**News Conference Guidelines**

* When notifying media of news conferences/availabilities, be sure to define what kind of event will occur. News conferences are held to announce something for the first time. Press availabilities are held simply to make individuals available to answer questions.
* Don’t call unnecessary news conferences/availabilities. If it’s not worth their time, the media will be angered.
* If holding a news conference, try to tell media in advance some details of what you will be announcing.
* Gauge the size of your crowd carefully when preparing a location. It’s better to have too much than too little space. Make sure microphones, chairs, lighting and water are in place at least 30 minutes prior to event.
* Decide format in advance, including who will introduce speakers, who decides when question/answer period ends and other details.
* Decide who will maintain control at the news conference, who will decide where cameras are set up and who will sit where.
* Try to plan the length of the news conference, but be flexible.
* Consider the time of the news conference. To make the noon, 6 p.m. or 11 p.m. TV and radio news, allow time for crews to travel and edit tape.

**Sample News Conference Media Alert**

**Who:** [Name, title of spokesperson from the appropriate authorities]

[Name, title of spokesperson for client]

[Name, title of [CLIENT] spokesperson]

**What:** Spokespersons will update media on the latest confirmed facts pertaining to:

* [List subjects that will be addressed]

**When:** [Day, Month X]

[X:XX a.m./p.m.]

**Where:** [Name of building]

[Address]

**Statement: [**Provide latest statement]

**Contact:** [Media contact name, phone and/or email]

**Managing the Question & Answer Period**

Here are some tips on answering questions during a Q&A session:

1. **Listen to the entire question**. Wait for your questioner to stop before you begin to speak. Not waiting to hear the question can result in an answer that’s off the mark. Force yourself to listen and make sure you understand the question. Don’t be afraid to ask for clarification.
2. **Pause and Repeat.** Allow yourself a moment to reflect on the value of the question. Repeat the question aloud so the entire audience understands the question and to be sure you’ve heard it correctly. Repeating the question allows you time to evaluate the question and formulate a response.
3. **Give credit**. Thank each questioner. You may say “That’s a great question” or “I hear that question often.” Also, it may be appropriate to tell the audience whether you know the questioner.
4. **Respond.** Give an honest answer to the best of your ability. Never try to fake an answer. “I don’t know” is an acceptable answer. If you can’t answer a question, promise to research and follow up. Remember to follow up.
5. **Bridge.** To create an ongoing dialogue, it’s important to ask if you’ve answered the question fully. A “yes” response allows you to move forward. A “no” response allows you to clarify your answer for the whole room and avoid confusion. If you feel like you’ve answered the question, don’t be afraid to move the discussion forward with phrases such as “I feel like we’ve covered this topic as well as I can” or “Let’s give other people a chance to discuss different topics.”

**Pre-Interview Questions to Ask a Reporter**

When you receive a media inquiry, quickly return a reporter’s call or email, but do not answer questions or discuss company actions or positions. Before you determine how the inquiry will be handled, gather the following information from the reporter:

* Reporter’s name, phone number and email address
* Publication name and coverage area
* Reporter’s deadline and best time to call them back. Note than reporters may have a very short deadline if they are writing a story for the online edition of their publication.
* Try to determine what the reporter is trying to find out. You can do this by asking:
	+ His or her story angle
	+ A list of questions he/she will ask
	+ If he/she has talked with others
* As time permits, research the reporter to determine his/her general tone, topics covered and if he/she has written about [CLIENT] in the past.

Gather all of the information the reporter will share and put it in a logical format. Share this information with the designated spokesperson, or use the information to inform your media statement. If you decide to provide an interview, anticipate any questions that may be asked and prepare answers for the spokesperson.