

MEDIA RELATIONS

Purpose

A continuing responsibility of the City of Newport Beach is to provide timely, accurate and factual information to residents, businesses and visitors. To meet that responsibility, the City must work in partnership with the news media. To ensure that the City communicates effectively with media representatives, the following procedures shall be followed and adhered to by all City employees, consultants, and members of boards, commissions, and committees.

A. Print and Broadcast Media Spokespersons

1. Designated Spokespersons

The City Manager, City Attorney, Assistant City Manager, Assistant City Attorney, Department Directors, Public Information Manager, Fire or Police Public Information Officers, designated departmental representatives (such as on-duty Watch Commander), or City Manager designee, may handle routine requests from the media that are within their area of expertise. Except to the extent authorized by Council Policy or law, no other persons may disseminate official information on behalf of the City, and should refer the reporter to the Department Director, Public Information Office or designated department representative.

2. Potential Controversial Issues

The City Manager, City Attorney, Assistant City Manager, Assistant City Attorney, and Department Directors may address questions from the media on sensitive issues relating to their area of expertise, including topics that may affect City policy and/or matters that may ultimately result in Council action.

B. Release of Information

1. Approval

News releases shall be prepared and routed to the Public Information Office for review before they are released to the media. The City Manager or Assistant City Manager will have final approval on all news releases except announcements regarding special events and routine activities.

Exception. Fire and Police responses to emergencies in the community may be reported directly to the media by a designated department spokesperson with the approval of the Fire or Police Chief or their designee.

Investigations and routine community relations activities may also be reported directly to the media by the designated Fire or Police Department spokespersons. All news releases should also be copied to the City Manager and the City's Public Information Office.

2. Format

All City representatives shall use standard City of Newport Beach news release stationery and follow City news release format and writing style to distribute information to the media. Electronic distribution of news releases shall utilize City email addresses, and where applicable, City Digital Communication Platforms as defined in City Council Policy D-5. News releases shall include the name of and contact information for the designated spokesperson to contact for additional information. Personal stationery, personal email addresses, and personal Digital Communication Platforms shall not be utilized for the dissemination of official news releases.

3. City Council Notification

All news releases shall be distributed to the Mayor and members of the City Council prior to release to the media if practical, or immediately thereafter.

4. Staff Notification

All information - written or spoken - released to the media by a member of the City staff will be immediately communicated via e-mail to the City Manager, appropriate Department Head and Public Information Office. The e-mail should contain a brief synopsis of the information communicated, the name and phone number of the person interviewed, the reporter's name, the name of the media outlet, and when the story is expected to appear.

5. Release of Reports

Reports prepared by City staff for submission to the City Council shall be made available to the media or the general public at the same time as the agenda packets are delivered to the City Council.

6. Confidential Information

News Releases shall not contain information, which is confidential pursuant to provisions of state or federal statutory or decisional law, or which has been received by the City pursuant to a representation of confidentiality. Documents or information exempt from disclosure pursuant to provisions of the California Public Records Act shall not be contained in any news release without City Attorney approval. No City representative will release public information contrary to the provisions of the California Public Records Act, the Brown Act, the California Penal Code, cases interpreting those statutes, or City of Newport Beach policy. Any questions related to Public Records Act requests should be directed to the City Clerk's Office and the City Attorney's Office.

C. Guidelines

1. Litigation, Personnel, Election Issues

Due to legal and privacy concerns, any request for information related to litigation, personnel or election issues must be handled by the appropriate department. This information includes: private employee information, employee disciplinary actions, matters considered in closed sessions of City Council, certain law enforcement records, certain Fire and EMS records, matters related to internal and external security, privileged communication records and work products of the City Attorney or special legal counsel, draft correspondence or documents, and records pertaining to litigation where the City is a party.

- Media inquiries regarding pending or ongoing litigation should be referred to the City Attorney's Office.
- Questions regarding personnel issues or matters should be referred to the Human Resources Department.
- Any inquiries regarding election or campaign issues should be referred to the City Clerk's Office.

In all cases, especially if there is any question as to which department should respond to the inquiry, the department should notify the City Manager and the Public Information Office about the inquiry.

2. Personal Points of View

City employees and consultants and members of boards, committees and commissions (BCC) have a right to their personal points of view and the freedom to express their opinions. Any City employee, consultant or BCC member that identifies themselves as an employee, consultant or BCC member of the City of Newport Beach must indicate that said opinions do not represent those of the City, but are the City employee's, consultant's, or BCC member's personal opinions (*i.e.*, views expressed are my own). In addition, media contact made as a private citizen may not be communicated or prepared on City time, stationery, equipment or in any way at City expense.

3. General or Routine Media Requests (events, meetings, etc.)

Routine media requests may be handled by any employee if the information provided is of a factual, incidental or inconsequential nature such as confirming a meeting time or providing scheduling, location or other routine information about a City event or activity.

4. City-initiated Media Contacts/Information Distribution

Proactive media contacts should be made by the Public Information Manager (or the City Manager's designee) or the Police and Fire Public Information Officers. This includes issuing news releases and media advisories and making proactive, personal contact with news reporters or editors requesting coverage. All staff, including the designated spokespersons identified in Section A-1 of this policy, must work through the Public Information Office or the Police and Fire Public Information Officers in initiating media contact.

5. Errors in Reporting

Reporting errors should be brought to the attention of the Public Information Office. The Public Information Manager, in conjunction with the City Manager or the appropriate Department Head, will determine if the reporter should be contacted about the error.

6. Crisis or Emergency Issues

During a crisis or an emergency as defined in Newport Beach Municipal Code Section 2.20.020, or any successor section, all media relations will follow the guidelines specified in the City's emergency operations plan.

[Attachment - Exhibit A]

History

Adopted G-3 - 11-23-1992
Amended G-3 - 1-24-1994 (changed to D-1)
Amended D-1 - 2-26-1996
Amended D-1 - 4-23-2002
Amended D-1 - 10-14-2008
Amended D-1 - 8-8-2017
Amended D-1 5-14-2024



CITY OF
NEWPORT BEACH

NEWS RELEASE

Date

Contact: Name

Title

Phone

Email

Headline Goes Here

NEWPORT BEACH, Ca. – News release content goes here.

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