



Rural EMS Media Toolkit

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Media Relations Guidelines

Establish and maintain positive relationships with the media, ensuring effective communication and coverage of its activities and initiatives.

Getting to know the media

- **Research:** Identify key reporters, journalists, and media outlets covering emergency services, healthcare, and local news.
- **Network:** Attend media events, introduce yourself to reporters, and build relationships with media professionals.
- **Understand preferences:** Learn about the interests, deadlines, and preferred communication methods of different media outlets and journalists.

Responding to interview requests or inquiries

- **Promptness:** Respond to media inquiries promptly, even if it's to acknowledge receipt and indicate a timeframe for a full response.
- **Preparation:** Gather relevant information, data, and spokesperson availability before committing to an interview or providing a quote.
- **Message alignment:** Ensure that messaging aligns with the objectives and priorities of the association or agency.

Reaching out with a news release:

A news release can be sent when you have newsworthy content. Determine if the information warrants a news release based on its relevance and potential impact. Have:

- **Clear messaging:** Craft concise, clear, and compelling press releases with key information upfront.
- **Distribution channels:** Utilize online platforms, email lists, and distribution services to reach target media outlets effectively.

How often you should reach out to the media:

- **Regular Updates:** Provide updates and announcements to the media on significant events, initiatives, or achievements.
- **Balanced approach:** Avoid overwhelming the media with excessive press releases or outreach. Maintain a balance between proactive and reactive engagement.

Outreach for radio:

- **Timely pitches:** Offer timely story ideas or interview opportunities to radio stations, considering their broadcast schedules.
- **Engaging spokespersons:** Provide articulate and engaging spokespersons for radio interviews, focusing on delivering concise messages.
- **Local relevance:** Emphasize local impact or relevance in pitches to community radio stations.

- **Visual image:** Radio stations have web sites and will post stories. A photo, logo or graphic is beneficial.

Outreach for TV:

- **Visual appeal:** Highlight visually compelling aspects of EMS activities or events to capture TV stations' interest.
- **Available for those visuals:** Ensure availability of EMS personnel, equipment, or demonstrations for TV crews to capture engaging visuals.
- **Advance notice:** Provide sufficient advance notice for proactive TV interviews or coverage opportunities, considering production schedules.

Outreach for Newspaper:

- **Local angle:** Emphasize local angles or human-interest stories relevant to the community in pitches to newspapers.
- **Background information:** Include relevant background information, statistics, or quotes to support story pitches to newspaper reporters.
- **Follow-up:** Follow up with reporters after sending press releases or story pitches to offer additional information or interviews.

Building positive relationships with the media

- **Honesty and transparency:** Maintain honesty and transparency in all communications with the media.
- **Respect deadlines:** Respect journalists' deadlines and provide information in a timely manner. If you cannot meet their deadline, let them know, or ask if there is a way to accommodate their request.
- **Appreciation:** Express appreciation for coverage, whether positive or negative, and provide feedback when appropriate.
- **Avoid bias:** Avoid showing favoritism to specific media outlets or reporters and treat all media professionals equally.

Guidelines for Social Media Usage

Effectively leverage social media to engage with your community, raise awareness about important health and safety issues, and enhance your overall public image.

What social media platforms should you be on?

- **Facebook:** Ideal for sharing long-form content, event updates, and fostering community engagement through comments and shares.
- **Instagram:** Great for visually driven, more personal content such as photos and short videos, appealing to a younger demographic.
- **LinkedIn:** Effective for professional networking, sharing industry insights, and showcasing EMS expertise to potential partners or recruits.
- **YouTube:** Great for posting longer videos including “how to” (shovel properly, clear a landing zone, etc.), “get to know us,” (open the back of an ambulance and explain 2-4 things that a person could see), or “what we do” (visit a patient to share their story and your impact on their life).

