

GATHERING NEWS INFORMATION (WATS Reports)

1. The following information must be included for an accurate report.

W H A T

W H E R E

W H E N

W H O

W H Y

H O W

(Don't be afraid to ask
questions!)

This means: names, ages, dates, locations, background, organizational affiliation, etc.

All interpretative statements (not specific facts) should be attributed to someone.

2. Summarize the incident or subject of report in the opening sentence. Use a short headline where possible.

s a m p l e: WATS report. July 3, 1964 Taken by Supersnick.

Baertown, Miss. (Amite Co.) YOUTHS BEATEN Geo Pye
Three SNCC workers were beaten by city police June 2.
John Jones, 19 (McComb), Joe Smith, 21 (Jackson), and
Bill Hall, 23 (white volunteer - Milwaukee, Wisc.)
were accosted about 20 minutes after leaving

Headlining will simplify use of compiled reports, especially where an incident is followed several days. It should be possible to flip through successive pages of WATS reports and find needed data without having to read lengthy reports in full.

If you are writing in paragraph form, think about underlining summarizing statements and important data.

Special information should be indented in some way so it stands out.

3. Distinguishing phrases must be used. There is a difference between being shot at and being shot and being shot down; between being hit with fists and beaten with blackjacks; between being taken into custody and being arrested; between city, county and state police.

June 26, 1964

URGENT MEMO FROM: JAMES FORMAN

TO: ATLANTA SNCC OFFICE

It is becoming clear that a lapse of hours between the time Atlanta is notified of an incident and time when Jackson was notified, may have an effect on peoples' lives.

THE FOLLOWING IS POLICY:

1. The Jackson office is to be called every two (2) hours.
2. A checklist is to be kept of those calls - time of day, who placed.
3. A clock is to be kept on the WATS operators' desk.
4. All calls from the field take priority in returning calls.
5. A record is to be kept of when information was received from Jackson or the field - time of day, who gave information, who took information. Similarly, a record is to be kept of calls informing any agents of the federal government, especially time of day.

THE FOLLOWING ORDER IS TO BE FOLLOWED ON ANY INCIDENTS: (Unless you are notified of change in policy.)

1. The Justice Department is to be notified immediately, at any time of day or night.

Justice Department: area code 202 RE 7-8200. If John Doar is not available, speak with any Civil Rights Division attorney.

John Doar (home number): area code 301 OL 2-0611

Burke Marshall (home number): area code 202 OL 2-3562

You may tell them that we are now informing the federal government of every incident as a matter of policy, and that we will express concern over what we consider as emergencies when appropriate.

2. Either the New Orleans (southern Mississippi) or the Memphis (northern Mississippi) bureaus of the FBI are to be notified next. Note time of day; ask name of agent you speak with.

FBI New Orleans bureau: area code 504 522-4671

FBI Memphis bureau: area code 901 525-7373

You may notify the Atlanta bureau also, depending on urgency.

Atlanta bureau: JA 1-3900

3. If the incident is an arrest, start calling the jail posing as a reporter for an Atlanta or Washington or New York newspaper. This is extremely important. Police may modify violence. Try to get information.

STARTING TONIGHT, JACKSON WILL MAKE ATLANTA TOP PRIORITY IN RECEIVING INFORMATION. Following these procedures is mandatory.