



Media Relations / News Conferences

Goal: To build strong media relations and prepare for and conduct an effective news conference



Strong Media Relations

- Identify and contact all media
 - Newspaper, TV, radio, cable, and web
 - Local, regional, key national news services
 - News directors, reporters, editors, photographers



Strong Media Relations

- Secure e-mail address, business and direct phone numbers, cells, pagers, etc.
- Meet & greet all directors of local outlets
 - Periodically, re-contact to keep lines of communication open



Strong Media Relations

(continued)

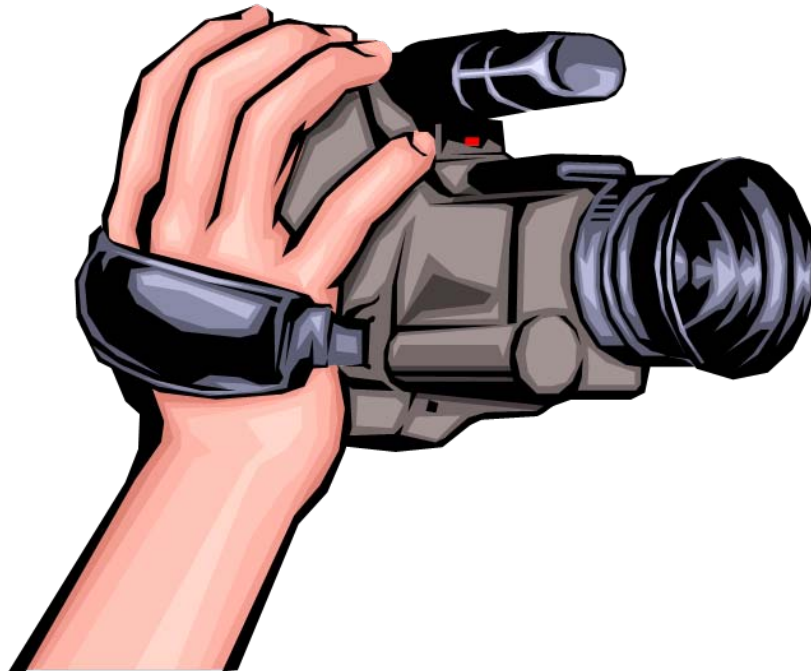
- Know each outlet's:
 - Deadlines
 - Live capability
 - Key journalistic decision-makers
 - Specific needs or processes



Strong Media Relations – The PIO Role

- Available 24 / 7 for contact
- Skilled in prompt information gathering
- Calm, controlled and articulate 'on-air'

What's It Like to Be a Reporter?





Discussion Question

Why hold
a news conference?



News Conferences

- Use for maximum, uniform media reach
- Ensure media receive same facts
- Must be newsworthy, timely, meet a wide need



News Conferences (continued)

- Requires speaker planning / prep
 - Spokesperson, key experts, key facts
- Held in fully accommodating venue
- Called in time for all to arrive and setup



News Conference Planning

- Include newsworthiness; vital facts
- Format based on situation
- Location & timing
- Prepare documents with facts / visuals
- Release via e-mail & post on web
- Pre-brief all speaking participants
- Support Media Center Facility



Speaker Preparation

- Determine need for key experts
- Identify key soundbites per speaker
- Prep all past or anticipated questions
- Differentiate who says what, when, why
- Fully explain 'hand offs', PIO control
- Brief all on positioning, exiting



Your Message to Media/Public

- Most important “now” information first
- Present tense, declarative sentences
- Step-by-step actions to public
- Experts support ‘now’ details
- All participants must have talking points



Key Message Reinforcers

- Public safety team is working for you
- Your safety is our immediate concern
- Here is what you need to do right now
- Get ready to take this action
- Many people are ready to help you



Empower public to take action



News Conference Process

- Pre-brief media on format / speakers
- Brief introduction
 - ID spokesperson, issue statement, update
- Open for Q & A
- PIO takes Qs, decides when to defer
- Close appropriately and exit directly



