

US Coast Guard Auxiliary

District 8 CR
Public Affairs Department 2010



“Do It Yourself” Public Affair Primer US Coast Guard Auxiliary

“You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.”

Anonymous

this publication

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Every time you step out of your house in your Coast Guard Auxiliary uniform, you are doing public affairs work for the US Coast Guard and US Coast Guard Auxiliary. The impression you present to the public reflects directly on these two closely-linked organizations. **Public Affairs is everyone's job.**

The staff of the Public Affairs Department of District Eight Coastal Region has prepared the following “Primer” to help make this job easier for you. In this primer you will find tips on speaking to groups, writing press releases, developing presentations, as well as other helpful hints to making that all important “First Impression”.

Our plan is to make this “Primer” an evolving process that each and every one of you may contribute to. We hope that you will find it useful and that, as you learn new public affairs “Pearls”, you will send them to us to add to the “Primer” for everyone use.

Stand tall, stand proud. You are a part of the best maritime safety and security organization in the world, The United States Coast Guard. Speak intelligently and eloquently of her. Help make a great “First Impression” of her to the citizens of your community, the United States of America and the world.

Very Respectfully,

Jake Shaw

District Staff Officer for Public Affairs

US Coast Guard Auxiliary

District Eight Coastal Region

Media Contacts

Who are they, how do you find them, and then what?

In order to contact your target audience with information, instructions, or anything else you need to tell them, you need a voice. For Public Affairs, Public Education, Program Visitor, or Flotilla Leadership this voice could be local media outlet contacts. These contacts, both print and broadcast, can “get the word out” faster and more effectively than just about any other means when your target audience is the general boating public.

With that having been said, the next logical questions are “what do I call them, where do I find them, and how do I contact them?” Let’s look at each of these questions and see how we can answer them.

In general, media contacts will fall into two very broad categories which are:

1 - Content Editors (print)/Program Directors (broadcast), and

2 - Reporters (print and broadcast)

Content Editors or Program Directors should be your initial point of contact. They will be responsible for placing your Public Service Announcement (PSA) into the publication or broadcast schedule. They will usually be more than willing to help, especially if you have material that they can use “as is”. We’ll talk about “as is” material a little later. If there is a need for live interview or photography, the Content Editor or Program Director may assign the project to a colleague, often this will be a reporter or photographer.

Following contact with the Content Editor or Program Director, it is appropriate to contact the reporter directly unless you have been requested to do otherwise. In smaller markets, the Content Editor or Program Director may also function as the Reporter.

In order to find out who these individuals are we need to make a few phone calls. The best place to start is in the business section of your local phone book. You might begin by using general headings such as “newspapers and periodicals”, “radio and TV stations”, “news wire services”, etc. These listings are easy to find in most locations and they providing addresses and phone numbers. If you own, or have access to a computer you have a wealth of information at your fingertips. Using your favorite search engine and the same general headings, you can find media outlets in your area. This may lead to internet addresses, which in turn, may lead to contact information via e-mail.

At this point the fun begins and each call you make is an opportunity to see or hear your name in the media! Begin by asking the person answering the phone, often

the receptionist, who is in charge of placing PSA’s and who you may be able to speak to regarding local interest news items. Most often they will be glad to point you in the right direction and they will usually answer any questions you may have. Be sure to write the contact name down so you can refer to it during your conversation and when following up with them at a later time. When you make contact with the right person, begin your conversation by briefly introducing yourself as a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary and tell them what position you hold, followed by what you need from them. Remember, you may not be able to get your information in immediately, but the media is often looking for short “filler” type articles or sound bites they can use. Probably the most important thing you need to remember is that you are attempting to build a relationship, so timely follow-up is imperative. If you promise them something by a certain time, make sure it is complete, properly formatted, and on time. As you build your relationship, it’ll be easier to have your announcement or news item included on short notice, but it takes time.

After compiling a list of viable media contacts it is helpful to create an e-mail “group” containing the names/titles of your contact along with their e-mail address. Using the e-mail group allows you to create one announcement, press release, or other communication and send it to everyone at the same time. Using this method also ensures that all media outlets receive the same information at the same time so there is no perception of favoritism or exclusivity.

