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**MARKETPLACE**

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HEADLINE: Martin Kaplan of the Annenberg School for Communication on the media getting out message of safety precautions against terrorism without sensationalism and profiteering

ANCHORS: CHERYL GLASER

Announcer: From the Frank Stanton Studios in Los Angeles, this is MARKETPLACE.

CHERYL GLASER, anchor: Wall Street's Achilles' heel. Hedging your bets in the market.

Plus, hiding behind a wall of plastic and duct tape.

Mr. MARTIN KAPLAN (Associate Dean, Annenberg School for Communication, USC): There's the possibility that people are playing the game known in Washington as 'cover your tushie.'

GLASER: This is MARKETPLACE.

BODY:  
CHERYL GLASER, anchor:

This is MARKETPLACE. I'm Cheryl Glaser, in for David Brancaccio.

Out here in California, we have earthquake preparedness kits. In Florida, it's hurricane supplies; the Midwest, tornado supplies. Now the Department of Homeland Security is recommending that everyone keep disaster kits on hand, stocked with plenty of duct tape and plastic sheeting, in case of a possible terrorist attack. Martin Kaplan is associate dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at USC. Now, Marty, we in the news business are helping get this message out, albeit perhaps with some reservations.

Mr. MARTIN KAPLAN (Associate Dean, Annenberg School for Communication, USC): It's a tightrope act, both for the government agencies and for the media, who are--in some ways, they're amplifiers for the government agencies. There really is an important responsibility to make sure that people are prepared for disasters. Unfortunately, we have the history of being prepared for nuclear war by putting our coats over our heads and getting under our little desks, and that, in retrospect, doesn't seem plausible. I'm not sure whether looking back at the advice of duct tape and plastic sheeting--whether that will seem any more reasonable, but there is a responsibility there.

On the other hand, there's the possibility that people are playing the game known in Washington as 'cover your tushie,' in which case you can't be blamed subsequently when anything bad happens. And I have a--a sense that some aspect of that is out there, and the American people are wondering, 'In the absence of concrete threats, to what degree are these bureaucratic moves in order to inoculate themselves against future damaging claims?' The media has the same issue because the media has a responsibility, as part of the public communication system, to spread this information, but on the other hand, it's a wonderful opportunity for sensationalism, alarmism, profit, getting eyeballs and eardrums and having people say, 'I better stay tuned because I'm scared.'

GLASER: In the meantime, we are seeing the media--us included, of course--gearing up for potential conflict coverage, should we say? This is a big financial commitment. I mean, the first time around, estimates are that the big networks were losing--What?--\$25 million a day or something?

Mr. KAPLAN: Well, they're both losing money on lost advertising, and they're spending money because they're deploying their own forces, which costs a lot of money. On the other hand, there's a kind of intangible benefit that they're accruing. There's a kind of brand equity, which is built up in the stars of the moment. Aaron Brown and Ashleigh Banfield became stars out of the tragedy of 9/11; Arthur Kent out of the first Persian Gulf War. And it's possible that even though the revenue dollars will drop, that the ratings will be jacked up and that the stars who are made by whatever sad events are about to unfold will redound to the bottom line of those media companies.

GLASER: So this is one of those times that media companies have to bite the bullet, so to speak, and really take the long-term view and say, 'OK, it's going to hurt for a while, but long term, this is going to help the bottom line.'

Mr. KAPLAN: Yeah. The question is: Can they do it with a certain amount of taste? The 'thundering drums of war' and the jingles and the 'lowdown on the showdown' kinds of chyrons, which are appearing, make people wonder whether there's an aspect of profiteering going on as well.

GLASER: And, interestingly enough, it's not just broadcast media. Apparently print media takes a hit as well--newspapers, magazines.

Mr. KAPLAN: Yes. Magazines are long lead-time advertisers, and in the wake of a national calamity, what often happens is that the media buyers just shut down. They don't know what to do. It's not that they think it's inappropriate. They just have no idea whether, in the midst of national tragedy or war, people will be buying *Us*, *People* and *Entertainment Weekly* to escape, or will it be the hard-core news outlets like *Time*, *Newsweek* and *US News*?

GLASER: Thanks so much, Marty.

Marty Kaplan is director of the Norman Lear Center at USC.