

Media Relations Checklist for Commanders and PAOs

Media Spokespersons

The commander and the PAO, as the commander's delegate, are the official spokespersons for their unit. (CAPR 190-1 paragraph 4)

Emergency Service Missions for state and local communities: Public affairs and media relations issues are handled by specially qualified personnel called PIOs or their supervisors or by incident commanders (IC) if a PIO has not been appointed. In accordance with CAPR 60-3, *CAP Emergency Services Training and Operational Missions*, information that is releasable to the public on CAP missions should be given promptly to news media representatives. The PIO provides and receives critical information, advises the incident commander, protects the image of CAP and provides timely information to the public affairs staff of each higher headquarters. (CAPR 190-1 paragraph 12)

In order to serve as a PIO, the individual will complete the required training and certification in accordance with CAPR 60-3 and CAPP 201. (CAPR 190-1 paragraph 12a)

A PIO, fully qualified in accordance with current PIO training requirements or a trainee under supervision as outlined in CAPR 60-3, may be appointed at the discretion of the incident commander (IC) for any training or actual mission. Assignment of a PIO is mandatory for all emergency services missions lasting or expected to last more than 48 hours, including but not limited to, missing aircraft, missing persons, disaster relief or other humanitarian aid operations. (CAPR 190-1 paragraph 12b)

Meeting the Media

Excerpts from the USAF Public Affairs Center for Excellence guide designed to assist airmen in communicating with the news media. The complete guide is posted on the PA page at www.capmembers.com

Proactive Media Relations

We live in a global information environment. The news media are everywhere, with the technology to publish in real time "24/7." If we wish to maintain public support, we must learn to work effectively with the news media.

DoD policy is very explicit: maximum disclosure with minimum delay. Bad news does not improve with age, and the mere appearance of withholding or manipulating information can destroy our credibility. Getting our side of the story out as soon as possible and as completely as practicable is essential to maintaining the high level of credibility and public support enjoyed by the U.S. military. The public formulates its opinion of an organization quickly, as much on how we respond to a situation as on the cause itself. We must actively seek to keep the media informed so that our story will be told.

The best approach is always to be PROACTIVE and plan your approach to public communications actions as carefully as you would plan any military operation. Prior planning is critical; don't "wing it."

Controlling the Interview

To control the course and content of an interview, prepare for it by identifying and organizing pre-determined, positive messages. No matter what the interviewer asks, you should feel free to steer your response to the related message.

Developing Your Messages

Prepare three to five points to promote the CAP side of the issue. Work to condense those main points into a 10- to 20-second statement. Ask yourself these questions: What is the issue? What is your involvement in the issue? Why is it important? What is the historical perspective?

List the 10 most difficult questions you might be asked regarding the interview topic and the 10 most difficult questions regarding CAP in general. Think about how you will transition from answering these questions into a key point you want to make.

Pre-prepared messages triggered by an interviewer's question will result in the delivery of accurate, concise information.

Interview Preparation Guide

NOTE: Complete the following prior to EVERY interview

Topic: _____

Your 3-5 Communication Points condensed into 10- to 20- second statements: List them in order of priority!

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Possible Difficult Questions: Your Response (20 second or less sound bite)

1. _____

Answer: _____

2. _____

Answer: _____

3. _____

Answer: _____

4. _____

Answer: _____

5. _____

Answer: _____

6. _____

Answer: _____

7. _____

Answer: _____

8. _____

Answer: _____

9. _____

Answer: _____

10. _____

Answer: _____

Rules for Success

- Tell the truth.
- Don't go into an interview cold. Give yourself time to prepare.
- An interview is not a conversation.
- There is no such thing as off the record.
- Keep it simple. Nothing ruins an interview faster than long, complex explanations.
- Be brief. Practice answering questions in 20 seconds or less.
- If you don't want to see it in print or hear it on the air – DON'T SAY IT!

During an Emergency

- Concern for people comes first in your comments.
- Don't deny the obvious by trying to minimize what is a serious disaster or tragedy.
- Don't speculate or place blame.
- Don't forget that privacy regulations apply during disasters and other incidents.

CAP Mishaps Involving Outside Agencies

Civil Air Patrol, as a fleet operator of vehicles and aircraft, manages mishap occurrences with a direct relationship to investigation agencies such as local and state law enforcement, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). Anytime an agency is involved, Civil Air Patrol will yield the investigation to the regulatory agency. In some cases, NHQ Safety will either query through the wing for information, usually with local and state agencies, but in all cases related to the FAA or NTSB, NHQ Safety signs in as a party to the investigation allowing the FAA and/or the NTSB designee to become the voice of all information related to the mishap.

