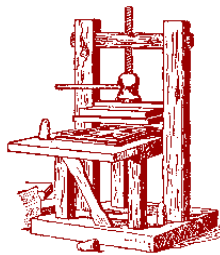


Always keep in touch with other staff persons in your unit to see if they can use your Public Affairs expertise to help them be more effective in carrying out their responsibilities.

Whether it is Member Training, Public Education, Academy Introduction Mission, Operations or Aids to Navigation, all of the other staff persons at one time or another can use some help from the PA Staff Officer.

If your unit has a publication, either regular or occasional, your publications staff person may also need your help. The PA Officer is an important part of the Coast Guard Team.



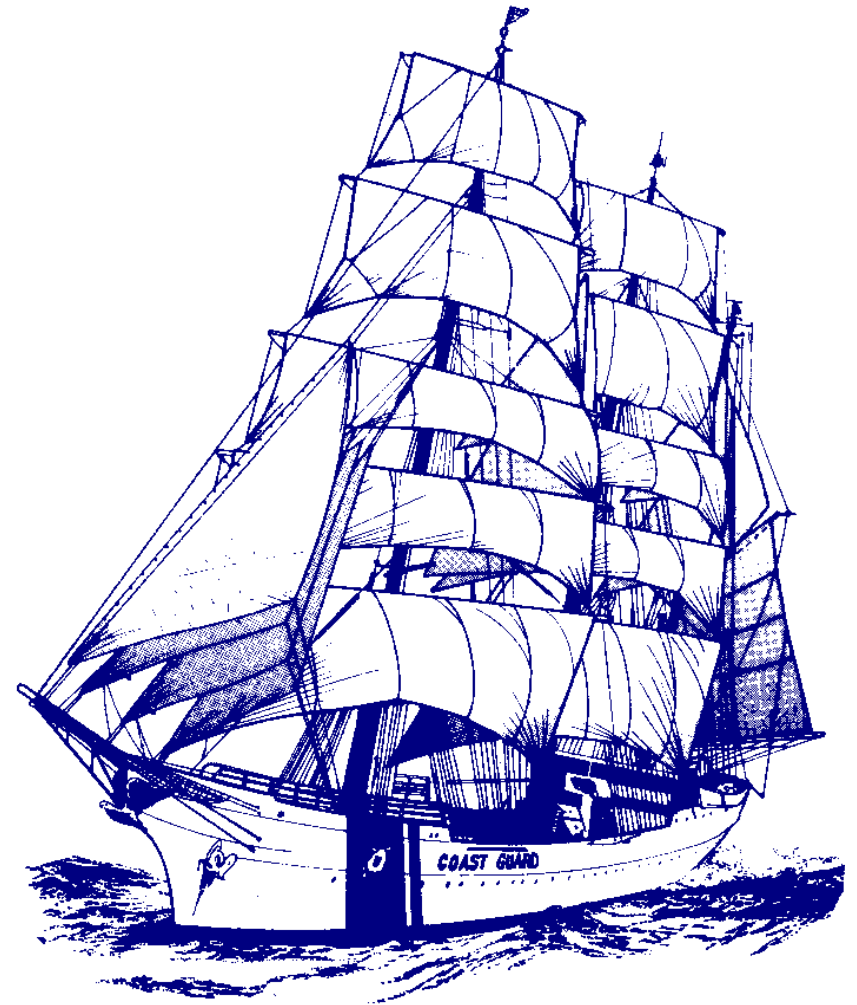
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The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary



PUBLIC AFFAIRS



HANDBOOK

PUBLIC AFFAIRS HANDBOOK

**A Primer on the Duties and Responsibilities
of United States Coast Guard Auxiliary
Public Affairs Staff Officers**



Prepared for N TRAIN -96

by

**Otis W. Littleton, Branch Chief, Editor, PA Update
under the Direction of**

**Commodore "Ted" Neale
Department Chief
Department of Public Affairs**



NOTES

Fact Sheet:

The FACT SHEET is an important and useful Press Conference Device. For example, if you are going to discuss boating accidents and the effect of alcohol on the severity and frequency of accidents in a given region, you should make the data on such topic available to the media.

Such data can be obtained from your state boating law enforcement agency or the United States Coast Guard. For example you may want to point out to the media that the data is not totally reliable because all accidents are not reported. Usually boaters only report those accidents where there is severe property damage or bodily injury. You may also want to request the insurance industry trade association in your state to see if they have any available data to compare with state data. This might reinforce your contention that not all accidents are reported.

