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## **Guidelines for Successful Interviews with the Media**

- 1. Take ample time to prepare.** Consider what questions are likely to be asked and think of simple, straight-forward, clear responses. Also, think of key messages you want to convey.
- 2. Ask the reporter's name, paper or station, and telephone and fax numbers.** Ask when the story is likely to appear.
- 3. Be confident in your own expertise.** It is greater than the reporter's in almost all cases. Reporters seldom have the time to research the subject as much as you or they would like. Instead, they depend on you to work with them in getting the whole picture.
- 4. Never go off the record.** Only give a reporter information you are willing to stand behind. Some reporters respect off-the-record remarks and some don't. They have no obligation to do so.
- 5. Simplicity works best.** Even to the most sophisticated reporter, simplicity communicates best, especially when familiar illustrations and comparisons are used.
- 6. Start with the conclusion.** Then explain and keep it tight. Make short, simple and specific statements.
- 7. Show consideration for the reporter and the reporter's objectives.** Take the time to explain technicalities or even the basics of your subject. The better the reporter understands your subject, the better he or she can communicate it to the audience.
- 8. Identify anything you say as either fact or opinion.** Fact is fact. Your opinions are your own. Be careful to separate the two when talking to reporters.
- 9. Accentuate the positive and do not be the one to bring up the negative.** If damaging issues surface, concede only what you must and in the briefest way, then describe what positive steps are now under way to handle the problem.
- 10. A void picking up negative phrasing from the reporter.** If a reporter asks, "Why are you persecuting Mr. ..." don't answer with, "we aren't persecuting Mr. \_ ..." a better way would be to say. "We have treated Mr.\_ as we do all our employees..."
- 11. Correct the misinformation.** If reporters include misleading or erroneous information in their questions, correct the misinformation before you answer the question. Don't let an incorrect statement go unchallenged. It gains more credibility the longer it stands before it is refuted. Refuse it politely, offering a brief, positive explanation, then shift to the issues you want reported.