

To: Emergency Communications Units - Information Bulletin
To: Emergency Management Agencies via Internet and Radio
By: Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS) of the
California Governor's Office of Emergency Services
EMC376 EMCOMM Officers Hdbk 10 Release 1/13/03

INCIDENT INFORMATION AND WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

The important thing to remember about the following is to check with the agency information officer before using it, or even doing any final training, as some agencies have very definite public info policies and REQUIRE all media contact to be made through agency paid staff that is trained in media relations as formal policy.

Therefore, the following is ONLY an example of how to work with the media and some is even printed "with tongue-in-cheek". Most of us will never have to worry about talking to the media without being trained and then briefed before each interview.

1. If you don't have a media relations policy, draft one.
2. If you don't want it printed or broadcast don't say it.
3. Say it in 30 seconds.
4. Record all sensitive media interviews.
5. Maintain a good balance in your media relations account.
6. Release bad news after the 6 p.m. TV news broadcast on Friday.

BE:

1. in charge, and organized.
2. wary of still photographers.
3. alert for the "waiting tactic".
4. aware of newspaper deadlines.
5. prepared for a media blitz.

ALWAYS:

1. be 100 percent right in a confrontation with the media.
2. convey the impression to reporters that you are trying to help them.
3. get your story out first.

- A. A good statement in the original story is worth a half-dozen "letters to the editor" later.
- B. Dribbling out information keeps the "embarrassing story" alive.

NEVER:

1. change the ground rules in the middle of the game.
2. say "no comment".
3. wear dark glasses during an interview.
4. give reporters your personal opinion.
5. voluntarily submit to an interview with 60 Minutes or 20/20.

DON'T:

1. give or expect favoritism.
2. attempt to talk "off the record".
3. make off hand remarks in front of reporters.
4. hide behind technical jargon.

5. disappear when unfavorable news breaks.
6. stonewall. When you can't disclose information, say so and explain why.
7. try to fool the press.
8. try to be a news personality.
9. propagandize.
10. tolerate any openly belligerent or abusive behavior.
11. make "wise crack" statements.
12. be misled by "off the record".
13. let the media take over your administration.
14. assume the interview is over until the TV crew drives away.
15. fight with people who have ink delivered by the tank car.
16. mess-up on a slow news day.

AVOID:

1. being openly hostile toward the media.
2. the appearance of "cover-up"

DELUSIONS:

1. I am safe from big city reporters.
2. The out-of-state media will treat you just like the local media.
3. I can respond to the media in my own good time and in my own way.
4. I can wing it.
5. I can retreat into the sanctuary of silence.

REMEMBER:

1. Deadlines sometimes assume more importance than the need to gather "complete" information.
2. Take care of the local media first.
3. You don't have to respond immediately to a telephone call from a reporter.
4. Under pressure, the mouth speaks when the mind is disengaged.

(PLEASE re-read opening paragraph!!)