



**Administrative Regulations
Office of the Mayor**

Title: MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

A.R. Number: 1.7 **Effective Date:** x/x/2009 **Page:** 1 of 2

Supersedes: Media Relations Policy **A.R.:** 1.9 **DATED:** x/x/x

I. GOAL

The City Administration strives to inform its residents, businesses, civic associations, visitors, and others through a proactive communications program. One of the most effective and necessary ways to communicate City policies and activities to the public is through the news media. It is extremely important that media requests are handled promptly and that proper media identification is provided at the time of the request. Often, the Mayor's Office and City Administration can positively impact a particular issue if its position is known in a timely manner.

II. GENERAL POLICY

The Press Secretary to the Mayor is assigned primary and official responsibility for the City of Richmond's media relations and serves as the designated spokesperson for the City in lieu of the Mayor and the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The Press Secretary coordinates information among these officials and prepares responses to the media that are approved on behalf of the City.

Only those representations expressly stated or otherwise approved by the Mayor, the Chief Administrative Officer or the Press Secretary will be considered as official positions or policies of the City Administration.

III. INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE MEDIA

The Office of the Press Secretary prepares, approves and issues all City of Richmond news releases, unless prior arrangements have been made. The Office makes final determinations regarding the potential newsworthiness of information, as well as whether and in what manner it should be released to the media. All official releases must be issued on Office of the Press Secretary letterhead unless otherwise arranged. The Office establishes and maintains a comprehensive media contact list for dissemination of news releases.

IV. CITY EMPLOYEE INTERACTION WITH THE MEDIA

All inquiries should be referred immediately to the Office of the Press Secretary, which is responsible for coordinating an appropriate response. The Press Secretary will contact and coordinate a response to the media on behalf of the Mayor, the CAO or a Deputy Chief Administrative Officer. The Press Office may designate other spokespersons, as arranged in advance, to address a particular inquiry or situation.

City employees are expected to provide members of the media with the same respect and courtesy afforded to any other citizen. If the media contacts you, please follow these steps for *all* contacts (unless other arrangements have been made):

1. When contacted, indicate that it is City policy to make the Press Secretary's Office aware of the contact before providing *any* information to the media.



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City Employee Interaction with the Media continued

2. Ask the media contact for the name, title, the media organization, telephone number, the deadline for the information and, most importantly, the specific information that is being requested.
3. Indicate to the media contact that someone will get back to them and ask what the deadline is for receiving the information.
4. Immediately notify your supervisor, who then is to contact the Press Secretary's Office by either e-mail or telephone.
5. Please be sure to follow this procedure. If you have any questions, contact your supervisor for guidance.

Examples of exceptions for Department Heads or their designee:

- *General media follow-up to an already approved and issued press release related to non-controversial information.*
- *General media inquiries regarding basic departmental operational matters (where there is no challenge at issue).*
- *Any matter of discussion that would involve dissemination of the same information already posted and available on City's website (where there is no challenge at issue).*

It is City policy not to comment on any matters in litigation, personnel actions and matters involving client information.

V. MEDIA ACCESS TO PUBLIC SETTINGS

The news media has a legal right to observe, photograph and/or record any event or any person in a public setting. If a member of the media arrives at any City location unannounced, the Press Secretary's office should be notified immediately so that it may begin the process of assisting the media.

VI. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION BY THE MEDIA

Requests to review or obtain copies of City documents may carry legal implications and potential liabilities for the City under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Employees who receive such requests must immediately notify their supervisor as outlined in Section IV, and also the Press Secretary's Office.

Reimbursement of costs in connection with the review and copying of information should be followed under FOIA, to reflect the actual cost to reproduce documents requested, as well as the staff time involved in responding to a request. Questions on this should be directed to the Press Secretary's Office.

VII. PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES

The City Police and Fire Departments have designated uniformed officers and other internal staff who serve as Official spokespersons regarding law enforcement issues and incidents requiring emergency response. Media inquiries regarding such issues should be referred immediately to appropriate Police or Fire Department personnel and at the same time, the Press Secretary's Office.

In all instances related to law enforcement or emergency response, the Press Secretary should be advised immediately of unusual incidents likely to garner significant media attention or which may warrant further involvement of the City Administration.

APPROVED:

MAYOR



INTERVIEW REQUEST FORM

DATE RECEIVED: _____ RECEIVED BY: _____

INTERVIEW DATE: _____ TIME: _____ LOCATION: _____

REPORTER/AGENCY:

CONTACT INFORMATION:

INTERVIEW TOPIC/PURPOSE:

QUESTIONS:

Please return form to:
Richmond Police Public Affairs
200 W. Grace St., Richmond, VA 23220
Phone: (804) 646-0607
Fax: (804) 646-3496