As mentioned earlier, “as is” material is readily available on the PA website. There is a large selection of material suitable for broadcast and print. The print information can be tailored to fit local needs and the broadcast material covers a wide range of topics. The information and files are available at auxpa.org. By using “as is” material we can provide media outlets with PSA’s, Press Releases, or announcements which do not require re-writing or formatting, thereby simplifying the process of getting the information out to the public.

If there is the opportunity to do live radio or TV, or to do a live interview for a printed publication you can, in most cases, direct the interview to ensure that your information is covered. As always, when meeting the public face to face or through the media, make sure that you present a neat, professional image. Make sure your uniform is clean, buttoned properly, and that all uniform attachments are correct. Also ensure that, while on camera, you are not wearing sunglasses and that you remove your cover.

Continued

Media Contacts, cont.

The following are a few tips to remember to make the interview appearance successful:

- > Watch successful interviews
- > Note styles and habits of people who interview well
- > Note the things they do which make them successful
- > Look your best
- > The better you look, the more professional you'll feel
- > Check out your venue if possible
- > Is the interview, on-air appearance going to be in an auditorium, a small conference room, a stadium, or standing on the dock
- > Be familiar with the sound system. If you'll be wearing a microphone, make sure it doesn't interfere with your natural movements
- > The more familiar you are with the space, the more comfortable you'll be at the podium or in front of the camera
- > Do your research, know what you want to say and how you want to say it.
- > The more you know, the more confident you'll be.
- > Visualize your success
- > If you believe you're good, you probably will be
- > Know your audience
- > Tailor your information to your audience where possible
- > Don't speak in acronyms. Use plain language so you'll be understood.
- > RELAX!
- > If you skip a point, chances are nobody but you will know. You can always go back and cover it later
- > Slow down
- > One of the indicators of nervousness is a lightning fast talker
- > Speak at a normal pace or maybe just a little slower than normal
- > Use your eyes
- > People trust people who look them in the eyes so look at your interviewer and into the camera
- > Don't just look at your notes
- > You look more confident with your head up and you can command the room.
- > Be yourself
- > People want you to succeed. Give them what they want by being the best you can be.

Take the time to build up your Media Contact List, your voice to the boating public. Use the list to keep your target audience informed, build a relationship with the people on your contact list, use the resources available to you. When you enjoy what you do, people notice and who knows, you just may recruit a new member with your enthusiasm.

US Coast Guard Auxiliary - Fact Sheet

When you are out doing vessel inspections, teaching a boating class or at the dock getting ready to get underway, someone, sometime, will ask you about the Coast Guard or the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Be prepared to give them some good information. Let them know what a valuable service the Coast Guard Auxiliary provides. It's a part of public affairs.

The following are a few facts to get you started.

The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary was established on June 23, 1939 by an act of Congress as The United States Coast Guard Reserves and re-designated as The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary on February 19, 1941.

During World War II, the USCG Auxiliary patrolled the beaches of America on horseback and the waters offshore in boats and with aircraft on lookout for German and Japanese submarines, rescuing mariners whose boats were sunk by these enemy subs.

Auxiliarists can be found on all the nation's waterways, in the air, in classrooms and on the dock, performing:

- Maritime Domain Awareness Patrols
- Safety Patrols
- Search and Rescue Operations
- Vessel Safety Checks
- Public Education
- Administrative Support to the Active-Duty Coast Guard
- Aids to Navigation Verification
- Bridge Administration
- USCG Aircraft Support
- Contingency Preparedness
- Licensing of Merchant Mariners
- Marine Safety and Environmental Protection Operations
- Port Safety and Security
- Public Affairs Support
- Recreational Boating Safety
- Vessel Inspections
- Waterway Management

The Auxiliary shares the Coast Guard's core values and motto. The core values are Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty. The motto is "Semper Paratus" (Always Ready).

The Coast Guard supports and encourages Auxiliary activities.

On September 13, 2006, Admiral Thad Allen, then Commandant of the Coast Guard, issued a new Auxiliary Policy Statement which states the "Fittingly, the core strategic purpose of the Auxiliary is to continuously hone its expertise to perform three prioritized functions:

- Promote and improve recreational boating safety;
- Support Coast Guard maritime homeland security efforts; and
- Support the Coast Guard's operational, administrative and logistical requirements."

