

CASE STUDY Media Relations



Institute of Civil Engineers (Yorkshire & Humber)

CLIENT

The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) is a charity that exists to promote and progress civil engineering. It is a qualifying body, a centre for the exchange of specialist knowledge, and a provider of resources to encourage innovation and excellence in the profession, worldwide.

OBJECTIVE

To launch a targeted and regional press campaign around the annual State of the Nation report within Yorkshire and the Humber. Cicada's objectives were:

to create awareness of the vital contribution the ICE makes to everyone's lives through their work to achieve extensive regional coverage on the day of the launch.

IMPLEMENTATION

Cicada identified that the strongest regional story coming out of the national report was how heavy rainfall in Leeds could lead to similar devastation experienced in New Orleans with Hurricane Katrina. A planning meeting was held with the ICE, and Cicada drew up a timetable of only four weeks to get the heavily embargoed report the maximum amount of publicity possible on the day of its release (Tuesday 18 October 2005).

Every media question had to be anticipated. We identified two natural talking heads within the ICE, both of whom possessed the necessary combination of gravitas and capacity to present complex technical concepts in layman's terms. A list of photogenic and relevant locations for filming and photography were drawn up, and our spokesmen briefed as to the requirements of journalists.

Individual journalists with television, radio and newspapers were approached with the embargoed story. They were offered copies of the report and our press release in advance of the launch date, as well as opportunities for our talking heads to be interviewed, filmed and/or photographed.

RESULTS

The impact throughout the day was enormous. BBC Look North ran the story at 7.00am, BBC Radio Leeds conducted an interview with one of the ICE spokesmen at 7.30am and the Yorkshire Post carried the story on the front page and in the leader column.

By lunchtime BBC Look North were broadcasting face to face interview with an ICE spokesman, Radio Aire was broadcasting an interview with another, both the BBC and Yorkshire Television were running the story as the lead on their websites and by the evening, the Yorkshire Evening Post had given the story almost their entire second page, BBC Look North ran an extended piece (just over two minutes) and Yorkshire Television's Calendar the same.

As a direct result of the coverage that day, Yorkshire and The Humber ICE has opened up a wider debate about flood management in the region. The Yorkshire Post interviewed the ICE again for an article published three weeks after the SON launch, as part of a series on flood risk. There has been general heightened awareness of flood risk throughout the region's media. The ICE Yorkshire & Humber office gained more media coverage than any other region in the UK.