

Introduction:

These guidelines are simply that. They are not a hard-and-fast procedure that must be followed at all costs and it is down to each individual station to decide how to react to such events.

There is no hard-and-fast requirement for any station to drop all regular programming and switch to 'Obit' mode, but stations should be aware of the general public mood and adjust their programming if they feel it is necessary.

The List:

The Obituary Procedure will usually apply in the event of the death of the following people:

HM The Queen
HRH The Prince of Wales
HRH Prince William
HRH Prince Henry (aka Prince Harry)

It may also be worth considering making programming changes in the event of the sudden and unexpected death of other members of the Royal Family or leading public figures; especially if it has been as the result of assassination or a tragic accident etc.

Similarly, arrangements for programming changes in the event of national or international news events which have the capacity to directly affect the national psyche (such as 9/11) should also be considered.

Guidance:

The circumstances of a Royal death mean arrangements and public reaction are likely to differ from case to case, e.g. the death of Princess Diana in a car crash at the age of 36 was very different to that of the Queen Mother, who died peacefully at 101.

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Stations should make arrangements which they feel will suit the mood of their audiences in the particular circumstances. For example the identity of the member of the Royal Family will suggest whether, or the degree to which, normal programming should be interrupted or suspended. The level of 'obituary' programming may be determined by the seniority of accession and, perhaps, to the fondness enjoyed by the individual.

Following a sudden announcement about any 'tragedy', whether related to a Royal death or not, stations are likely to adjust the tone of programming accordingly, in terms of the style of speech output and the nature of music broadcast. As the tone of certain music and its lyrical content may be unsuitable it is recommended that stations compile a selection of appropriate music tracks. These do not need to consist of sombre, classical music but could consist of soft instrumental tracks.

These should, ideally, be readily available on a CD in the studio.

IRN will probably have extended on-hour news bulletins, which may cause problems for those stations which take IRN during automated hours.

Those stations which have access to IRN Net Newsroom will be able to get further information regarding additional news bulletins and any special programming.

Advance Notice:

Hospital Radio stations will not receive the 'Obit' alarm from IRN, which is usually transmitted in advance to commercial radio stations in order to inform them about an imminent announcement.

It is likely, therefore, that the first a hospital station will know of a Royal death will be during the relevant on-hour bulletin, or it will have been announced during a period when the station is either off-air or broadcasting via automation.

Obviously if a member of the Royal Family on The List is seriously ill then it would be wise to ensure that your station will be able to adapt quickly and easily should they subsequently die.

Any other sudden or unexpected (and unconfirmed) announcement from any source other than directly IRN/SKY or the BBC must be checked first.

This is crucial in the age of social networking where rumours and incorrect news stories can easily be spread via Twitter and Facebook etc.

Timing:

There is no requirement to remain in 'Obit Mode' for a long period; although, again, the person and the circumstances of their death, or the event, will need to be taken into consideration.

When the Queen Mother died in 2002 most stations had reverted to semi-regular programming by lunchtime the following day (which was a Sunday). They then reverted to a softer style for the time of the funeral.

In situations where jolly music and light-hearted presentation would seem insensitive such 'normal' programming may sensitively be suspended or adjusted to complement the mood of the nation at that time.