How often should you post:

- Aim to post 3-5 times per week to maintain an active presence.
- Adjust the frequency based on how often your audience engages with you, so you don't overwhelm them with too many posts.

When to post:

- Schedule posts during peak engagement times, typically early morning or evening hours when users are most active on social media.
- The days when people are usually most active on social media are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.
- The times of the day can vary, but it is often between 8-11 am and 4-6 pm.

What to post:

- Post a mix of educational content, community updates, safety tips, behind-the-scenes glimpses, and relevant news.

Examples of good posts from Minnesota Ambulance Association members

- Highlight successful patient outcomes or stories of EMS “heroes” going above and beyond the call of duty.
- Share safety tips for different seasons or holidays, such as firework safety on Independence Day, winter driving tips, water safety in the summer or signs and symptoms of a stroke or heart attack during Heart Health Month (February).

- Showcase community outreach efforts, such as CPR training events, blood drive, book or food drives or participation in local health fairs.
- Recognize EMS staff milestones, achievements or acts of kindness within the community.
- Once a month do a “Did you Know?” post about your service, highlighting a data point (distance or number of patients), a fun fact (how much food was served at your brat fry) or promoting a skill.
- Periodically share a “get to know the staff” post with a photo and information on that colleague, both professional and personal. “These are the people who could be caring for you in your time of need.”
- Create an event (on Facebook) and share, so the community is invited.

Photos and reels (vertical videos):

- Share high-quality, visually appealing photos and short video clips showcasing your personnel in action, community events, training sessions or equipment demonstrations.
- Utilize reels or short videos to deliver quick safety tips, CPR demonstrations, or highlight your involvement in community initiatives.

When and how to engage (respond, like, comment, share):

- Monitor social media channels regularly for comments, mentions and messages, aiming to respond promptly within 24-48 hours.
- Engage with followers by liking, sharing and commenting on their posts to foster a sense of community and build rapport.

What NOT to post:

- Avoid sharing sensitive patient information, including identifiable images or videos of patients without explicit consent.
- Refrain from posting controversial or divisive content that may alienate followers or undermine your organization's reputation.
- Exercise caution when using humor or sarcasm, ensuring it does not trivialize serious situation or offend followers.

Creating an Effective Message

When you are asked to do a media interview, provide a presentation to a local community group, or write a news release, follow these guidelines to effectively communicate your message:

- **Know Your Audience:**
 - Understand who you're addressing (public, media, colleagues).
 - Tailor your message to their level of understanding.
- **Clarity and Brevity:**
 - Keep your message concise and straightforward.
 - Focus on key points without unnecessary jargon.
- **The 5 Ws and H:**
 - Answer the essential questions:
 - **Who:** Introduce yourself and your agency.
 - **What:** Explain the situation, event, or topic.
 - **When:** Mention relevant dates or timelines.
 - **Where:** Specify the location or context.
 - **Why:** Explain the purpose or significance.
 - **How:** Describe actions or procedures.
- **Have three points:**
 - Three are easier to remember.
 - 1-2 could be facts and the other is educational or empathetic.
- **Stick to the Message:**
 - Stay on topic; avoid tangents.
 - Reiterate key points consistently.
- **Time Management:**
 - **Media Interviews:**
 - **Soundbite:** Aim for 20-30 seconds per response.
 - **Background Information:** Provide additional context if needed.
 - **Speeches:**
 - **Opening:** Grab attention in the first few sentences.
 - **Body:** Organize content logically.
 - **Closing:** End with a memorable takeaway.
- **Prepare and Practice:**
 - Anticipate questions and rehearse responses.
 - Be confident and authentic.
 - Videotape yourself and watch it back to see how you do.

Effective communication builds trust and informs the public. Whether it's a brief interview, a speech, or a news release, prioritize clarity, relevance, and professionalism.

How to Create a Boilerplate

A **boilerplate** is a concise and standardized piece of text that provides essential information about your company. It ensures readers understand who you are and what you do. It's commonly used in media releases, official documents, and other communications such as in letters, on your web site, and in the "about us" section on social media.

