

WMC

Opens with a report on how the suspects got the guns.

- Story of a young romance gone wrong.
- Feelings of guilt among survivors.
- Suspects in court.

ANALYSIS

The narrative was clean and presented with high energy.

March 27**KAIT**

- Opens with a voice-over on footage from a funeral, church services elsewhere.
- Friends of slain teacher talk about her.
- A report on gifts to school coming from all over world.
- "What are teen-agers talking about tonight in Jonesboro?"
- School violence piece from CNN.

ANALYSIS

The sidebar on the teacher is a touching piece. The station continues its valuable service as a community bulletin board, providing information on where viewers can call, participate and contribute.

KATV

- Story that no federal charges will be filed is the second story of the newscast. Severe local weather was the lead story.

- On-scene reports from funerals.
- From the studio, an explainer on juvenile vs. adult charges, and a look at the types of weapons used in the shootings.

ANALYSIS

Leading with the weather story was the right call. KATV made good use of its staff and did a solid job.

WMC

- The lead story is a live report from Jonesboro, during which a "crawler" at the bottom of the screen warns of severe weather in the region. The reporter works the threat of tornadoes into his Jonesboro story, a report about the community pulling together.
- Two of the victims are buried.
- Authorities say suspects will not face federal charges.
- A local songwriter pens a tune of grief and sadness.
- A wrap-up of regional efforts to raise funds and promote healing in Jonesboro.

ANALYSIS

Using the "crawler" to plug the weather story while the Jonesboro report was airing seemingly gave the station the best of both worlds. But given that there was nothing startling or terribly new in the Jonesboro report, WMC might have better served its viewers by following KATV's lead and topping its report with the weather.

Equipment trouble hinders local TV station's coverage

The "electronic newsgathering truck" owned by KAIT Channel 8, an ABC-TV affiliate and the only television station in Jonesboro, had been having generator problems. It was due for repair March 24 in Memphis, a little more than an hour away.

The repair trip was delayed that day for some reason, station officials say. And it was that fact — battling the balking generator along the way — that allowed the small broadcast station to report "live" from the scene within minutes of the shootings at Westside Middle School.

KAIT still faced technical hurdles. Having just one "live truck" limited its coverage. Even after trucks and equipment arrived from sister stations on following days, there were problems.

Vice President and General Manager Clyde Anderson said, "Had we had two trucks, it would have made all the difference in the world, and as a result of that we now are getting ready to order our second truck."

KAIT reporter Bryant Huddleston and a reporter from *The Jonesboro Sun* were first on the scene, Anderson said. "The problem we got into was that after we had been there for a while ... all of sudden the people were being taken to the local hospital (and) the local county sheriff was calling a press conference. With (just) one truck we had to break down and leave. There was a 40-45 minute gap in reporting where we had to go back to local programming. And some people thought we might have dropped the ball there."



Clyde Anderson: "Had we had two trucks, it would have made all the difference in the world."

Help was on its way, but not without its own problems.

Recalled news director Harvey Cox: "Our station in Evansville, Ind., WFIE, got a live truck on the road right away. Their live truck was supposed to have its generator pulled because it was having problems ... but they said 'we think it'll work.' So they put a photographer on the truck. He rolled in here I think about 2 o'clock in the morning."

Having a second truck meant a big difference on Day Two. "The governor was going to be at the hospital at noon. We had our live truck out at ... the continuous news conferences and briefings," Cox said. "So I met (WFIE's truck) and escorted it to the hospital and got that set up in time."

Additional help came in the form of a truck from sister station WSFA in Montgomery, Ala. "Except they sent us a dog of a truck," Cox said. "Blew a transmission 20 miles down the road as they drove in. We put [the crew] in a news car, and they went out and covered stories for us until the memorial service. They were here almost a week. It took them a while to get their truck fixed, too."

"Then we had to send the Evansville truck back, so our station in Biloxi Miss., (WLOX) sent us a truck to help out. So we wound up with three live trucks at various stages. Three different stations helped."

KAIT is one of eight stations owned by Cosmos Broadcasting Corp. of Greenville, S.C.

— Gene Policinski