



Advice for Media during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Pandemic – Broadcasting Brief

This internal guidance was produced by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) to help ABC content makers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ABC International Development is sharing this guidance in case it is useful for adaptation by other media organisations in our region.

Please remember that this guidance is not official medical or legal advice and should not be treated as such. Any advice must be adapted to local country contexts, taking account of your government's laws, rules and guidelines. In the event of a conflict between this guidance and local laws, the local laws will prevail. This guidance should not replace official advice from your usual sources of health or legal information.

Pandemic

An outbreak or unusually high occurrence of a disease or illness in a population or area (an epidemic) which has spread across multiple countries (including your own).

For all levels

Refer to senior editorial staff to adjust updates times and frequency on editorial judgement, including stopping coverage when audience is well informed, and any decisions to unpin social posts.

What people need/want to know

- Information about the disease
- Symptoms and testing procedures
- Risk groups and vulnerable people
- Minimising risks and behavioural advice e.g. hand washing practices, using face masks
- How to plan for a pandemic
- How to self-isolate - including where/how to get help
- Ways to reduce panic and anxiety
- How to find out more information
- Other unforeseen and yet to be identified impacts

Phase	What's happening	What to do on Radio	What to do on Social
Initial response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small number of cases in your country • Information scarce • Agencies preparing for escalation • No vaccine/antivirals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create awareness of the disease in normal programs and news bulletins • Play Community Service Announcements (CSAs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post on editorial value - be mindful of tone, avoid panic • Monitor comments carefully • Promote main platform for information
Targeted response Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government agencies start taking targeted action to reduce cases • Person to person transmission likely in your country • Increase in community concern and disruption to social and economic life including reducing travel and large gatherings • Some panic buying of goods and medicines • Social distancing encouraged, some high-risk people in self isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use HEALTH INFO: ALERT audio sting at start of updates • Broadcast Health Information updates into programs at peak listening times • Play 1 CSA per program • Keep tone calm and controlled • Don't speculate, just the facts • Concentrate on crucial and useful information (frequent use of casualty and new case numbers may increase panic) • Broadcast national and relevant state/territory press conferences (e.g. Prime Minister, Ministers, Chief Medical Officer) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post on impact, disruption and editorial value • Include links to advice or warnings from relevant agencies • Summarise new rules e.g. "What you need to know" posts • Share posts and user-generated content where appropriate • Be mindful of tone, avoid panic • Tweet links to official advice/warnings from agencies
Targeted response Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spikes in the disruption to life in a community and/or region • Schools and childcare centres close, social isolation increasing, tighter restrictions on events and gatherings • Many people working from home, more people in self isolation due to possible exposure • Calls to Emergency number and presentations to Emergency Departments may exceed capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AS ABOVE, but updates should be every 3 hours into programs (including peak listening times) • Play 1 CSA per update and one per program • Broadcast national and relevant state/territory press conferences featuring Prime Minister, Ministers, Chief Medical Officer etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AS ABOVE plus if a region or city is experiencing significant disruption, pin Facebook post to top of page • Update and summarise information, including links to relevant health agencies • Stream relevant press conferences live • Include links to coverage on other platforms

Phase	What's happening	What to do on Radio	What to do on Social
Targeted response Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widespread and ongoing disruption to social and economic life (as above) Official quarantine messages for specific locations or regions Official rationing of supplies may be introduced Management of mass casualties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AS ABOVE, but updates should be <u>hourly</u> into programs Refer up to senior staff to adjust update times and frequency on editorial judgement Quarantine messages should be read ASAP and twice hourly until audience is well informed Consider rolling coverage when information is changing rapidly, multiple regions/cities are severely disrupted, news is breaking and there is a high volume of advice/warnings etc Play 1 x CSA per hour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AS ABOVE
Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The public health threat can now be managed with normal arrangements Monitor for a second wave of outbreaks Transition back to normal life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadcast information about the end of targeted responses to the pandemic Broadcast program and news content on recovery efforts and Life returning to normal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share information and generate posts indicating the threat has passed Create posts to assist people in the transition back to normal life

Social media tips

- Post information that helps the audience prepare for and respond to a pandemic
- Maintain a neutral tone without the use of emotive language
- Avoid posting every news article or a running tally of cases as this may lead to warning fatigue and/or increased anxiety
- Use BREAKING NEWS graphics only for urgent and very important posts
- Avoid the use of colour like red, orange, yellow in graphics unless posts are urgent and very important