

GETTING IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME

(HOW TO GATHER THE FACTS)

If you've ever had a phone call in the middle of the night from someone that is reporting an accident, you may know the feeling of disorganized thoughts as you try to extract the facts from someone that is possibly excited or distraught. You need a checklist of questions to ask but it isn't at your fingertips right now. What are the right questions to ask?

You only need to commit five words to memory. These five words are self-prompting to you once you ask them. They are the same five questions that are asked by a cub or a seasoned newspaper reporter when they are looking for the facts for a story.

The five words are:

WHO: was involved? Who are the witnesses? Who authorized the action or event? Who??

WHAT: happened? What was the weather like?

WHERE: did the mishap occur? Where are the victims now? Where is the damaged property? Where??

WHEN: did the mishap occur? When can you talk to the parties involved? When??

HOW: did the mishap occur? How could it have been prevented? How??

Asking these five questions are the basics of good reporting and good fact finding. If you commit them to memory, you will never end up wishing that you had asked so many other things when the person on the other end of the phone line hangs up.

The same applies if you are interviewing anyone at the scene of a mishap. Got a few good questions? What are they? When did the question come to mind? Where will you get the answers to your questions? Whose question was it? How important is your question?

Get the Idea?