Similarly, if you are talking about the value of PFDs, you can obtain data on the death rate of various accident situations by persons wearing PFDs versus those who were not wearing PFDs.

The Press Corp.

Don't forget, those who succeed in having their press release published in the local newspaper, mentioned on the radio or TV become eligible to membership in the Press Corps.

Remember also, that eligibility for membership in the press corps is not limited to Public Affairs Officers. Many rank and file members, as well as elected officers are members of the Press Corps. Membership in the Press Corps. is subject to an annual renewal.

To qualify or to maintain your eligibility from year to year, you should send clipping or copies of audio or video tapes to Betty J. Smith, Division Chief for Press Corps. Her address is:

10531 Sweetbriar Pkwy.
Silver Spring, MD. 20903
FAX 301-439-2330

Your duties, as the PA officer of your unit, include helping other members to get their stories out to the public. As Admiral Kramek noted in his Policy Statement, "The Coast Guard core values of honor, respect and devotion to duty, result in a quality organization that has an important story to tell. Tell it with Pride."

Don't delay, start today

COMMANDANT'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS POLICY STATEMENT

"One of the basic principles inherent in a democracy is the free and open exchange of ideas and information as servants of the Public Trust. We have an obligation and responsibility to educate the public on Coast Guard activities.

Toward that end, all members of the Coast Guard Family are encouraged and authorized to express publicly for attribution and on the record, their knowledge and professional opinions about their jobs and those Coast Guard areas for which they are responsible. In short, our policy is, "If you did it or have responsibility for it, you can talk about it - - if not — don't."

Accuracy is paramount in describing Coast Guard actions and practices. Information must be confirmed prior to release. Information that is adverse shall not be withheld simply to avoid embarrassment. As has been said before, "Bad news does not get better with age." We must tell our story accurately and first.

Protection of personnel and mission accomplishment are goals that take precedence over timeliness in releasing information. That which violates privacy, subjects Coast Guard Personnel to possible harm, or interferes with law enforcement, an official investigation, or judicial proceeding may be withheld until determined to be a matter of public record.

Authority to release information and images rests with the Command. Commanding Offices shall exercise that authority aggressively while insuring that accuracy, privacy and policy requirements are observed. Coast Guard Public Affairs Professionals are always available to support and advise unit commanding officers.

The Coast Guard core values of honor, respect and devotion to duty, result in a quality organization that has an important story to tell. Tell it with Pride."

**Robert E. Kramek
Admiral**

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION:

Public Affairs is an important and essential function of any organization, public or private. Public Affairs is the function of effectively communicating to the public about our activities and how those activities relate to the persons being served.

Public Affairs is the **ART** of effective communications, both external and internal. The fact is that we are a public entity and that we have a statutory and close working relationship with the United States Coast Guard.

Effective public affairs will communicate to our customer base, the recreational boater, the closeness of our relationship with the United States Coast Guard and will also allow the recreational boater to get to know of our skills and seamanship when it comes to safe boating issues.

GOALS OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAM:

Following the Commandant's policy statement, the goal of a public affairs program is that we, as servants of the public trust, have an obligation and responsibility to inform and educate the

public on Auxiliary activities.

Specifically, we have a directive to provide the public with information regarding the aims, purposes, and activities of the Auxiliary for the specific purpose of developing a **PUBLIC** understanding and appreciation of the role of the Auxiliary relative to recreational boating safety and the assistance it provides to the Coast Guard in carrying out its recreational boating programs.

Departmental Organization

The Public Affairs Department, nationally, falls under the jurisdiction of The National Rear Commodore having responsibility for the Member Services Directorate. This directorate also oversees the responsibilities of Auxiliary Member Resources and Membership Training. Recently, the Historian was removed from the auspices of Member Resources Department and made a part of the Public Affairs Department.

Every unit of the Coast Guard Auxiliary is supposed to have a Public Affairs Officer according to the organizational scheme of the Auxiliary. The unit to which the office is attached

The Press Release:

The press release must be well written, conform to the style requested by the media and get their attention. In general, the press release can be typed on a standard 8.5" x 11" letter size paper. The release should be double spaced. Make certain that it has been proofread and corrected.

It is not necessary, but a logo imprinted on the paper with the Public Affairs officers name, address, telephone number and fax number, if any, are conve-

niently shown. In this way the editor or other representative of the media will be able to communicate directly with you.

