

## The context

<b>It's news because someone dying or being injured by a tree is a rare event</b>	If you're the duty holder and someone is unfortunate enough to be killed or seriously injured by one of your trees, this page explains why it's so important to have a prepared media statement. Page 2 is the statement to customise and release to the media. There's also a 'near miss' variation.
<b>You're already on the backfoot and will get negative media coverage</b>	When someone is killed or seriously injured by a branch or tree falling, if you're the duty holder then you're already on the back foot. You can all too easily suffer substantial negative media coverage and reputational damage simply by how the incident is covered in the first flurry of reporting. You're also likely to get a spike in enquiries about tree risk.
<b>The media narrative is often something went wrong</b>	Coverage is seldom balanced and is often vulnerable to hindsight bias. Members of the public talking about 'widow makers'. Someone saying they KNEW the tree was dangerous. That it was an accident waiting to happen. Reporters ringing around and finding an Arborist who gets too excited about being in the media and gives an opinion despite not having enough information, or strays outside their field of expertise.
<b>Comments on the news and social media are often risk-averse</b>	Unfounded prejudices about trees and tree risk are commonly posted in 'below the line' comment sections by ill-informed armchair experts. These comments are often fed on by others holding similar opinions, and negative messages can get reinforced. Arborists groups may also contribute to the problem by posting unfiltered comments in their social media without thinking about the unintended consequences.
<b>Negative biases about tree risk can be 'anchored' and reinforced by the public and professionals</b>	The first flurry of reporting has an important influence with 'anchoring' and 'availability' biases on those exposed to it. This includes Judges, Coroners, and Lawyers who might later be involved in any legal or enforcement proceedings. As well as on the wider public knowledge about tree risk generally, and the knock-on effect in applications to carry out unnecessary tree work.
<b>There's an opportunity to encourage Passive Assessment</b>	It's not all bad news. There are opportunities here. You get to let everyone know that you take tree risk management seriously and that you're doing something about it. Perhaps more importantly, you get to encourage Passive Assessment by increasing the public awareness of what 'obvious tree risk features' they should be keeping an eye out for.
<b>Be prepared You won't have time if it happens</b>	Even though these events are rare, you'll be asked for comment if they happen. You won't have time to prepare, and there's a risk of unintended damage if you or someone else says the wrong thing that is then seized upon.