Include:

- **Organization's name:** Clearly state your organization's full name.
- **Founding date and place:** Mention when and where your organization was founded.
- **Services:** Briefly describe what you do.
- **Location:** Mention where you have sites, what region you cover (counties or communities), other geographic information.
- **Mission:** Highlight your organization's purpose or mission.
- **Social media links and contact information:** Provide relevant links and ways to get in touch including phone number, email address, mailing address.
- **Consider mentioning major milestones, awards, and honors:** Showcase your achievements.

Tips for Writing a Great Boilerplate:

- **Gather data:** Collect current statistics and relevant information about your company.
- **Balance objective and mission:** Make your company sound influential in its industry.
- **Inject personality:** Consider adding a touch of energy or brand voice.
- **Be succinct:** Keep it concise while covering essential points.

Press Release: How-to & Template

Purpose

Press releases are the cornerstone of any publicity program. They need to be written well, with solid and precise information. An effective press release captures key messages, establishes credibility and, above all, is relevant and interesting.

Font

Use 11-point font, ideally Arial or Times Roman. Keep the copy black. Use bold and underline sparingly, and only for emphasis.

For a headline, use a bold font, around 16-point font, centered in the page.

Structure

- **Contact Information**

In the upper-left corner of the press release, include the name, telephone number, and e-mail address of the media contact person within your organization.

- **For Immediate Release**

In the upper-left corner, below the contact information, add in the line: **For Immediate Release**

Press Release Title/ Headline

Provide a catchy headline that tells the whole story and will earn the attention of a reporter who has to wade through hundreds of press releases each day. Keep the headline brief and ensure it communicates that your release contains press or information appropriate to your target readership.

Dateline

- Location (Add in the location from where you are sending the release)
- Date (Add in the date of the media release)

Example: **Los Angeles, December 15** – ABC Ambulance announced today...

Lead & Body

To ensure the important information stands out clearly, press releases are written in inverted-pyramid form. The “lead” is the first sentence of first paragraph and should summarize the entire press release while the remainder of the first paragraph should be used to amplify the lead. Each following paragraph will contain less-important information but should add more detail and color to the release. Press releases are written in a form that helps reporters spot the vital information.

Press releases should be no more than two pages. If it is longer than one page, each page should end with a completed paragraph, and “MORE” typed three times across the bottom of the page. The last page of the press release should end with the numerals “-30-“ or “###” typed across the bottom.

About [Organization]

This is commonly referred to as the boilerplate. Insert your organization’s description, about one paragraph, and it should include the name, when it was founded and by whom, and the general services and location. Awards and accomplishments can be included. The last sentence of the "About" section should direct the reader to the company's web site and social media for more information.

:: EXAMPLE :: INCLUDE YOUR LOGO IN THE HEADER

Lt. Joe Smith
Phone
Email

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ABC Ambulance Provides Life-Saving Care to Neighbors

(City, State, Month, Day, Year) – ABC Ambulance use 1-2 sentences to get to the point)

Next paragraph: provide details answering the who, what, where, when why and so what questions.

Next paragraph: Include a quote from someone on staff, the patient, a community member. That can be the executive director, patient or family member, mayor or community leader, etc.

Next paragraph: If needed add more information, such as details, data, where to find out more, when the next event is, etc.

About ABC Ambulance

Put your boilerplate here.

