

# Media Relations Checklist

1. The commander and the PAO, as the commander's delegate, are the official spokespersons for the unit. All media inquiries are referred to the commander, PAO/PIO for response.
2. Before EVERY interview, the Commander, PAO/PIO will prepare 3-5 key points in 10- to 20-second statements he/she wants to be sure are printed or aired. The commander and PAO/PIO will provide a media response when unprepared to give 3-5 key messages. The interview is never a conversation. No other CAP members should comment to the media.
3. By federal law, the FAA or the NTSB Investigator in charge is the voice of all information related to a mishap. Therefore, Civil Air Patrol cannot disclose information; all media inquiries must be directed the NTSB or FAA Investigator in Charge. It should be assumed that the FAA or NTSB is involved in all mishaps until otherwise confirmed by NHQ Safety. Contact the NOC 888.211.1812 at or NHQ Safety Manager Frank Jirik at 877.277.9142, ext 232 or [fjirik@capnhq.gov](mailto:fjirik@capnhq.gov) if you have any questions.
4. Media relations for emergency services missions are handled by Public Information Officers. Assignment of a PIO is mandatory for all emergency services missions lasting or expected to last more than 48 hours, including missing aircraft, missing persons, disaster relief or other humanitarian aid operations. All emergency services media inquiries should be referred to the PIO.
5. The Air Force must approve information released 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.)
6. 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 unit, wing, region or national level), work through the NOC and NHQ/PA for approvals.
7. All flights carrying media personnel will be coordinated through the NOC – no exceptions.
8. 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. PAO/PIOs will work with the NOC and NHQ/ for approval of local releases for high-profile events or activities on corporate missions.
9. 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 as part of the customer's initial mission request.
10. CAP cannot store/retain most imagery (except photos used for publicity purposes) due to legal issues. Members cannot keep pictures for themselves. Publicity photo approvals should be obtained at the same time news releases are approved.

## Media Relations Do's and Don'ts\*

1. **Tell the truth.** The truth may hurt, but lies are deadly.
2. **Come to an interview prepared with your messages.** Find opportunities to get your messages across without ignoring the reporter's questions.
3. **Be informative, not conversational.** News interviews are exchanges of information, not conversations.
4. **Be brief.** Reporters generally don't want lengthy, drawn-out explanations. Knowing what you want to say in advance will go a long way in simplifying your answers.
5. **Don't go off the record.** There is no such thing as off the record. If you don't want something to appear in the media, don't say it.
6. **Know your role.** If you are not the spokesperson, refer the reporter to that member.
7. **Don't use jargon.** Avoid using terms or acronyms that can't be quoted without explanation.
8. **Don't lose your temper.** Sometimes reporters are intentionally rude to elicit a response. Don't fall into that trap. Respond politely, in control at all times.
9. **Be friendly.** It's an interview, not an interrogation.
10. **No comment.** Don't say, "No comment" or "I can neither confirm or deny..." The public views this as, "I know but I can't say." Instead, tell the reporter you are unable to answer the question and, if possible, why.
11. **Don't answer when you shouldn't.** Don't answer the questions if you aren't the appropriate spokesperson. If a reporter presses, repeat your answer. Don't waiver, and don't go off the record.
12. **Don't guess.** If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Be sure you offer to either find the answer or find someone else who knows.
13. **It's OK to make a mistake.** The tape is rolling and you realize you've made a mistake. Stop. Say, "I'm sorry I haven't answered your question very well. Let me back up." The reporter will prefer your new, crisp response.
14. **Talk from the public's point of view.** Answer questions in terms readers and viewers can relate to.
15. **Cite facts.** Reporters love facts and figures that will lend credibility to their stories or make certain points.
16. **Be prepared to repeat yourself.** If a reporter repeats a question, welcome this as another opportunity to state your message, perhaps more clearly.

17. **Be confident.** You are the expert.
18. **Don't be defensive.** Make positive statements instead of denying or refuting comments from others.
19. **Never ask a reporter to preview the story.** Reporters generally never let sources review stories. The likelihood of being misquoted is reduced substantially if you speak briefly and clearly.

\*Taken from "Meeting the Media," produced by the USAF Public Affairs Center of Excellence