

# **MEDIA RELATIONS**

**SOURCE: Ohio EPA Administration**

**CONTACT: Public Interest Center**

## **Media Relations Policy**

1. All Agency news releases are written and distributed by the Public Interest Center (PIC) or the deputy director for communications (communications DD). PIC media staff or the communications DD will coordinate development of news releases with technical staff and management as necessary to ensure accuracy of the news releases.
2. PIC will ensure that reporters receive information in a timely manner. Employees outside PIC must not contact reporters to initiate or suggest a story involving the Agency or matters governed by the Agency.
3. Media Interviews
  - PIC or the communications DD are the first point of contact for all media inquiries. Employees who are directly contacted by a news reporter, editor or producer must immediately refer the reporter to the Public Interest Center (614-644-2160). PIC media staff will coordinate development of the response with technical staff and management as necessary to ensure the accuracy of the response. Media requests for public records will be coordinated with the Agency's public records manager.
  - Employees who come in contact with a reporter while away from their office (doing field work/spill response, or at a public meeting, community meeting, speech, etc.) must direct all media inquiries to the designated media staff contact in PIC unless they have been specifically designated as a media liaison by the communications DD or the PIC assistant chief.
  - When an employee is authorized to speak to the media, the employee must:
    - only speak or write about the confirmed facts, agency approved program rationale or agency approved policies surrounding an issue;
    - not offer personal opinion or speculation; and
    - not speak or write on topics outside their area of official duties.

Questions that would require an employee to respond inconsistently with these requirements should be referred to the PIC media staff.

- On issues of considerable importance or sensitivity, cross-media issues, large-scale emergencies, and issues that require coordination with other

agencies, a single Ohio EPA spokesperson may be designated by the PIC assistant chief or the communications DD. Employees involved in the issue will be notified of the designated spokesperson.

- Authorized spokespeople will make every effort to be responsive to reporters' deadlines. If the information requested is extensive and will take time to be coordinated, a timeline for delivery will be agreed upon with the reporter.
  - The PIC assistant chief or the communications DD will coordinate all media briefings and background sessions for reporters.
  - Employees whose official duties may cause them to be designated as a media liaison will be briefed in advance by PIC media staff prior to an interview.
4. All letters to editors and correction letters to reporters must be approved and issued by the PIC assistant chief or the communications DD. If an employee believes that a story or editorial was in error, the employee should contact the PIC media staff as soon as possible.
  5. Editorial board meetings for the purpose of soliciting editorial support shall be coordinated by the communications DD. The Director's Office will approve the participation of employees in these meetings.
  6. Content, design and placement of public service announcements and paid advertising must be approved by the PIC assistant chief and the communications DD.
  7. When a member of the media makes a public records request, the request should be processed through Ohio EPA Public Records Retention and Inspections procedures. Once the records are assembled and reviewed, only a member of the legal staff should deliver the records, arrange for time to inspect the records or answer any follow-up questions about the request.
  8. Public Presentations
    - When an employee is authorized to speak pursuant to their official duties in a public setting/meeting where public officials and/or reporters are present or reasonably expected to be present, the employee must:
      - inform PIC and communications DD as soon as attendance is agreed to about the subject, date and location of the event using the form provided on the Agency intranet site (Notification of Public Event found on intranet Forms tab or at <http://epaintra.epa.ohio.gov/pic/reportingform.aspx>);
      - email any presentation materials to the PIC assistant chief for review two weeks prior to the event/meeting;

- only speak or write about the confirmed facts, agency approved program rationale or agency approved policies surrounding an issue;
- not offer personal opinion or speculation; and
- not speak or write on topics outside their area of official duties.

Questions that would require an employee to respond inconsistently with these requirements should be referred to the PIC media staff.

May 2014