

IAA-01-IAA.9.2.04

POST-CONTACT COMMUNICATION

**Allen Tough
University of Toronto
16 Balaby Crescent, Toronto, Canada M3C-2B7
Phone: +1-416-444-3135
Fax: +1-416-444-5538
Email: allentough@aol.com**

The scientific search for extraterrestrial intelligence is adopting fresh strategies and accelerating its pace. This increases the likelihood of successful detection in the near future. Humanity's first contact with alien intelligence will likely trigger extraordinary media attention and public interest. By improving our readiness for contact, especially for communication during the first few chaotic weeks, we can avoid negative scenarios and enhance humanity's benefits. For effective post-contact communication, two sorts of preparations are required now by each SETI project and by the IAA SETI Committee. (1) We need a fail-safe plan for keeping at least one rapid communications channel open to SETI scientists and their closest colleagues, unclogged by the general public or the media. A closed email list of one kind or another might suffice, or a password-protected web page. It is also important to have security measures in place to ensure that SETI scientists will not be hampered from continuing to communicate. The prospect of sabotage or violence may seem melodramatic to scientists at first, but they should note the unpleasant experiences faced by some whistle-blowers and abortion doctors. (2) We need a comprehensive plan for making information and explanations immediately available worldwide to the mass communications media and the general public. A comprehensive plan could combine several methods, such as press releases, voice interviews, email interviews, and a designated "news and announcements" page on the World Wide Web. This web page could also list several qualified SETI spokespersons who are willing to be interviewed, along with their email address or telephone number.