PRESS RELATIONS—DOs and DON’Ts

Do . . .

Consider appointing a public information representative to respond to media questions at the Disaster Field Office.

Establish positive relations with the media. Keep a current list of contacts of your local newspapers, radio stations, and television stations (reporters or editors you deal with).

Learn media deadlines and accommodate them as much as possible.

Return media calls promptly.

Be sure you are the appropriate person to discuss the issue. If you are not, direct the media to the proper person.

Anticipate the questions you’ll be asked and prepare your answers prior to an interview. State the important facts at the beginning.

Be helpful, friendly, and courteous. Never argue with a reporter and never lose your cool. Their perception of you will influence the tone of the story.

Be clear, concise, factual, and unemotional when responding to questions.

Keep your message brief.

Tell the truth (even if it hurts).
PRESS RELATIONS—DOs and DON’Ts

Don’t . . .

Answer questions you don’t know the answers to. It’s okay to say, “I don’t know.”

Contribute more information than is needed. Stick to the facts. Never speculate or make predictions.

Go “off the record.” If you say it, expect to see it. Never say anything you wouldn’t want to see quoted or in a headline.

Respond to an inquiry if it is not your expertise. Recommend a proper source, if possible.

Jump at media questions. Take your time and think before answering.

Let the reporter speak for you. If a reporter tries to lead you into quotes, do not repeat them, even to deny them. Simply say, “no, that is not correct;” and proceed to give the correct information.

Forget to say “thank you” once in a while to the reporters and editors.