It is not suggested that the sample news release header shown below is the last word on graphics design. The idea is to create a letterhead that makes it obvious that the recipient is in receipt of a news release.

On this letterhead, type in the date, and other pertinent information such as the city or town of release. The release should be double spaced, typed and short.

SAMPLE

from **The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary**
NEWS 5th Coast Guard District, NR
 1 Washington Avenue
 Philadelphia, PA. 19147

Reply to :
 Joe Public Affairs
 2932 Simpson Rd
 Anytown, CA 17865
 Tel: 818-761-8635

January 29, 1996
 Anytown, CA. For IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Flotilla 67, United States Coast Guard Auxiliary has announced it's spring schedule of Safe Boating Courses. Courses will start March 11, 1996 at the Anytown Community Center at 7:30 PM sharp. The text used will be the new 11th edition Boating Skills and Seamanship.

Public Education Staff Officer, I. Teachem, said the course will be scheduled for 13 weekly lessons from 7:30PM to 9:30 PM and will be taught by qualified ins-

What To Write and How Often

There is no shortage of topics or issues about which to write relative to Coast Guard Auxiliary activities. To the extent possible, target your releases to attract the attention of the broadcast media. Remember, TV needs to have visual material that will attract and hold the attention of their viewers.

If you can invite the TV crew to the waterfront to “shoot” activities on or near the water that relate to your release, it will be great. It doesn’t have to be the waterfront.

Don’t forget the print media. Where possible, include photographs. (check with the local papers to ascertain whether they need black and white or color and the size of the picture.) The old saying, “a picture is worth a thousand words” is true.

Also, remember, with the media, *perception* is often reality. There is no practical limitation as to how many releases to send out in a given period of time. The important quality about releases is that they contain information that is useful to the readers and especially boaters. The more often you send out quality news releases, the greater the chance that you will create the proper percep-

tion that the Auxiliary is an active, thriving organization.

As a minimum, at least one press release should be distributed monthly.



The things about which you can write are virtually unlimited. Read your PA Manual, , **COMDINST M. 5728.3**. It has a number of suggestions on topics about which to write. In addition to those issues, your state boating law regulatory and enforcement agency activities can provide further opportunities to inform the boating public of changes in laws or new laws that impact on their boating activities.

In this regard, there is only one major caution. Be certain that you have the facts, understand them and communicate them in a way the reader and the editor will understand your release.

Prepare your release in a manner that is acceptable to the media and use your creative skills in designing a release that is an attention getter. Try it, practice will make you perfect.

can be determined by the acronym used.

The District Public Affairs Officer is known as the DSO-PA. He or she may have one or more assistants known as ADSOs-PA. At the Division level the Public Affairs Officer is the SO-PA. At the Flotilla Level, it is the FSO-PA.

Public Affairs Resources:

The Auxiliarist has several kinds or types of resources available to him or her for the purpose of communicating with the public. These resources are independent and will exercise their independent judgment as to whether any public affairs activity will be utilized at any given time. There are a number of factors the resource will use in arriving at the decision:

- Is the subject newsworthy or of general interest to the public?
- Is the information being disseminated in the public interest? That is, will the public derive some benefit from its publication?
- Is the information reliable and accurate? Does the information defame or otherwise provide derogatory or inaccurate information?

Is the information subject to comprehension at about the sixth grade reading level?

Is the information submitted in a format acceptable to the media being used?

The media resources include:

The Print Media

Daily Newspapers
Weekly Newspapers
Periodicals
Shoppers
House Organs

Broadcast Media

Radio (AM & FM)
TV local origination
TV Cable or Satellite

Public Appearances

Community Service Clubs
Schools
Business Corporations
Church Groups
Youth Organizations

Static Displays

Bulletin Boards
posters
counter displays
Shopping Malls
Bill Boards

All of these media outlets take time to organize and develop into a working relationship.

Contacting the Media:

The various media gets lots of mail submitting various types of releases ranging from feature stories to a press release announcing some event or accomplishment or achievement.

In short, there is a lot of competition in the media for a limited amount of space. In order for the things you write to get appropriate attention, you will have a better chance if the editor knows the person(s) submitting the articles.

Periodically you should call the media representative, make an appointment to visit him or her, put on your uniform and go see him or her. Be prepared to tell them about the Auxiliary, what it means to you and how the use of volunteers to promote recreational boating safety is saving every taxpayer lots of money.