It also states that:

"Every commander, commanding officer, officer-in-charge, and program manager shall work closely with their Auxiliary counterparts to fully leverage the resources, skills, qualifications, and profound dedication that reside within the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Such focused collaboration is essential to our unwavering commitment to mission excellence in serving and protecting the public trust."

On an average day, Coast Guard Auxiliarists throughout the United States will do the following:

- Complete 62.5 safety patrols
- Complete 6.2 regatta patrols
- Perform 10.2 vessel assists
- Assist 28 people
- Save 1 life
- Save \$341,290.00 in property
- Participate in 100 operational support missions
- Complete 13.4 recruiting support missions
- Educate 369 people on boating safety
- Perform 299 vessel safety checks
- Attend 70 public affairs functions
- Participate in 100 operational support missions

The Coast Guard relied heavily on Auxiliary direct and indirect support during the recovery missions surrounding hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as well as the recent Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Editor's Note: The public affairs team of District Eight Coastal Region urges all of you to be active readers and learn all you can about the Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary. The more you learn the prouder you will be about being a part of "Team Coast Guard" and the better advocate you will be to the public.

Tips, Guidelines, and Templates for writing an Effective Press Release

The following information will assist you when writing a news release for distribution through the PR Web press release network. A well crafted press release captures the attention of journalists and is optimized for distribution over the Internet, through e-mail and over specialized network feeds.

Pay Attention to the Content of your Press Release

When we talk about content we refer to the news story you are telling. Keep the following points in mind when writing your press release.

Is your news "newsworthy"? The purpose of a press release is to inform the world of your news item. Do not use your press release to try and make a sale. A good press release answers all of the "W" questions (who, what, where, when and why), providing the media with useful information about your organization, product, service or event. If you read your press release and it reads like an advertisement, rewrite it.

Start strong. Your headline and first paragraph should tell the story. The rest of your press release should provide the detail. You have a matter of seconds to grab your reader's attention. Do not blow it with a weak opening.

Write for the Media. On occasion media outlets, especially online media, will pick up your press release and run it in their publications with little or no modification to what you send. More commonly, journalists will use your press release as a springboard for a larger feature story. In either case, try to develop a story as you would like to have it told. Even if your news is not reprinted verbatim, it may provide an acceptable amount of exposure.

Not everything is news. Your excitement about something does not necessarily mean that you have a newsworthy story. Think about your audience. Will someone else find your story interesting? This is a common problem. Let's assume that you have just spent a lot of effort launching a new online store. Announcing your company's opening is always an exciting time for any business, but the last thing the media wants to write about is another online store. This is old news and uninteresting. Instead, focus on the features of your online shopping experience, unique products and services. Answer the question? Why should anyone care? (Avoid clichés such as "customers save money" or "great customer service".) Focus on the aspects of your news item that truly set you apart from everyone else.

Does your press release illustrate? Use real life examples about how your organization solved a problem. Identify the problem and identify why your solution is the right solution. Give examples of how your service or product fulfills needs or satisfies desires. What benefits can be expected? Use these types of examples to powerfully communicate the benefits of using your product or service.

If you are reporting on a milestone make sure that you attribute your success or failures to one or more events. If your company has experienced significant growth, tell the world what you did right. Show the cause and effect.

Stick to the facts. Tell the truth. Avoid fluff, embellishments and exaggerations. If you feel that your press release contains embellishments perhaps it would be a good idea to set your press release aside until you have more exciting news to share. Journalists are naturally skeptical. If your story sounds too good to be true, you are probably hurting your own credibility. Even if it is true, you may want to tone it down a bit.

Pick an angle. Try to make your press release timely. Tie your news to current events or social issues if possible. Make sure that your story has a good hook.

Use active, not passive, voice. Verbs in the active voice bring your press release to life. Rather than writing "entered into a partnership" use "partnered" instead. Do not be afraid to use strong verbs as well. For example, "The committee exhibited severe hostility over the incident." reads better if changed to "The committee was enraged over the incident." Writing in this manner helps guarantee that your press release will be read.