Appearance / Body Language

- PIO: check participant's appearance
- Freshen up before going on air
- Wear agency uniform / emblems
- Remain calm, poised, in control
- As you wait to speak:
 - Look at speaker, media, or notes only
- When off-podium, you are still 'on'



News Conference Close & Departure

- PIO should close when:
 - Planned information is presented
 - Questions become hostile or redundant
 - Expert(s) appears to be losing control
- Summarize key facts, state next action

News Conference

Close & Departure (continued)

- ID time of next briefing / news conference
- Leave room directly without stopping



Post News Conference Evaluation

- Video or audiotape news conference
- Transcribe content ASAP
- Monitor media for misinformation
- Immediately correct media mistakes
- Debrief participants quickly, positively
- ID media Qs not previously answered



News Conference Cautions

- Listen carefully before answering
- State facts, not your opinion
- Avoid 'no comment', 'off-the-record'
- Select question you'll answer carefully
- Do not speculate on future possibilities
- Avoid answering 'trapping' questions
 - Use "That's not something I'll address"

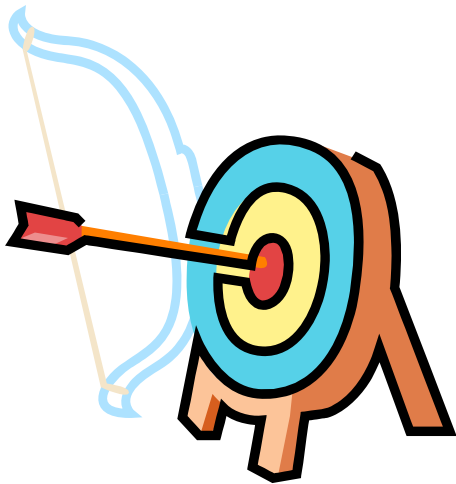


Preparing “Officials” for Air

- Politicians must comfort, support, guide
 - Beware of politics
- Draft talking points for your politicians
 - Advise them on possible questions
- Practice ‘tossing’ back to PIO

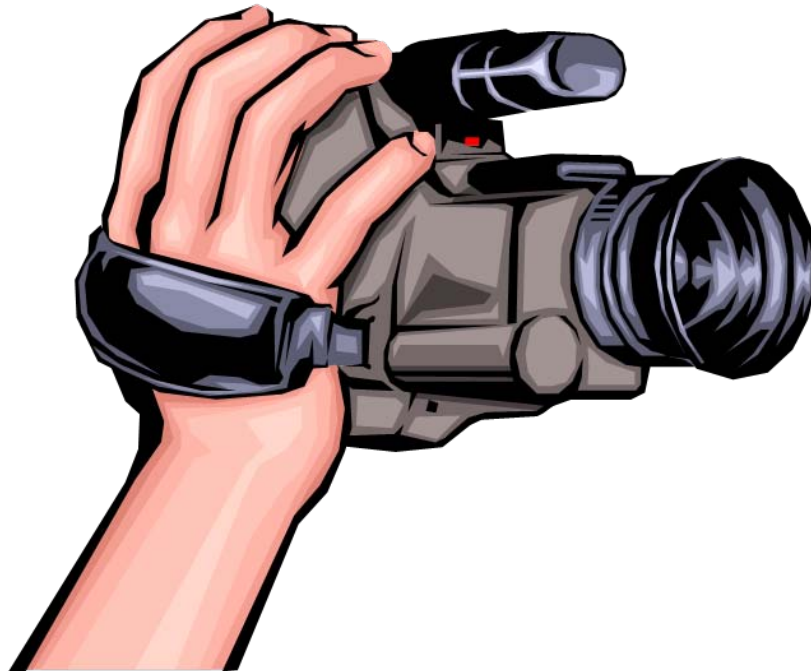
Preparing “Officials” for Air (continued)

- Assign emergency response to emergency professionals



Seamless information
&
continuity

Video Examples





Summary

- Effective media relations demands comprehensive preparation / planning
- Know what media need, when, where
- News conferences move critical 'now' facts to public through media
- Take care to prepare elected officials