Civil Air Patrol is bound by federal regulation to not speak to media, but to direct all media inquiries to the lead investigator. In some cases, Civil Air Patrol may make a media statement; however only after this has been coordinated through NHQ Safety and the lead investigating agency. Fundamentally, this means that no media contact should be allowed by any member in any capacity from Civil Air Patrol, unless advised otherwise and provided the essential information has been properly coordinated and approved for distribution by NHQ PA, GC, and/or SE.

Media Relations Guidelines for Civil Air Patrol

Air Force Assigned and Corporate Missions

Air Force Assigned Missions (AFAMs)

News Releases

- The Air Force must approve information releases for any form of information generated during the conduct of an AFAM (“A” and “B” missions) (video, still imagery, data, etc.) to any media outlet (print, TV, radio, internet, etc.)
- Approval for typical AFAMs (SAR, DR, intercept, etc.) comes from AFRCC, 1st, 11th, PACAF or CAP-USAF. Wings will make requests to the NOC to obtain approvals from 1st, 11th, PACAF or CAP-USAF.
- For SAR missions only, CAP ICs and PIOs will work directly with AFRCC to obtain approval to release information. If considered a high-profile mission (potential to generate considerable media attention at the wing, region or national level like the Steve Fossett or John F. Kennedy Jr. missions), work through the NOC and NHQ/PA for approvals.

Media flights

- All flights carrying media personnel will be coordinated through the NOC – no exceptions. For AFAMs the NOC will coordinate Air Force approval following the non-CAP passenger approval process.
- Early notification of media ride-along requests to the NOC and NHQ/PA is critical -- the sooner the better. Early requests increase the probability of ride-along approval. Don’t wait until you know the specific names of media to ride along. The names can be provided later.

Corporate Missions

News Releases

- Corporate (“C”) mission news releases are approved at the wing level by the commander or the commander’s designees, but assistance is always available from the NOC and NHQ/PA.
- PAOs will work with the NOC and NHQ/PA for approval of local releases for high-profile events or activities on corporate missions.

Media flights

- All flights carrying media personnel will be coordinated through the NOC – no exceptions. The NOC will coordinate NHQ/DO approval on corporate missions.

Tips for All Missions

- Wings should include federal, state and local customers in the news release coordination process.
- If you have any questions, call and ask for help. The NOC duty officer is available 24/7/365 at 888-211-1812, ext. 300. NHQ/PA is available during duty hours at 877-227-9142, ext. 250 or 251 and after hours via email at jdebardelaben@capnhq.gov.

Imagery vs. Publicity Photos

Imagery

- Disaster imagery (damage photos) taken for customers is generally considered their property, unless the customer approves CAP to use the imagery. The wing will work with customers to include getting their written approval for CAP to use images captured during the mission in the customer's initial mission request.
- CAP cannot store/retain most imagery (except photos used for publicity purposes) due to legal issues.
- Members cannot keep pictures for themselves. Members using their own camera to take images will need prior approval from the NOC and must plan to turn over all imagery to the customer.

Publicity Photos

- Non-CAP members must give approval to CAP using their photo for publicity purposes. Email approval is acceptable.
- If the background of the photo is sensitive, it will require approval by the NOC and/or NHQ/PA (and possibly the AF) prior to release. For example, photos inside another agency's facilities or with another agency's personnel in the background will require coordination with that agency. Ideally the member who desires to use this photo for publicity purposes should get written approval locally beforehand to expedite this process.
- Photo approvals should be obtained at the same time news releases are approved.
- A good photo may not be usable if we can't get approval to use it because nobody documented who was in it.

Natural Disaster Coverage

- When you see preparedness messages, alerts and warnings on TV for large areas, especially multiple states, consider the mission to be high-profile. Although local news releases generated from C missions are approved by the wing commander, PAOs will coordinate with the NOC and NHQ/PA for all news releases and photos related to high-profile natural disasters.
- Most high-profile natural disaster missions will be AFAMs, meaning that any related news release and photos will require Air Force approval. Send requests to the NOC and NHQ/PA. The NOC and NHQ/PA will coordinate with 1st Air Force for approval. NHQ/PA coordinates the release of photos and information with other NHQ offices if necessary and edits the releases prior to going to 1st Air Force.
- Contact the NOC or NHQ/PA for approval to post imagery and information on social media sites.
- See Guidelines for Partnering with NHQ/PA for High-Profile Missions on the PA page at www.capmembers.com for more information.

