertips though I do know that it is extremely small. Please let me get back to you with an answer on that question.

**NOTE:** If a reporter asks about the total number of deaths across all events, please say: "I do not have that information but can connect you to someone at our national office." And reach out to **Arney Rosenblat**: 212-476-0436 (office number) or **Becca Kornfeld**: 212-476-0484 (office number).

Remember: Do not offer more information than is needed to answer a question, even if a reporter pauses and waits for you to continue speaking.

## **MEDIA INTERVIEW TIPS**

- **Approach every media interview with three clear message points** and then make them.
- **Prepare for every interview.** Know the chapter's facts.
- **No matter what the question, you can always give your key message points.** For example, you could say --

"First I want to be sure that people understand ---."

- OR -

"To answer that I need to put this into perspective ---."

Then go on with your key message.

- **Never become confrontational.** Don't allow yourself to be drawn into an argument with interviewers or other people being interviewed.

1. Just stay cool and collected, and remember your three key message points.
2. Practice ahead of time

And remember, it is extremely rare for journalists to be confrontational when interviewing not-for-profit groups. They generally try to help us achieve our goals!

## **Social media communication**

It is likely that any major events will be talked about in local social media channels. Ensure that a staff member is monitoring your chapter and event Facebook pages and twitter feeds immediately and is prepared with appropriate responses (Jeremy Barewin and Michael Doyle to monitor). Again, this should be reactive only – please do not announce an incident. Social media responses should be similar to the talking points for traditional media listed above.

- If the name of the injured individual is posted, delete the message immediately.

- Do not reveal details of the incident.
- Should a response be needed – for example if someone posts a newspaper article link reporting on the incident, respond to messages with sympathy and refrain from answering questions until official details have been released by your media relations team. You can use language from talking points like „On behalf of everyone at the National MS Society, our sympathies and support are with the family who is coping with the grief of this unfortunate tragedy. Out of respect for the family, we request that you refrain from discussing this on our Facebook page.” Remember that updates and tweets must be succinct- we recommend you prepare messaging in advance and have it available in the event a response is needed.
- Ensure readers that your chapter is doing everything you can to support the injured individual, their family members, friends, and team mates.

**# # #**