

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration
Office of the Administrator
Washington, DC 20546-0001



February 5, 2003

TO: Officials in Charge of Headquarters Offices
Headquarters Contingency Action Team

FROM: ADT/Associate Deputy Administrator for Technical Programs

SUBJECT: Establishment and Operations of Columbia Action Center (CAC)

There is an increasingly enormous level of interest on the part of the public, the media, the Congress, and other governmental entities, both domestically and internationally, in receiving current and evolving information about the accident itself, and its implications for the future safety and prospects of space operations. The Agency has a responsibility to be as responsive as possible to these expressions of interest and requests for information, while not inhibiting its ability to continue its ongoing activities, as well as its support of the investigative processes now under way.

In an effort to help facilitate these potentially conflicting demands on the time, energy and skills of our dedicated personnel, I am establishing a Columbia Action Center (CAC) to serve as a central clearing-house and collection point for information developed in response to queries made to the Agency regarding the Columbia accident, as well as material developed in anticipation of requests for information.

This activity is not intended to replace or supercede the normal information-dissemination activities already being undertaken by the various NASA offices in connection with the accident; its purpose is to ensure that those activities are coordinated and integrated into a single, Agencywide response to external requests for information about the accident. Those Functional Offices with Agencywide responsibilities for external affairs and liaison continue, of course, to bear those responsibilities and their prerogatives and duties to structure and disseminate information is in no way diminished or affected by this coordinating activity.

Drawing on previous experience in coordinating Agency responses to the Mir de-orbit and the annual Congressional consideration of the International Space Station, the CAC will operate from a central facility, located in room 7W41 at NASA Headquarters. It will be implemented through a representative group of senior staff representatives of those Headquarters Offices most directly involved with responding to the Columbia accident. At least one dedicated support staff person will be located in the facility and responsible for maintaining the Center's document database and action-tracking system and for facilitating daily meetings of the representative group. The telephone number for the CAC is 358-1493.

CAC – Designated CAC representatives

Michael Greenfield, (358-1820)

Code M – Dr. Rebekah Davis (358-1656)

Code L – Helen Rothman (358-1943)

Code P – Rich Cooper (358-1774)

Code I – Dennis McSweeney (358-1095)

Code B – Douglas Comstock (358-0760)

Code G – Robert Stephens (358-2053)

Code Q – Mark Kowaleski (358-0751)

Code AD - Gary Martin (358-1828)

Code A – Jeff Bingham (358-1855)

Code M-1/HCAT liaison - Bill Bihner (358-4441)

Full-time Staff – PMI Ashley Stockinger (358-1493)

Central Location: Room 7W41

Email: cac@nasa.gov

Fax:

CAC - Basic Operational Procedures

Information requests will come from a wide range of sources through the responsible Codes including:

- Media (Code P)
- Congress (Code L)
- White House/Other Agencies (Scott Pace)
- Individuals Citizens (Code P)
- International (Code I)
- NASA Internal and Anticipatory

All requests coming into the Agency should be forwarded, by email or by fax, to the CAC. The CAC will enter a description of the request into its tracking database and assign a tracking number.

The designated CAC representatives will also remain alert to potential information requirements or required responses and bring those to the attention of the CAC.

Triage for Requests for Information

The CAC will review each logged request and define its category, determine the appropriate response type (RTQ, QFR, Fact Sheet, Talking Points for telephonic response, etc.) and establish its priority. As part of that review, the CAC will determine if an appropriate, cleared response already exists in its Document Database which would serve to respond to the request, in whole or in part, and factor that determination into its assessment and subsequent tasking.

The CAC will then identify the appropriate "Lead Code" for the response, depending on the primary subject matter, assign a target due date/time, and forward the request as appropriate. Where a request requires a response to multiple topics within the areas of responsibility of multiple Codes, CAC will assign a "Lead" Code the task of providing an integrated and coordinated response. It is anticipated that most requests for information will come into a specific Code who will also be the lead for response. The real value in the process will be the sharing of already vetted information for quick turn-around.

