

# Working with the Media

**-Suggestions on-  
*How To Get It Done***

U.S. Department of  
Homeland Security  
**United States  
Coast Guard  
Auxiliary**



## The Key-

**Stage an event!**

**Don't just have a bunch of heads talk about a subject. Have a VE conduct a VSC. Talk with a boater about America's Waterway Watch and have him put a decal on his boat. Conduct a one-day PE class. Show the local police in uniform conducting a sobriety check on a member of the media. Put the media into (not on) the water and ask them to put a life jacket on while in a (YMCA or hotel?) swimming Pool.**

## Using a Press Briefing

### Why

**The Press Briefing remains the most prolific way to reach a mass audience quickly. Be they boaters, fishermen or those involved in outside recreational activity (those who visit the water for a day, week, month or summer), when the media is used to convey one of our six (6) RBS and MDA messages, it is a sure bet that more will hear than you can ever hope to reach at a static display or boater safety class.**

**As a matter of fact, the public may be more enticed to take advantage of our services (PE, VE) if we use the media to detail our objectives.**

**Some may tell you that it is not the thing to do. WRONG! The media is in business to serve their public. Indeed, the messages they convey to serve their audiences can make or break them reputation wise, but even more importantly ratings wise. Always remember, the media only asks that you state your message in a timely manner, and do so with the credible authority necessary to convey that message as an expert. It would be foolish to talk about the dangers of ice when no ice is on the local lake yet. It would be foolish to talk about the VSC Program, when you yourself know nothing about what's involve.**

**When it comes to the media, in most cases they are very, very interested in what the US Coast Guard has to say on a subject involving RBS or MDA. With few exceptions, the US Coast Guard Auxiliary can speak for the Coast Guard when it comes to RBS or America's Waterway Watch. At the very least, an Auxiliarist can direct the media to someone in the Coast Guard who can speak about particularly sensitive subjects (MDA).**

**Remember this as well. As a PA Officer, you do not always need to be the one who speaks to the reporter about a subject. That will be addressed shortly.**

**So how do you do it? Start by creating your own Media contact list.**

## Media Contacts

You may have specific individuals as points of contact within certain media outlets. This is good, but not recommended as the only media contacts you should have.

It is United States Coast Guard Public Affairs Policy to treat all media the same!

By using your own POC's alone, you may well be overlooking a newspaper, television/cable or radio news operation who might have covered your event had you informed them of it happening, thusly increasing the circulation to those who you are trying to get your message to.

Besides, what if your personal POC is assigned another story, or is on vacation, maybe has the day off, or just not interested? Chances are your story will receive no coverage and the PA mission ends in failure.

What each and every PA needs to do is sit down and write the names of each and every Media operation within their AOR that operates a News Department.

1. Whether you like, listen, watch or read them, you must include them on your lists
2. SO/PA's should focus on daily newspapers, television/cable news, 24 hour radio news departments
3. FSO/PA's should focus on weekly & monthly newspapers and 24 hour radio news departments.

The major media market cities that SO/PA's should focus on are as follows.

1. Watertown, NY
2. Syracuse, NY
3. Rochester, NY
4. Buffalo, NY
5. Erie, PA
6. Cleveland, OH
7. Toledo, OH

Note-Daily, weekly, monthly newspapers, television/cable, radio news operations outside of these AOR cities should be left to FSO/PA's.  
Examples-Ithaca, NY  
Ogdensburg, NY  
Geneva, NY  
Dunkirk, NY

*All include the immediate suburbs !*

## [Media Contacts con't](#)

Once you have completed that list (and you will know what media to put on it because it is what you listen to, watch and read every day), sit down at the computer and type that newspaper, radio, or television/cable name into a search engine.

Chances are good you will find a website including telephone number, address and possibly an email address. If nothing appears in the way of contact information on the web (not likely to happen these days), call the station or newspaper and ask for information. When you've gathered this, organize and save it. You will be able to use the same list again and again each time you stage an event.

It is suggested you try to establish three (3) contacts within a media outlet. A way to contact the "Assignment Desk", "Evening or Morning Anchor Person", and another major anchor or reporter. This assures that someone will know of your event and it is hard for a producer to ignore an event if three people tell him about it.

For newspaper coverage, include the assignment desk, local desk editor and at least one reporter that you are fairly confident will be interested in your event.

**ALWAYS EXCHANGE BUSINESS CARDS OR CONTACT  
INFORMATION WITH ANY REPORTERS WHO ATTEND YOUR  
EVENT!!!**



## Timing

**A total of six (6) events a year would be staged if each of the GLIMSS Operations previously detailed were scheduled. That might mean 6-days a year that a PA would need to ask for a half day from work or school. You are the planner/organizer. Select the best days that work for you.**

**Keep this in mind. On a Thursday or Friday leading into a holiday, most media is screaming for scheduled events they can cover to fill time with. Also, When you pick your day, would you want the public watching, listening or reading your message before the weekend begins, or during the weekend when your audience is already outside playing? Do you want your event covered by the primary anchor/reporter/cameraperson, or the weekend reporter?**

**Thursday & Friday Mornings at around 10AM are the best days to stage Public Affairs activities for the media. You'll usually get the first string reporter covering it, and 10 AM gives them time to get the story and return to home base to write it up. They will remember and thank you for that.**

**Keep this in mind. If a local businessman calls a press briefing, a congressman, senator or governor, or a major fire, auto accident or homicide happens, your event will likely be ignored and your PA Mission will fail.**

