

KEY MESSAGES ARE IMPORTANT BECAUSE:

- People (including journalists) don't remember very much of what you say
- Any part of an interview can be edited and used

YOUR KEY MESSAGES:

- **The 2 or 3 most important points you want to get across to that audience**
- **Simple** - avoid jargon and long words. You may only have 10 secs – or 30 words
- **Memorable** - something that catches people's imaginations
- **Positive but true** – don't let them come back and trip you up later... “this will never happen again...”
- **Relevant** to your audience. Who are they? Specialist or general? (Utility Week magazine v BBC Radio Newcastle)
- **Relevant / appropriate** to the situation. Be careful with values and mission statements. They can sound especially odd or uncaring (e.g. to say “we are award winning” - when 3,000 homes have lost supply)
- You must deliver them **authentically**. Be aware of your **tone**
- The key messages must be **consistent** across your organisation and partners (if applicable) and within any **guidelines** you have
- You **MUST** deliver your key messages! You should repeat them several times
- Use **A + 1** to get one of your key messages in, where **A** is the answer (or just acknowledgement), **+** is a **bridge/ link** phrase and **1** is one of your key messages
- The link phrase is something like “what's really important here” or “what we are concerned about” or “what I can tell you is”
- Don't say “**no comment**”. It looks like you don't care or are hiding something
- Rather than saying ‘no comment’, you can use a **holding statement**. Something like: “*It is too early to say at the moment, but we will be investigating*”
- Don't say anything “**off the record**” - even if you are pushed by a journalist

TAKE CARE IN NEGATIVE SITUATIONS:

- It can help to take a soft, rather than defensive, approach to a difficult situation
- The three key messages that can work in negative situations are:
- **CONCERN:** (empathy) “*We realise many people have been inconvenienced by losing their gas supply*”
- **ACTION:** “*We are doing what we can to get their supply back*”
- **REASSURANCE:** “*Everyone should be back on by tomorrow evening*”
- BUT be careful not to overpromise!
- Think how this sounds compared with what you might be tempted to say:
- **DO NOT SAY:** “*We are working as hard as we can and I've been up all night trying to sort this. If people just left us alone, we could get on with the job!*”