Also, let them know how the role of the Auxiliary is evolving in these times of fiscal crises and just how the Auxiliary provides real time dollar savings to the government through its volunteer programs.

Ask them to describe the format in which they like best to receive submissions for publication. Then follow the format they describe. It will make it easier for

them to consider the use of your submissions.

Should you double space? Should you use all CAPS? What are their deadline(s) for submissions? What types of releases do they prefer? Approximately how many words do they want?

I have found most news media persons to be friendly and interested. After all, you could have the story of the year for them.

Don't be too concerned if a submission is not printed. There is a lot of competition. If your submission is too long or too complex for the average reader to comprehend, your story will more than likely be set aside. Also remember, your writing should be of a quality to be understood by the average sixth grader.

Feature Stories:

A feature story is one that focuses upon a particular subject matter. It is usually detailed, highly informative and takes a great deal more effort to write than a news release. Do not attempt to write and submit a feature story without first discussing the idea with the editor. The feature article usually requires very careful preparation, verification of facts and close cooperation

Media Lists:

Because your flotilla or division may cover a large geographical area, you may not be fully aware of all the media in your area or how to reach them. Usually there are trade associations for media such as a statewide or regional newspaper, TV or radio association. Such organizations often publish the names of member media representatives, but also often contain other useful information such as deadlines, names of contact persons, address and telephone numbers of key persons.

Some media will sometimes try to solicit a paid advertisement as a condition to getting a news release printed. If your treasury is loaded, it might be a good idea, but most often it becomes an expensive way to get a release published.

In some states, the media association often runs specials available to any advertiser that provides for either a classified add or a display add that would appear in all member papers in specified regions of the state at a very reasonable cost. If you are going to spend money for advertising, check that program out! It is usually very cost effective.



In the State of Pennsylvania, the State Department of General Services publishes a book entitled, "*The Pennsylvania Manual*". It is distributed free by members of the State Senate and the House of Representatives. This publication contains all kinds of statistical data on state and local governments and elections. It also contains a comprehensive listing of the print media, TV and radio. The listing identifies key persons in management, address, telephone numbers, and deadlines as well as circulation data.

Similar information may have been compiled in other states. and may similarly be available free or at a nominal cost.

Your local library may also be a source of the information you seek. Once you acquire this information, enter the information in your computer data bank to be used for the printing and mailing of releases or other information to the press.

should also brief or prepare the spokesperson on the issues to be discussed and of the anticipated questions the press may ask. The Public Affairs officer should make certain the decorum of the press conference is maintained at all times.

The Public Affairs officer should not seek a press conference unless the subject matter is such that the spokesperson can address the subject with some high degree of knowledge and confidence. The press conference has the potential of being a very unpredictable tool.

This is especially true if the subject matter is controversial. Questions from the press can cover any aspect of the subject and may not always be friendly.

At the start of the press conference or immediately preceding it, a briefing or position paper should be released as a point of reference for the start of the conference. This document should contain all relevant data as well as a narrative report to provide essential information and should be referenced at the beginning of the conference. The spokesperson should be prepared to "quote" from the paper and, if necessary, refer the questioner back to the paper for specific information.

The paper should be double spaced and be sufficiently long in length to cover the subject matter adequately.

Set a time limit for the close of the press conference. This is important. Terminate the conference at the established time. Do not allow the spokesperson or yourself to become argumentative with the press. If you see that the authorized spokesperson is starting to get into difficulties or is not familiar with some aspect of the subject relative to the question(s) being asked, **politely interrupt**, and make reference to the advance material that had been distributed. Inform the questioner that if he has more specific questions, you will be happy to research the matter after the conference and get back to him with an answer. As the Public Affairs Officer, you should be in a position to prevent the conference from becoming a feeding



with the editor . If you are good enough, you could even be asked to contribute additional feature stories on some regular or irregular basis.

The News Release:

A news release should follow a specific structure. The utmost care must be used in crafting the first or **LEAD** paragraph. The Lead paragraph is most important, because, if properly written, it will focus the readers attention on the highlights of the story. It is in the lead paragraph that we usually make use of Rudyard Kipling's five faithful serving men.*

In the lead, we usually try to compress the highlights of the story into two or three sentences that capture the interest and attention of the reader so that they want to know more. They usually cover ***who, what, when, where and why** and sometimes even **how**.

