

EDITING BREAKING NEWS ONLINE: Getting it right

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Breaking news is a big commodity

In a 2006 story on Poynter.org, business of journalism writer Rick Edmonds wrote:

“As newspapers and TV stations rush headlong to bolster their online offerings, some are blogging, some are not; some embrace citizen content and comment unfiltered, others say they are not going there. Everyone, though, wants breaking news to be a core component that will prompt visitors to return to their sites time after time.”

Seven years later that is even more true.

Breaking news issues for editors

- Does your publication have a breaking news protocol?
- When does posting fast trump editing?
- When should the copy desk serve as the rewrite desk?
- What new skills do you need?

Breaking news plan

- Should there be a plan or is it OK to operate on the fly?
- A plan spells out how to quickly fill roles for a breaking story, including what roles copy editors/web editors will have and who will fill new roles such as social media editor, aggregator, etc.

Breaking news plan

- Having a plan allows a publication to mesh work on all platforms at the same time.
- A plan spells out in advance how editors will fill roles: Who does first reads, who back-edits, who checks for repetition and consistency.

Breaking news plan

If your newsroom doesn't have a breaking news plan, be proactive and suggest developing one.

Then volunteer to be on the development team. Doing so ensures a role for the copy desk in that plan.

Breaking news plan

For more information on how to develop a plan and what should be addressed, see this article on Poynter.org:

“How newsrooms can create a breaking news plan & why it matters”

<http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/newsgathering-storytelling/208635/how-newsrooms-can-create-a-breaking-news-plan-why-it-matters/>

New breaking news story forms

- **The running log story: As information filters in to web editors, line editors or the copy desk, they can do a quick edit and post, then read behind to do a more thorough editing job.**

- **11:10 a.m. Police Chief Kevin Belk identifies all seven victims of mass murder** and their relationships to suspect Rodrick Dantzler.
- **11:05 a.m.** Grand Rapids Mayor **George Heartwell introduces press conference**, mourns with city.
- **11 a.m. Watch live video from today's press conference** with Grand Rapids Police Chief Kevin Belk about Thursday's mass murder tragedy.

Fatal links
Rodrick Dantzler appears to be the only link between two families mourning seven people killed in his rampage.

2046 Plainfield Ave. NE
owned by Patricia M. Dantzler, mother of Amanda and Katherine

1218 Bryant Court NE
owned by Patricia M. Dantzler, mother of Amanda and Katherine

Rodrick Dantzler, 34

Patricia Lynn Dantzler, 32, sister of Katherine Dantzler, 23, former girlfriend of Rodrick

Amanda Dantzler, 23, sister of Katherine Dantzler, 23, former girlfriend of Rodrick

Katherine Dantzler, 23, former girlfriend of Rodrick

Jennifer M. Dantzler, 25, estranged wife of Rodrick Dantzler, 34

Karen Dantzler, 25, daughter of Jennifer Dantzler and Rodrick

Thomas S. Dantzler, 32, Jennifer's father, homeowner

Rebecca L. Dantzler, 32, Jennifer's mother, homeowner

April Dantzler, 25, Jennifer's sister, called police to say he was following her car

[View full size](#) Milt Klingensmith | The Grand Rapids Press

- **9:57 a.m.** Bishop Walter Hurley on Grand Rapids tragedy: **"We extend our prayers."**
- **9:08 a.m.** Grand Rapids Press Editor Paul Keep reflects on the tragedy: **After Rodrick Dantzler's rampage, how can we afford not to have a strong social safety net?**

• **9:10 a.m.** A pickup truck driver stuck in a traffic jam in Grand Rapids says a **titanium plate in his nose kept him from being severely wounded or killed** by a gunman who fatally shot seven people and took his own life.

• **7:45: a.m.** As Grand Rapids begins its first day of mourning for seven murder victims, **a vigil is set for 8:30 p.m. tonight** at Ford Museum, and candles, flowers and teddy bears grace the porch of the Plainfield Avenue home where three were slain.

• **7:20 a.m.** Police have confirmed they will **hold an 11 a.m. press conference** today.

• **7:06 a.m. Mayor Heartwell on murder rampage: 'This has shaken us to the depths'.** offered words of support to families and friends of the seven victims of murder rampage suspect Rodrick Dantzler, who later took his own life.



