

# MEDIA RELATIONS

SOURCE: OHIO EPA ADMINISTRATION

CONTACT: PUBLIC INTEREST CENTER

## Media Relations Policy

1. All news releases are written and distributed by the Public Interest Center and/or the deputy director for communications.
2. Employees outside the Public Interest Center should not contact reporters to initiate or suggest a story. The Public Interest Center will ensure that the appropriate reporters receive stories in a timely manner.
3. Media Interviews
  - Employees must report media calls to the Public Interest Center (614-644-2160) immediately. Whenever possible, employees should contact the Public Interest Center before being interviewed by a reporter. If it is impossible to contact the Public Interest Center beforehand, call immediately afterwards to report the interview (or as soon as practically possible if you are in the field).
  - An employee may talk to a reporter only if he/she is responsible for, or directly involved in, the subject of the reporter's inquiry. Employees should not speculate on topics outside their area of expertise. Instead, those questions should be referred to the Public Interest Center media staff or to the person who is most familiar with the subject matter.
  - 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 Public Interest Center and/or Director's Office. Those involved in the issue will be notified if there is a designated spokesperson.
  - Calls from major out-of-state news organizations must be directed to the Public Interest Center media staff, who will coordinate an Ohio EPA response. This includes newspapers such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post* and *Chicago Tribune*, as well as Washington D.C. bureaus of major Ohio newspapers. It also covers broadcast media such as *Primetime*, *20/20*, and network news programs.
  - Employees who are contacted by editorial page writers and/or editors must refer the call to the Public Interest Center media staff.
  - Employees must return media calls the same day, unless the reporter indicates he/she has a different deadline. Employees who are not able to return a media call within the reporter's deadline should seek assistance from the Public Interest Center media staff.

- When talking to reporters about Agency activities, employees must represent Ohio EPA and the director. Comments must accurately reflect Agency policies and positions, not personal opinions.
  - Employees should not provide interviews that are “off-the-record,” “for background only,” or “not for attribution.” If there is a valid reason not to reveal information (such as when the information has been reviewed by Legal and determined to qualify as confidential under Ohio's public records law), the employees should explain why. Refer to Ohio EPA's public records policy and Ohio Revised Code Section 149.43 for more information on this topic.
  - All requests for in-person and on-camera media interviews (interviews not conducted by phone) will be coordinated through the Public Interest Center media staff or deputy director for communications. Employees who are in the field or at public meetings may give in-person and on-camera interviews if they are directly involved in the subject without consulting the Public Interest Center first.
  - The Public Interest Center and/or deputy director for communications coordinate all media briefings and background sessions for reporters.
  - Employees who are in a position to be interviewed by the media shall attend media relations training, which is offered periodically by the Public Interest Center.
4. All letters to editors and reporters must be approved and issued by the Public Interest Center and/or deputy director for communications. If an employee believes that a story or editorial was seriously in error, he/she should contact the Public Interest Center as soon as possible.
  5. Editorial board meetings for the purpose of soliciting editorial support shall be coordinated by the deputy director for communications. 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 Public Interest Center and deputy director for communications.

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