



# Writing News Releases

There are three basic steps for effective news releases- **formatting**, **writing**, and **getting noticed**.

## Formatting Tips

- **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** These words should appear at the top, just under your letterhead. Be sure to capitalize every letter.
- **Contact Information:** Skip a few lines then list your contact person, along with his or her title, phone and fax number and e-mail address. You might also want to include home or cell phone numbers, since reporters work on deadlines and may be trying to call after normal hours. Make sure your contact is available and capable of answering questions. Also, include your agency's web site address.
- **Headline:** Skip two lines and use boldface type. Don't make it longer than one line. Use caps and lower case.
- **Dateline:** This should include your city and the date you are issuing the release.
- **Lead paragraph:** The first paragraph needs to grab the readers attention and should have the five W's and an H: who, what, where, when, why, and how.
- **Text:** Use 8.5 x 11" paper; with one inch margins on each side. Keep it to one page, never more than two. Reporters usually won't read more than one. If you need more than one page, center the word "-more-" at the bottom of the first page.
- **Center:** "# # #", "-30-", or "-end-" at the end of the news release to signify the end of the news release.

## Writing Tips

- **Make it Newsworthy:** Are you solving a problem? Pinpoint what the need is and write from that perspective.
- **Write a Headline that gets to the Point:** Immediately tell why this news is important. Avoid promotional sounding words. What you say in the headline determines whether or not the reporter will read you release.
- **Write a Strong Lead Paragraph:** Answer who, what, where, when, why and how. Use this paragraph to summarize the news. Make sure the first ten words of your release are effective, as they are the most important. Don't use fancy language.
- Once you have provided a brief description of the news, and then you can tell who is announcing it, not the other way around.

- Give News Details so that the Reporter understands why it is important to Read On: Add background quotes, and comparisons to illustrate the importance of the news. If you're announcing something, mention when and where it is available and other points. Deal with the facts, don't editorialize.
- Include a Short Summary of your Organization: Especially include any information about what distinguishes your agency's expertise. Include your expertise and location, but keep it short.
- Make sure your contact information is complete.
- Use an active voice instead of a passive voice.

## Tips for Getting Noticed

- Make sure your information is newsworthy and targeted to the appropriate audience.
- Find out the best way to contact reporters—do they want a phone call, email, or fax?
- Don't include attachments if you send an email release. Put the release within the body of your message.
- Don't issue a news release until you have some substantial level of important information to convey.
- Make it easy of the media to do their jobs-include tip sheets, background papers, or Q & As.
- Know the publication or station deadlines.
- Before sending out news releases, know exactly who is to receive it. Call the paper and ask who you should address the envelope to.
- Ask the paper how they like to receive their news releases: via email, fax, or regular mail. Your news release will be more likely to get published if you send it according to the paper's preferences.
- Be ready to talk to the media incase they need to clarify the information or in case they want a quote.
- Many times the papers are interested in localized stories or human interest stories.
- Be concise with your writing. Limit yourself to no more than two pages.