Economy of words. Use only enough words to tell your story. Avoid using unnecessary adjectives, flowery language, or redundant expressions such as "added bonus" or "first time ever". If you can tell your story with fewer words, do it. Wordiness detracts from your story. Keep it concise. Make each word count.

Beware of jargon. While a limited amount of jargon will be required if your goal is to optimize your news release for online search engines, the best way to communicate your news is to speak plainly, using ordinary language. Jargon is language specific to certain professions or groups and is not appropriate for general readership. Avoid such terms as "capacity planning techniques" "extrapolate" and "prioritized evaluative procedures".

Tips, Guidelines, and Templates for writing an Effective Press Release

Avoid the hype. The exclamation point (!) is your enemy. There is no better way to destroy your credibility than to include a bunch of hype. If you must use an exclamation point, use one. Never do this!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Get Permission. Companies are very protective about their reputation. Be sure that you have written permission before including information or quotes from employees or affiliates of other companies or organizations. Any dispute resolution will favor the other company, meaning that your press release may get pulled.

About your organization. Your press release should end with a short paragraph (boilerplate) that describes your organization, products, service and a short company history. If you are filing a joint press release include a boilerplate for both organizations.

Formatting Your Press Release

How you present your news is just as important as its content.

Mixed case. NEVER SUBMIT A PRESS RELEASE IN ALL UPPER CASE LETTERS. This is very bad form. It will definitely be ignored by journalists. Use mixed case.

Correct grammar usage. Always follow rules of grammar and style. Errors in grammar and style affect your credibility. Excessive errors will cause your press release to be rejected.

No HTML. Never embed HTML or other markup languages in your press release. Your press release will be distributed over a wide array of networks. Including such formatting will negatively impact the readability of your press release.

More than one paragraph. It is nearly impossible to tell your story in a few sentences. If you do not have more than a few sentences chances are you do not have a newsworthy item.

Summary paragraph. Include a one paragraph summary. Some distribution points only receive your headline, summary and a link to your press release. If you fail to include a summary paragraph you may reduce the effectiveness of your press release.

Word processor. Write your press release on a word processor instead of composing online. Writing online will not achieve best results. Take time to do it right. Write, print, proof read. Rewrite, edit...

Do not include your e-mail address in the body of your release. Do not include your e-mail address in the body of your press release. If you include your e-mail address in the body of your press release you run the risk of receiving spam. This is because your e-mail address will be available to the public. Spiders routinely scour the Internet harvesting e-mail addresses for spammers. Provide your e-mail address only in the space(s) provided during the submission process.

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Tips, Guidelines, and Templates for writing an Effective Press Release

Follow a standard press release format.

Make sure your press release looks like a press release. The following can be used as a template for your press release.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Contact Person

XYZ Company

555-555-5555

555-555-4444

Writer@desk.com

<http://www.YourWebAddress.com> (if applicable)

Headline - Be creative. One sentence. Use proper title case, capitalizing every word except for the following articles: of, it, the, a, an, from, and, is, by ...

City, State (PRWEB) Month Day, Year -- Grab their attention here. A strong introductory paragraph should cover who, what, when, where, why and how.

Put the body of your press release here. Expound on the information provided in your introductory paragraph. Include quotes from key staff, customers or subject matter experts.

The body of your press release should contain more than one paragraph. The final paragraph should re-state and summarize the key points of your news release.

For additional information (or sample, copy or demo), contact: (include contact information here)

You can include details on product availability, trademark acknowledgment here.

About XYZ

Include a short background.

Include safe harbor statement (if applicable).

Editors Note: The above information is from the "Tool Kit" found in the US Coast Guard Auxiliary's Public Affairs Department's website. Much more useful information can be found there as well. Visit www.auxpa.org/resources

PRWEB also have a great deal of free, useful information on writing good press releases. They are found on the world-wide web at <http://service.prweb.com>

Tips for USCG Auxiliary Elected Officers Being Interviewed

Whether you are talking to a newspaper reporter or being interviewed in front of the camera, here are some tips to help you. Know what you want to communicate, and don't be afraid to repeat yourself. Important ideas often need to be repeated several times.

