

# Marketing 101

# Writing Effective News Releases

There are three basic steps to creating effective news releases--formatting, writing and getting noticed.

## Formatting Tips

- **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** These words should appear at the top, just under your letterhead. Be sure to capitalize every letter.
- **Contact Information:** Skip a few lines then list your contact person, along with his or her title, phone and fax number and e-mail address. You might also want to include home or cell phone numbers, since reporters work on deadlines and may be trying to call after normal work hours. Make sure your contact is available and capable of answering questions. Also include your agency's web site address.
- **Headline:** Skip two lines and use boldface type. Don't make it longer than one line. Use caps and lower case.
- **Dateline:** This should include your city and the date you are issuing the release.
- **Lead paragraph:** The first paragraph needs to grab the reader's attentions and should have the five W's and an H: who, what, when, where, why and how.
- **Text:** Use 8.5 x 11 paper; with one-inch margins on each side. Keep it to one page, never no more than two. Reporters usually won't read more than one. If you need more than one page, center the word "-more-" at the bottom of the first page.
- **Center** "###" or -30- at the end of the news release to signify there is no more copy.

To help with formatting your news release, you may use the NRCS news release template available on the website.

## Writing Tips

- **Make it newsworthy:** Are you solving a problem? Pinpoint what the need is and write from that perspective.

- **Write a headline that gets to the point:** Immediately tell why this news is important. Avoid promotional-sounding words. What you say in the headline determines whether or not the reporter will read your release.
- **Write a strong lead paragraph:** Answer the who, what, where, when, why and how. Use this paragraph to summarize the news. Make sure the first ten words of your release are effective, as they are the most important. Don't use fancy language.
- **Once you have provided a brief description of the news,** then you can tell who is announcing it, not the other way around.
- **Give news details so that the reporter understands why it is important to read on.** Add background, quotes, and comparisons to illustrate the importance of the news. If you're announcing something, mention when and where it is available and other points. Deal with the facts, don't editorialize.
- **Include a short summary of your organization.** Especially include any information about what distinguishes your agency's expertise. Include your expertise and location, but keep it short.
- **Make sure** your contact information is complete.

## Tips for Getting Noticed

- Make sure your information is newsworthy and targeted to the appropriate audience.
- Find out the best way to contact reporters--do they want a phone call, email, or fax?
- Don't include attachments if you send an email release. Put the release within the body of the message.
- Don't issue a news release until you have something of substance to say.
- Make it easy for the media to do their jobs-include tip sheets, background papers or Q&As.
- Know the publication or station deadlines.