• **6:35 a.m. MDOT traffic cameras captured some of the massive**

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Coverage of the Fifth and Maple fire as it developed



Posted: Aug 16, 2012 5:25 PM CDT
 Updated: Aug 16, 2012 8:36 PM CDT

THURSDAY, AUG. 16, 7:08 p.m.: "We have been checking on the property to keep it secure. I was down here this morning," Toni Hemming said. The Hemmings bought the building at the end of December and were planning to renovate it and put five living units on each floor, as well as four units in the north structure. Neal Hemming said the house had no electricity in it, so the fire was caused by someone. "We can see a window that's open, that hadn't been open," Neal Hemming said, pointing to the west side of the second floor.

THURSDAY, AUG. 16, 6:46 p.m.: Herald-Whig Staff Writer David Adam says that while firefighters continue to work at the fire and it remains extremely smokey, the blaze is mostly controlled at this time. The bulk of the damage is on the south side of the building, on the north side of Maple. The crowd watching the fire remains large.

THURSDAY, AUG. 16, 6:24 p.m.: Firefighters say the 1870s circa home at Fifth and Maple is expected to be a total loss. Toni and Neal Hemming owned the house that burned at Fifth and Maple had hoped to rehabilitate the property for apartments. Doug Wilson reports that the Hemmings said there was a constant battle to secure the property, which had been a target for arsonists several times. "We were here one night when the police caught some kids trying to burn the new addition," Toni Hemming said.

The couple had been at the property when a group of juveniles tried set fire to a portion of a wooden structure that had recently been added at the northwest corner of the property. Quincy Police apprehended the juveniles.

"We have been checking on the property to keep it secure. I was down here this morning," Toni Hemming said.

Neighbor Shanna Willis who lives across Maple Street from the building was alerted to the fire by her cousin, Jill Bowden, who lives across the corner from the house at the corner of Fifth and Maple.



Fire at Fifth and Maple on Thursday, Aug. 16, 2012. (H-W Photo/Phil Carlson)



Firefighters work the scene of a fire Thursday afternoon at Fifth and Maple. (H-W Photo/Phil Carlson)



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SNOW UPDATE: Small amounts of snow possible Wednesday



Posted: Feb 26, 2013 7:21 AM CST

Updated: Feb 27, 2013 8:17 AM CST

BY THE HERALD-WHIG STAFF

The National Weather Service is forecasting that less than a half inch of snow could fall in Quincy after 1 a.m. Wednesday, as temperatures fall to 28 degrees. Another inch and a half accumulation is expected by Wednesday night, with highs near freezing.

There are chances of flurries on Thursday and Friday, but with little additional accumulation.

Herald-Whig reporters and photographers were out and about Tuesday finding out how people are dealing with the storm that started at around 2 a.m. Monday. Search for #Qweather on Twitter to view several photos from H-W photographers.

5:40 p.m.— Snowfall is dwindling as the storm exits Brown County, Ill.

Paula Garthaus, who works the front desk at the Mount Sterling YMCA, said there were loads of children at the facility late on Tuesday.

"We canceled our evening classes and men's basketball, but we've got a lot of kids," Garthaus said.

She estimated that up to six or eight inches of snow fell in town, but added that road crews did a good job of clearing traffic lanes.

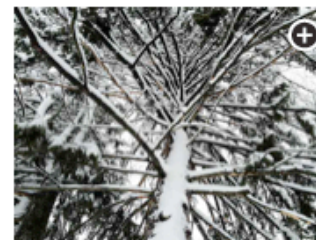
5 p.m. — Shelby County, Mo., got snowfall estimated at seven inches in some places. Deputy Sheriff Eddie Landis said there were spotty power outages near Shelby and Hunnewell lost electric service for a while due to the snow storm.

Highways were in good shape by noon and the Sheriff's Department did not respond to any vehicles off the road.

"It was a little slushy when I came on shift at 10 a.m, but it was pretty clear by noon," Landis said.



A worker uses a snowblower to clear the sidewalk in front of the Marion County Courthouse Tuesday in Hannibal, Mo. (H-W Photo/Phil Carlson)



Taking a look up at snow covered tree in Quincy's South Park. (H-W Photo/Steve Bohnstedt)



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New breaking news story forms

- **Storify or other social media compilation service:** An editor gathers and curates bits of social media, including items coming from staff and the public, into a story.

Snow storm hits Omaha

A collection of photos, tweets, stories, updates and random blizzard observations from around the metro. (Newest ones at the top.) Send us your updates with the hashtag #omasnow. Collected by the online staff of The World-Herald.