**But wait a minute, there's that Thursday or Friday before a holiday again. What are the chances of a State Senator or Governor scheduling a press event just before the Memorial Day or Forth of July weekend?**

**Also one more thing about weekend scheduling. Most media outlets operate with a skeleton crew on Saturday and Sunday. Saturday and Sunday are when festivals, parties, fairs, concerts are staged. Does your RBS/MDA message fall into any of these categories? No! In the minds of the media they do however, if you hold your event on the weekend.**

## Always remember

**The closer you stage your event to the inner city where  
the media outlets are located, the more likely  
they will be there to cover your event !!!**

**No one wants to travel great distances to get a story unless it is hard news!!!**

## Assets

Several are available to you if you know where to look. Probably the best is the O-I-C of your local Coast Guard Unit. By telling him what you are attempting to do, he may well volunteer to come to any events you stage and act as an official expert spokesman for the activity. At the very least, he will probably assign a member of his crew to attend and speak on behalf of the Coast Guard.

Within your own Aux ranks, your Division or Flotilla Commanders will likely be more than willing to act as an official spokesman for your activity. FSO & SO's in areas of Operations, VE, PE are all probably very good in their areas of expertise.

Outside agencies can often, and often will participate in activities you plan, especially if they are involved in some way. Police, Fire, Medical including ambulance personnel will often provide expert testimony when it comes to pro-active preventative measures. Organizations like the Red Cross, Mothers Against Drunk Driving or Students Against Drunk Driving will be the first to stand-up for your event if it means getting a preventative message out.

The World Wide Web (www) is an excellent source for facts, figures, details and knowledge. Google (search engine) your way to a better understanding of your topic. You will find that many organizations (including the US Coast Guard itself) has provided information for dissemination to the general public which you can copy, paste onto a document and then distribute to the media for their usage.

Watch the District 9ER Website-"Members"- "Public Affairs" or "Publications" for links provided, focusing on a specific GLIMSS Operation.

<http://nintheastern.org>

or <http://a092.uscgaux.info>

Never, Never believe that the US Coast Guard Auxiliary or the US Coast Guard are the lone experts on any given subject or topic. Reach out to other agencies and/or organizations if you believe the message they bring is appropriate to the issue you are attempting to educate about.

Never feel that you must be the spokesman when the DCP or FC, VFC or VCP, SO or FSO is available to speak and more versed on the topic.

## [The Press Release](#)

Go to this address below to get to a template of one! After looking the form over, click on the reset button at the top of the page and begin typing your release. When completed, proof-read and then “save” onto your desktop.

Close the web page and re-open the press release on your desk top. Print as many pages as you need to send to the media contact list you developed, or print one page and duplicate with a copy machine as needed.

Be sure to print enough copies to send to your media contact list and those members of your Unit that you want to receive one.

[http://www.uscgaux.org/~forms/archive/news\\_release-f.pdf](http://www.uscgaux.org/~forms/archive/news_release-f.pdf)

You must revisit this website each time you want to type a new Press Release.

Press releases must be sent to the media at least 2-3 weeks prior to an event date, no less or you risk being ignored.

Proof read it again to make sure all your facts are correct as they pertain to date, time and place. Mistakes in these will be deadly when it comes to the media !!!

Using your media contact list, send one to each person by folding it in half, taping or stapling it together, addressing and stamping it and dropping it into the mail.

Do not put every release into an envelope. It is a waste of your time and the Assignment Editor might not appreciate opening another envelop when all he wants for the future file is the letter itself.

The release must include your contact information including name, rank, address, phone number and email address, and must include the who, what, when and where of the press event.

It is also a good idea to include the names of any other groups or organizations who will be there in support of the event (example: The US Coast Guard and the American Red Cross, or The Coast Guard Auxiliary and Monroe County Sheriffs Department)

Written press releases can be followed up by written emails one week prior to an event.

Do **Not** use attachments. Send a simple email with the who, what, when, where and your contact information again.

## Incidentals

**Never send email messages to a mix of media outlets ! Send one email per media outlet you are attempting to reach. Send a second, third or fourth email to other contacts in other media groups, one per outlet.**

**Example: 3 contacts from WIXT-TV receive one email**

**3 contacts from the Daily Journal receive one email**

**3 contacts from WIMH-AM Radio News receive one email**

**Make sure each of the emails all say the very same thing !!!**

**Prepare a handout for the media. Include in it the names, titles and phone numbers of anyone who will speak at your press briefing. Email addresses wouldn't hurt either.**

**This will allow the reporter to contact that person by phone or email should they have more questions, or need to clarify a statement.**

**Distributing brochures or other written material about the subject addressed can help the reporter with doing his story. Using materials released by the US Coast Guard will keep the focus on you and the Coast Guard Auxiliary.**

**Make sure you exchange business cards with all reporters and camera people. If you have no cards, include your name, rank, address, phone and email on the handout you give to the media. Be prepared to write their contact information down, and then include them for all future press releases for all future events.**

**You must arrive at least 1/2 hour before a press event is scheduled to occur.**

**Tropical Blue Long (Trops) is the recommended uniform for all press events unless otherwise notified. Outdoors or indoors, no hats on while addressing cameras. Hats on when outdoors, but not addressing a camera.**

**No sunglasses!!!!**

**Got Questions ???**

**Contact Me**

**[jhoss@twcny.rr.com](mailto:jhoss@twcny.rr.com)**