Tips on handling a crush of in-bound media requests

Handling the media during a crisis is a form of triage. It is critical to decide what should be done and what can wait and to make time to care for the crisis responders. There will be many competing demands for your attention. Don't be drawn into distractions. Make smart choices and prioritize your very valuable time. Below are some top tips.

**DESIGNATE A GATEKEEPER**
Choose someone to handle all inbound requests. Prioritize reasonable outlets, outlets with larger audiences, and outlets targeting audiences that you think are most critical. Be very careful about hostile outlets and NEVER send an inexperienced spokesperson to a hostile broadcast outlet.

**DESIGNATE SPEAKERS**
Make sure only a few people are designated as spokespeople. These spokespeople need to be prepared with talking points and use each opportunity to proactively drive your chosen messages. Practice before all broadcast appearances.

**DISTRIBUTE YOUR PREPARED WRITTEN STATEMENT**
A short, simple prepared statement is your best means to deliver your own thoughts, in your own words. Send it to all relevant media outlets. This does not mean that you have to give equal consideration to responses you may receive. Follow the guidelines noted above. The statement allows you to give content to all media outlets while still making your own decisions about priorities.

**REMEMBER THAT YOU DO NOT NEED TO ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS**
When fielding questions from journalists, your top goal is to drive your messages. If you feel a question is off-topic, or wrong, or misguided, simply pivot politely. For example “I think the important thing to emphasize is really that...”

**TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO NEGOTIATE**
The media needs spokespeople to interview. This presents a real opportunity to make some demands in return. Ask journalists for a commitment to cover broader or related issues after the immediate crisis is over. For example, you might ask that they do a segment on the breadth and diversity of the Muslim community or the Muslim LGTBQ community. Similarly, you might ask for a segment with major Muslim and LGBTQ leaders jointly addressing the issue.

**TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF.**
Breath. Take a break to calmly walk around the block and refresh your thoughts. Remember to eat.