



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING
RECLAMATION AND ENFORCEMENT
DIRECTIVES SYSTEM

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Subject: Public Affairs Responsibilities for Eastern and Western Field Operations Offices.

Approval:

Jed P. Christensen

Title: Director

1. Purpose. This directive establishes guidelines and procedures for conducting public affairs activities between headquarters and OSMRE's field organization, with particular emphasis on two-way communication.

2. Definition. None.

3. Policy.

a. Policy. It is the policy of the agency to keep the media and the public promptly and accurately informed of all its programs and activities. In accord with long-standing Department policy, full disclosure of factual information is the general rule, not the exception.

b. Responsibilities.

(1) The Director is responsible for overall program guidance.

(2) The Chief, Office of Public Affairs is responsible for developing and carrying out a nationwide public affairs program, and guides and coordinates the efforts of agency officials in communicating with the media.

(3) The Assistant Directors, Eastern and Western Field Operations and Field Office Directors, assisted by designated personnel, are responsible for insuring that accurate information is disseminated to the media and the public about the work of their respective offices.

c. Procedures.

(1) Media Information. While most media inquiries come through Public Affairs, the offices of the Eastern and Western Field Operations and the Field and Area offices are often contacted directly. When that happens here are the steps to follow:

(a) Telephone Inquiries.

1 Respond promptly, within the same day an inquiry is received and certainly no later than a reporter's deadline.

2 Always speak "on the record." Avoid giving personal opinions, or speculating on matters outside your direct knowledge. The news media is entitled to full and accurate information, not guesses.

3 When in doubt concerning issues or policy, contact Public Affairs for guidance and clarification.

4 After an interview -- print or broadcast -- contact Public Affairs the same day, giving the substance of the interview.

(b) Radio and Television Interviews. Occasionally, OSMRE officials are asked to be interviewed for a radio or television broadcast. Before a commitment is made, call Public Affairs for guidance and assistance. Obviously, it would not be practical to notify Public Affairs when asked for an on-the-spot interview during emergency situations. (See Public Affairs Guidelines During a Disaster March 2, 1983).

(c) News Releases.

1 Releases will be issued either through headquarters or locally through field offices. That determination will be made by Public Affairs in consultation with headquarters and field officials.

2 Releases issued by Public Affairs, involving policy and major decisions and state-specific action, will be promptly telefaxed to all field organizations, with instructions as to whether a release should be reissued to local media for maximum exposure.

(d) Video Tapes.

1 Every effort should be made to obtain and send expeditiously to Public Affairs video tapes of the following: Local television newscasts describing any aspect of OSMRE's programs; newscasts where the Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or Director appears discussing surface mining; and newscasts where field officials appear. NOTE: It is quicker and much cheaper to record local television news on VCR than to buy it afterward from the station or a commercial monitoring service.

2 Public Affairs will alert field officials when headquarters or Department officials are scheduled to appear on local television or radio broadcasts.

(e) News Clips.

1 All field organizations should subscribe to local newspapers. Designated personnel should check newspapers as early as possible each working day for news stories and editorials dealing with OSMRE programs and Interior policies. This material should be carefully screened for favorable and controversial slants and clipped daily.

2 Controversial news stories and editorials should be faxed directly to Public Affairs. Typical examples: The Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or Director has a news conference or speaking engagement in a state. The news story reports what was said, but also includes quotes from sources who agree or disagree with their views. A national press release is issued on a regulation. Again, the resulting story reflects criticism or differing views. NOTE: News stories that are faxed should be sent full size. Reduced-scale photo copies are not readable after fax transmission.

3 Field offices are expected to use judgment when screening newspapers for controversial items. At the very least, a call should be made to alert Public Affairs.

4 Other clips that pick up essentially the same information as issued in an OSMRE release should be mailed to Public Affairs by the close of business Friday. Public Affairs, in turn, will send a summary of Washington and state-oriented clips to all field organizations by the close of business every Friday. Field officials will be phoned and faxed any clips, originating in the Washington press, which affect their area of responsibility.

(2) Speeches and Articles.

(a) Field officials are encouraged to seek opportunities and accept invitations from civic, trade, or professional groups to explain OSMRE programs, either in a speech or through a written article. The Department Manual, Part 470, requires all speeches and articles involving policy to be given prior review. While field officials are free to speak extemporaneously, they are advised to prepare and clear a written speech when speaking on policy matters.

(b) Speeches and articles concerning OSMRE and Interior policy must be cleared through the appropriate Assistant Director and Deputy Director, and through Public Affairs, at least three days before a speaking engagement, or two weeks in advance of publication.

(3) Publications and Audiovisuals.

All publications and audiovisual materials that will be disseminated to the general public and that are developed or funded -- even partially -- with OSMRE funds must be approved by Public Affairs before any action is taken. Approval is required for internal newsletters and annual reports. Approval is not required for environmental impact statements, charts, maps, training films, slide shows, video tape recordings, and administrative materials produced solely for in-house use.

4. Reporting Requirements. None.

5. References.

Departmental Manual, Parts 470, 471, 478, 301, 318.

6. Effects on Other Documents.

Supersedes Subject Number: INF-10; Transmittal Number 139, dated November 12, 1982.

7. Effective Date. Upon issuance.

8. Contact. Public Affairs Staff (202) 343-4953, 4719.