NOTE: Appropriate lead time is essential for securing approvals. Don't expect a same-day turnaround when submitting AF approval requests after 1 p.m. Central Time.

Crisis Communications

In consultation with their commanders, PAOs at all levels will develop a crisis public affairs plan to ensure a rapid and effective response during an emergency that may damage the organization's reputation if mishandled. Unit crisis public affairs plans will reflect guidance outlined in the CAP National Headquarters, Writing a Crisis Communications Plan, listed at http://members.gocivilairpatrol.com/cap_hq/public_affairs/. All crisis communications plans will be approved by the wing commander or designated representative. Subordinate unit crisis plans will be submitted to wing PAOs for review and input. Wing and region crisis plans will be submitted to NHQ/PA and to the National PAO for review and input. (CAPR 190-1 paragraph 7a3)

10 Steps to Take Now for Crisis Readiness

From Public Relations Society of America's "Public Relations Tactics," January 2012 issue

1. Identify potential crises.
2. Analyze your state of readiness. Do you have a crisis plan? Does it have the latest contact information for key personnel? Is it up to date and relevant or just boilerplate? Who are the people who would be in the spotlight? Are they prepared and knowledgeable about policies and procedures?
3. Check the crisis readiness of your "bull's-eye" team. Are they comfortable and effective in front of the news media? Do they have experience in crisis situations? Do they know CAP's crisis response resources, policies and procedures?
4. Research your crisis response record. What previous crises occurred and what were the outcomes? Were rules and regulations violated, especially in matters related to safety and environmental responsibility?
5. Build the image of key leaders. Leaders who are already known and respected have a media advantage in a crisis.
6. Review your social media status. Do you have the tools and people in place to monitor Facebook, YouTube, blogs and Twitter? Are you aware and taking advantage of the impact of these new media?
7. Examine and strengthen key relationships. This includes local and national media, government officials, employees and people in potentially affected communities.
8. Schedule media training sessions. Anyone who could end up in the spotlight should know the essentials of successful media interviews.
9. Stage crisis readiness simulations. They help discover flaws in current crisis plans, identify leadership qualities and raise everyone's awareness.
10. Update or create a crisis response plan, and name an ongoing crisis team. The team should meet at least once every three months to evaluate the program and consider any changes to procedures, assignments or materials.

Rules for Success

- Make sure your crisis communications plan is in place, and that your messages are accurate and current. There usually isn't time to revise them when they need to be implemented in an emergency.

- Confirm that all people speaking to the media on behalf of your organization know the messages and can convey them. The press will immediately pick up on inconsistencies between spokespeople.
- Stay strong with your communications and never waiver. Having a firm, consistent and strong message is incredibly important and will ultimately ensure that the news media accurately and positively represents your position.

Guidelines for Partnering with National Headquarters Public Affairs for Media Relations Assistance

The Civil Air Patrol Public Affairs Officer or Public Information Officer plans and coordinates media relations activities. National Headquarters Public Affairs is always available to assist the PAO, PIO, Incident Commander and Agency Liaison with media relations. NHQ PA can provide assistance in the areas cited below. This is especially critical when there is not a PAO in place, the PAO/PIO is new and/or inexperienced and/or the mission is high-profile.

Planning

- Develop and/or refine crisis plan or public relations plan
- Identify a spokesperson
- Anticipate media needs and questions
- Make recommendations on all media coverage
- Coordinating national leadership participation
- Provide talking points
- Provide media kits

Media Queries & Response

- Respond to media inquiries
- Research, interview and write news releases
- Disseminate news releases nationwide
- Develop radio and TV announcements
- Set up interviews
- Set up press conferences

Issues Management

- Develop proactive media messages
- Prepare a daily issues management report that tracks key issues and recommends courses of action

Logistics

- Publish daily updates online
- Provide media contact lists
- Provide a daily report of media coverage
- Provide a copy of WMIRS reports to members involved in missions, issued daily by NHQ's National Operations Center
- Prepare an after action report

Creative Services

Contact for assistance with the following:

- Establishing and maintaining a unit website or help with NHQ's websites
- Obtaining high-resolution CAP imagery and artwork or customized graphic design needs
- Obtaining NHQ-generated videos or producing locally generated feature videos
- Small print jobs at the wing and region level (limited basis)