###

Examples of Social Media Posts

Here are **six sample social media posts** your agency can use to engage with your community and share important information:

1. **Community Safety Reminder:**
 - Did you know? Properly installed car seats save lives! Make sure your little ones are buckled up correctly. Check out our web site for car seat safety tips and upcoming inspection events. #SafetyFirst #CarSeatSafety
2. **Meet Our Heroes:**
 - Meet Paramedic Sarah! She's been serving our community for over a decade. Sarah's dedication and compassion make her an invaluable part of our team. Drop a comment to show your appreciation for our hardworking EMS professionals! #EMSHeroes
3. **Emergency Preparedness Tip:**
 - Be prepared! Create an emergency kit for your home. Include essentials like water, non-perishable food, medications, flashlights, and a first aid kit. Share this post to spread the word and help others get ready for any situation. #Preparedness #SafetyKit
4. **Behind the Scenes:**
 - Ever wonder what happens during a 911 call? Our dispatchers work tirelessly to connect callers with the right resources. They're the unsung heroes behind the scenes! Drop a ♥ to show appreciation for our dispatch team. #911Dispatchers #TeamWork
5. **Health Tip Tuesday:**
 - Did you know that staying hydrated is crucial for overall health? Proper hydration helps prevent heat-related illnesses and keeps your body functioning optimally. Drink up, stay safe, and tag a friend who needs a reminder! #HydrationMatters
6. **Community Event Alert:**
 - Join us this Saturday at the local park for a free CPR training session! Learn life-saving skills and meet our friendly EMS team. Let's empower our community to save lives together. Share this post to spread the word! #CPRTraining #CommunityEvent

These posts should be customized to fit your agency's voice and specific events. Engage with your followers, share valuable information, and foster a sense of community!

Photography Guidelines for Social Media

When it comes to posting photos on social media, there are some essential guidelines and tips to keep in mind.

1. **Quality Matters:**
 - **High-resolution:** Ensure your photos are clear and sharp.
 - **Well-lit:** Natural light works best; avoid grainy or dark images.
 - **Composition:** Pay attention to framing and balance.
2. **Relevance to Your Brand or Message:**
 - Choose photos that align with your brand or convey your message.
 - Avoid random or unrelated images.
3. **Consistency:**
 - Maintain a consistent style or theme across your posts.
 - Use a similar filter or color palette for a cohesive look.
4. **Show Authenticity:**
 - Share behind-the-scenes glimpses or candid moments.
 - Authenticity resonates with your audience.
5. **Incorporate Text Sparingly:**
 - Add captions or overlay text when necessary.
 - Keep it concise and easy to read.
6. **Use Hashtags Wisely:**
 - Include relevant hashtags to increase discoverability.
 - Don't overdo it — quality over quantity.

A good photo is one that tells a story, evokes emotion, and connects with your followers.

Essential Canva Graphics for Social Media

Canva provides free customizable templates to make your design process easier.

As part of this media kit, six unbranded general templates were created for you to use now. However, consider getting a free account so you can create graphics your agency can use for your social media presence including:

1. **Facebook Cover Photo:**
 - Use a high-resolution image that represents your agency's mission and services.
 - Include your logo, agency name, and a brief tagline.
 - Ensure it looks professional and visually appealing.
2. **Instagram Story Templates:**
 - Create templates for sharing quick updates, behind-the-scenes glimpses, or safety tips.
 - Use eye-catching visuals and minimal text.
 - Consistency is key — stick to a cohesive design.
3. **Emergency Preparedness Infographics:**
 - Design infographics with essential safety information.
 - Include steps for CPR, first aid, or handling emergencies.
 - Keep them simple, easy to read, and shareable.
4. **Quote Graphics:**
 - Share inspirational quotes related to emergency response.
 - Overlay the quote on a relevant image (e.g., a paramedic in action).
 - Quotes can motivate and engage your audience.
5. **Event Promotion Graphics:**
 - When organizing community events (CPR training, blood drives, etc.), create eye-catching event graphics.
 - Include event details, date, time, and location.
 - Encourage sharing to boost attendance.
6. **Thank-You Posts:**
 - Express gratitude to your community, fellow first responders, or supporters.
 - Use a heartfelt message alongside a photo of your team in action.
 - Show appreciation — it fosters positive connections.

These graphics should align with your agency's brand, convey important messages, and resonate with your audience.