The second part of a release is the **ELABORATION**. This part of the release puts some flesh on the skeleton in the **lead** paragraph to provide the reader more detail and further retain and focus his attention. The elaboration usually is limited to not exceeding two paragraphs. Finally

we come to the conclusion, sometimes called the **CATCHALL**. In this section of the release, we might provide some interesting details or local color or other useful information about the Coast Guard or the Auxiliary or where to obtain even more detailed information.

Your news story may not always be printed. Don't get angry with the editor. Maybe they needed to edit the story to make it fit available space or to make a particular issue clearer for the readers. Talk to the editor to determine if there is any chance for a rewrite. Don't complain if he edits the content of your story.

Often, they do that, so anticipate it. Inform the editor that if he is going to edit or rewrite, and make substantive changes in the release you would like to have the opportunity to review the proposed editing with him. Your reason is to make certain that important information is not deleted or changed in a way that could render it misleading. It is not to censor their editing. Remember, you need to earn the trust of the media. There is no better way to do that than to work with them a few times. Once they trust your skills and judgment, you will find it is easier to work with them.

Also, the paper may de-

for rewrites done by the media, it behooves you to know the nature of the medias writing structure and to adhere to it as closely as possible to avoid any temptation by the editor to rewrite.

A good, friendly, working relationship with your editor will go a long way in improving your relationship with the media.

How often should you send out a news release? There is no hard and fast rule, but common sense dictates at least once a month. Two or three or more are acceptable because it represents a certain amount of dynamic activity. Just about any bone fide activity of the Auxiliary is a candidate for a news release. Elections, meeting notices, special meetings, awards, recognition of local official for their support, AIM-RAP activities, Courtesy Marine Examinations, Marine Dealer Visitations, Operations or SAR activities or special events (booths at boat shows, etc) are just a few of the Flotilla activities that may warrant a press release or feature news story.

Remember, if you do your job well, the news release may actually justify the media sending a reporter to do a face to face interview for a feature story on your activities.

The timing of the news

release or feature story may be critical. So check with the paper, TV station or radio station to get their time frame for submission of any articles or news releases. Material sent too late may make stale news for the next edition.

Media reporters don't al-

GET YOUR ARTICLES IN . . .



NEXT DEADLINE DATE IS . . .

ways get the chance to go out on a boat. Maybe they would be interested in joining you on a patrol or other official activity such as an aids verification patrol or an environmental patrol. Before you ask them, clear it with your DL-RAUX through the proper chain of command.

Be flexible, be creative, be patient. Be of good spirit and be enthusiastic about the work we, as auxiliaries, do.

Another important matter!

Remember, we often use a great number of abbreviations. To many Auxiliarists, it seems to be fashionable thing to do. Most civilians can really get lost and turned-off with our renditions of a serving of alphabet soup. Make

sure your articles don't contain a lot of mysterious abbreviations that may, to the editor, render your article effectively useless.

Practice being brief, simple and sincere in your writing. Know the subject matter, be objective. If you are giving an interview, **never say anything you don't want to see in print.** Reporters are a pretty intelligent lot and once they have the information, they can usually find someone to confirm what you have told them. Don't use the media for Flotilla or Division or District politics. Be truthful and don't try to manipulate the press. They don't tolerate that well.

Always edit and proof read your material. Yes, it can be tedious and boring, but is a good idea to do it. Remember, Your work not only represents you, but also the United States Coast Guard and the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Failure to submit a release that is as perfect as you can get it reflects an attitude of incompetence and a lack of quality workmanship, a perception you do not want to cultivate. Ask a fellow member to "proof" your work and even then re-read it with great care to make certain the article is as you want it. Perfect!

The Press Conference:

The press conference is a means of communicating information to the public via the media by responding directly to inquiries from members of the media. Media members in attendance may represent the broadcast media, radio and TV, as well as the print media. Press conferences are initiated by the person(s) wanting the services of the media to reach the public on a matter they feel is important.

Never call for a press conference unless the subject matter is newsworthy. Never call a press conference unless you are prepared to answer all questions that may be asked. If you don't know the answer to a question, state that you don't know and offer to get the information and submit it to the reporter as soon as practicable.

Also, remember that the Public Affairs person is rarely the news and should not become the news event. The press conference is usually called to permit elected officers or other persons who have been involved in a newsworthy event to provide details to the media that the media feels will best serve the needs of their customers.

The Public Affairs Officer should anticipate the kinds and type of questions the press corps might ask. The Public Affairs offi-