The CAC will record and monitor the status of each task through its tracking database.

Product Draft Review

Before a draft document is returned to the CAC, it should be given final review and clearance by the appropriate official in the Lead Code. If multiple codes are involved in the action, the assigned Lead Code will ensure an integrated review and concurrence is completed before returning the draft document to the CAC. The CAC will assist in the concurrence process, if necessary.

Once the CAC receives a draft response, the participating representatives will review the draft and determine if any further clearance is needed at the Enterprise or Functional Office level and immediately secure that clearance. In cases where the draft response is substantively different from previously approved responses the originator will be notified.

Upon completion of all reviews, the draft documents will be forwarded to the Associate Deputy Administrator for Technical Programs for final review and approval. In addition, the ADA will resolve any remaining clearances issues or disputes regarding the content of any document.

Product Dissemination

Following final approval by the Associate Deputy Administrator, the documents will be forwarded back to the responsible Codes (as above) for distribution.

Each cleared document will be entered into the document database maintained by the CAC, along with an indication of any restrictions associated with its use.

Core Products

The CAC will make use of approved documents to generate and maintain a number of "Core Products" in its database. Among these will be the following:

A. Fact Sheets:

Examples:

1. Investigative Process Description – Internal and External Reviews
2. Debris Recovery Process and Status (Recurring)
3. Response to GAO Reports on Personnel Reductions and Safety Impact
4. Response to relevant ASAP reports
5. Potential Space Station or Shuttle Mission Impact and Options
6. Budget History and Impacts

B. Q and A – RTQ and QFR

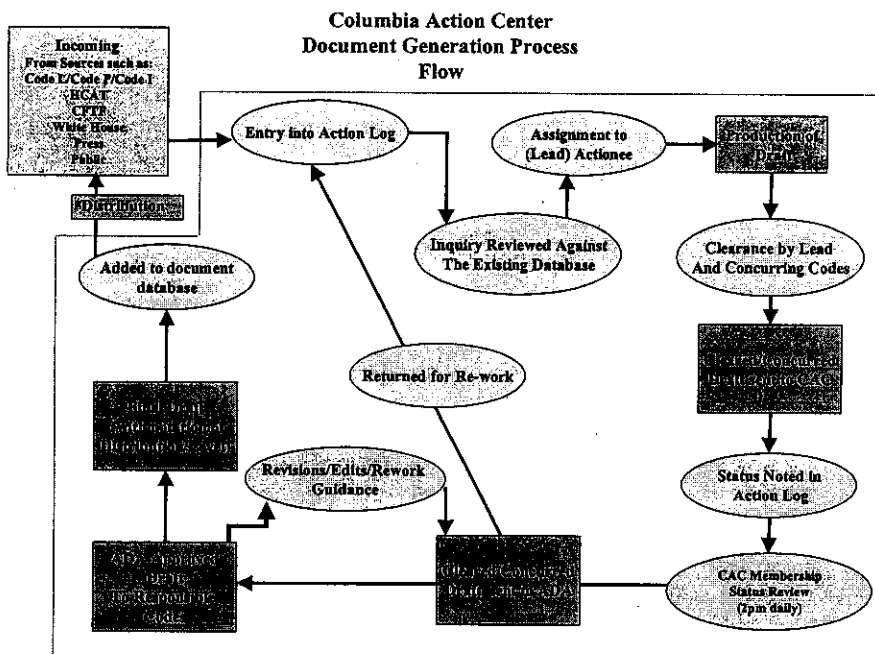
C. Talking Points

D. White Papers – Article responses

Spokespersons/Opinion Leaders

The CAC will also maintain a distribution list for potential distribution of materials for backgrounding and briefing regarding any aspect of the Columbia accident. This list will be fully coordinated and validated in conjunction with those Codes with responsibility for external Agency relations (Primarily, Codes L, P and I).

CAC action Flow Chart



Original signed by

Michael A. Greenfield
Michael A. Greenfield, Ph.D.