We're going to cut off the live updates for the rest of the evening. We'll come back with major developments and then kick it off again bright and early on Friday. Thanks for joining us today!

We'll send you off to bed with a couple pictures from our pretty great Thursday photo gallery. Lots of good stuff in there from all of the [@OWHpictures](#) staff. Check it out: odc.omaha.com/index.php?u_p...



PHOTO SHOWCASE: Omaha braces the cold and snowy weather - http://odc.omaha.com/index.php?u_page=5002&p=4328
<http://pic.twitter.com/OEDKaQsJiC>

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BY NORDECLAIR · 14 HOURS AGO
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BY NZHERALD · 2 YEARS AGO
202,627 views

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Quotable Ernie

Omaha.com



Staff-only tweets, reporting from scene

New breaking news story forms

- **CoveritLive:** A live blogging tool that allows interaction with the audience, and allows the end user to monitor and allow comments and questions.

Sept. 25: Replay updates from the NU-South
Dakota State game

Saturday September 25, 2010

5:20



5:20

In the newsroom: Welcome to our live coverage of Nebraska-South Dakota State. We'll be providing game updates and getting comments and analysis from our writers at the game.

5:22

In the newsroom: As we're waiting for our 6 p.m. game time, check out some of our pregame coverage:

5:22



HuskerExtraBC: RT [@kungfusquirrel](#): [@HuskerExtraBC](#) at this point, I'm not so sure Texas will score in their next two games. [via Twitter]

5:22



HuskerExtraBC: RT [@cccutler](#): [@HuskerExtraBC](#) too bad, was hoping texas would be a top ten team

Twitter embeds

- Tweets can come from newsroom staff, but also from readers and elsewhere.

The following came from Omaha.com's reporting of a recent fire in an apartment complex. They sent a photographer, but other people nearby were snapping away before the paper arrived. The paper ended up embedding reader tweets in the story to help illustrate it.







Using other resources

- How should you determine when a breaking news stories needs other resources, such as Twitter widgets, CoveritLive chats or other tools to update faster than can be done in a story file?

Getting it right

- First, lobby to make sure copy editors are part of your breaking news team.
- Second, make sure everything is read, even if it's a back read.
- Tell your audience when you don't know something; don't hedge or mislead.
- Make corrections online as soon as possible and make them prominent and complete.

Getting it right

- Tell what you don't know: Slide from “Engaging in Breaking News Coverage,” Steve Buttry, Sept. 2012



Getting it right

- Make corrections of fact as they are necessary and point them out.

• **11:28 p.m.** The two hostages remaining inside the house are an adult man and woman. The man is Steve Helderman, 70. The woman does not live at the house; she was just visiting.

• **11:10 p.m.** Police Chief Kevin Belk **confirms two hostages remain inside the house** at 3232 Rickman Avenue NE with the suspect. One of the remaining hostages was reported to be hiding in the house.

• **10:10 p.m.** Police chief Kevin Belk corrects earlier reports: He indicates two children are among the 7 dead today. One at 2046 Plainfield Ave. NE, a girl, 10; and, newly reported, a child dead at 1270 Brynell Court NE.

• **9:51 p.m.** **Mass murders in Grand Rapids: What other media are reporting** on Rodrick Dantzler (video)

• **9:37 p.m.** Police dispatch traffic indicates mass murder suspect Rodrick Dantzler has been seen snorting an unknown substance. Police believe he is still armed and reports indicate he has an extended magazine. He is threatening to commit suicide.

Getting it right

- Have an online corrections policy.
- If your organization has print and web platforms, consider writing a separate corrections policy for online. The audience and consumption methods are different and inaccuracies are easier to spread online.
- Have a social media corrections policy: Tweet corrections and contact those who retweeted your errors, so that they can correct them as well.

Getting it right



Craig Silverman @CraigSilverman

Jan 3

@gerrrib @andrewphelps Ideally, you want to message folks who RTd to direct them to the corrected info so they can spread that, too.

💬 [View conversation](#)



Craig Silverman @CraigSilverman

Jan 3

Yes! MT @gerrrib: Had an inaccurate attribution in a tweet from my news org. Sent a correction tweet. Figure @CraigSilverman would approve.

Expand

Some helpful links

- <http://zombiejournalism.com/2011/01/accuracy-and-accountability-checklist-for-social-media/>
- <http://www.slideshare.net/stevebuttry/engaging-in-breaking-news-coverage>
- Editing breaking news exercise for students at EditTeach.org:
http://www.editteach.org/tools?tool_entry_id=606