*Live by your message points, the key points you feel are most important to communicate to the media and your audience. Remember: Life jackets save lives. Safe boats save lives. Educated boaters save lives. Sober boaters save lives. Tie these "command messages" to your local area whenever possible.

*Short answers are better than long ones. Each message should be no longer than 10 to 15 words. Stop talking when you're done making your point.

*This is not a confrontational interview. Smile.

*Don't overlap the interviewer's question. Begin your answer when he or she is finished.

*Speak in complete sentences, trying to repeat the main part of the reporter's question. Example: "How should a boater prepare for the boating season?" Answer: "The Coast Guard Auxiliary recommends that boaters take a boating safety course and have their boat checked to ensure they have required and recommended equipment to operate safely." Your quote will be more likely to be used by the media if it contains a complete thought.

*Avoid jargon and acronyms. Speak as simply as possible.

*Relax by taking a few deep breaths before the interview, and remember to breathe throughout. Keep your hands free, open, and animated. Gesture as you normally would.

*Plan what you'd like to say if asked, "is there anything else that you'd like to say?" You should recap your three main message points as a response.

*Always assume the camera and microphone are operating. When doing studio interviews ask which camera is on you and be sure to face towards it. When doing a one on one, face the interviewer. And, remember where reporters are concerned, there is no such thing as "off the record".

*Resist the urge to lean into the microphone. They are very powerful and can pick up every word you say.

*Television is an intimate medium. Speak in personal, anecdotal terms. Use analogies to illustrate your point. Don't be afraid to tell "your story."

*Body language is important for television. Practice by talking into a mirror and by having a friend ask you questions you think journalists would ask. People will remember how they felt about you more than they will remember what you said; so, it's important to be relaxed and sincere.

*Wear the appropriate uniform – usually Trops in a studio setting and ODU in the field. If the interview is outdoors, take off your cap. No sunglasses, please.





Publication - Newsletter Tips

Required Elements of an Auxiliary Newsletter

The following information is needed and should always appear on the publication masthead, if one is used, or on the cover page.

- ◆ Name of publication
- ◆ Date of publication
- ◆ District
- ◆ Division
- ◆ Flotilla

The editor's name, address, and telephone number must appear somewhere in the issue preferably on the first inside page.

It is a good idea to have the highest elected officer's name, address, and phone number in your publication (Flotilla/Division). The editor must obtain permission from this officer before listing personal contact information. Email addresses may be used.

The notice of your next meeting: date, time, place, agenda, or special program.

A calendar of coming events in your flotilla, division, district, and boating community.

Be sure to list dates of national meetings and urge members to attend.

A message from your DCO, DCDR, FC, and or VFC.

Remember that you are the editor and correct any spelling or other errors you might see in the article. But even as the editor it is not appropriate for you to sign your name to an article that has been written or submitted by someone else.

In telling time, the word hours is not used by the Coast Guard. The preferred way is to use only military time with nothing following the numbers.

Example: "The meeting will start at 1900."



Coast Guard Policy

It is the policy of the Commandant that all articles, items, etc. shall avoid the use of specified gender instances where the subject could be either.

Example: "Anyone wishing to attend the unit banquet must submit his/her name to the secretary by 1 October."

Preferred: "Members wishing to attend the unit banquet must submit their names to the secretary by 1 October."

Publication Info:

You will find as you start out working on an story that sometimes getting members to help with or submit articles can be rather trying. If you've been publishing a newsletter for a while you already know this. But you can't be discouraged.

Present to the flotilla membership an outline of subjects that you think would make good news and ask members to suggest things they would like to read about. NOW, they become involved. They commit themselves. Now you can ask them to write about the things that they suggest.

Don't wait for people to bring news to you! Ask for it! Attend Auxiliary events. (They're fun anyway!!) Read to keep up on the programs, aims, and activities of the Auxiliary. Circulate at meetings and social events. Talk with everyone you can and keep your handy notebook ready at all times. Also in today's modern age of digital photography keep your camera handy. Photos can really enhance a story and add to the look and flow of your newsletter.

Current or past Commodores are the only Auxiliarist that may have their title precede their name. Titles of all other Auxiliarist appear after their name. Refer to page 26 of the Publication Officers Guide for further clarifications.