

## Unit Media Officer Job Description

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**Responsible to** the Unit Board/Committee

### Key Relationships

- Unit volunteer members
- Regional Manager and other regional staff
- CNZ media advisor
- Media
- Police

### Purpose of the Position

To liaise with the local media to obtain publicity for Coastguard on unit activities and in the event of a SAR operation to coordinate with Police and the Regional Manager or designated person in managing media interest.

### Responsibilities

1. To speak for the Unit or to assist the President to speak for the unit in relation to local activities and SAR events to obtain public awareness of Coastguard.
2. To liaise with Police, the Regional Manager and the CNZ Media Advisor in relation to SAR operations as necessary.
3. To refer media questions in relation to complaints, Coastguard accidents or incidents, national or regional activity, position and policy issues to the CNZ CEO or Regional Manager in the first instance who will then ascertain the most appropriate person to provide information or comment on specific issues.
4. Work with the Regional Manager or CNZ Brand & Relationships Manager to prepare media releases on local activities.
5. Use the Useful Media Phrases guide provided by CNZ to assist in dealing with media and to provide training and support to others within the Unit.
6. To have a good knowledge of the Coastguard 'position statements' and to express the Coastguard 'view' at all times.

### Knowledge and Skills

Ideally the Media Officer should be someone who can

- Interact and communicate well with others
- Has good people skills
- Had had Media Training
- Is able to keep their cool during difficult situations or dealing with difficult people

## Supporting Information for Media Officers

### Media Best Practice Guideline (Policy)

The goal of this policy is to ensure that positive comments that enhance the profile of Coastguard are provided to the media. Coastguard must speak with one voice on issues.

1. All media comment and enquiry regarding complaints, national activity, position and policy, accidents involving Coastguard CRV or Aircraft or personnel must be referred to the CNZ CEO or Regional Manager in the first instance. They will then ascertain the most appropriate person to provide information or comment on specific.
2. All media releases should be approved by the Regional Manager prior to being released.
3. Media Training is required for all Media Officers, Presidents or other spokes persons before they undertake public comment on issues or activities.
4. This does not preclude Media Officers or Unit Presidents from engaging in ad hoc promotional opportunities such as fundraising events or locally based news stories. Regional Offices will provide media releases for Units on request.

### Crisis Communications Plan

#### Overview

When a story breaks, reporters will report that story with or without our help. Often, it is about being first. They will set the scene, tell you what they know even if the information is sketchy. The details will follow. Instead of shutting reporters out and opening the door to speculations, we must understand that the media can be our greatest ally.

By offering accurate and available information, we appear responsive, credible, concerned and helpful to a reporter who simply wants information to build a story. Otherwise, that reporter will just try to fill time.

It is most important to respond quickly even if there is little to say. When we do not respond reporters will wonder if we have something to hide. Make no mistake about it, no matter how hard a reporter tries to be objective, their perception and attitude is often reflected in their report. Therefore, if we cannot release any information, take control of the story by explaining why. By offering an explanation, we appear responsive and cooperative even if we do not really have anything pertinent to share.

During a crisis, we must keep these goals in mind

- Offer information to reduce the chance of speculation and inaccurate information being reported to the public
- Never say 'no comment'. Instead, tell reporters the situation is still being reviewed and you will have a statement as soon as you have all the facts.
- Respond quickly to define and control public perception of how we are handling the crisis or the media will do it for us.
- Show compassion and concern for the people involved.
- Never speculate. If the interviewer says something that is not factual, correct the information.

- Report our own bad news. If we think the media might find out about something that happened, then go to them first. If they have to dig, they might decide we are guilty before we have a chance to respond.
- Admit mistakes. If we have made a mistake, say so. Explain why that mistake occurred and what you are doing to fix the problem. Don't be afraid to say I'm sorry.
- Stay 'on the record'. If we don't want something reported, then don't discuss it.

How you handle a problem can have a direct impact on what the public thinks about you and the organisation. 95% of people feel more offended by an organisation that lies about a crisis than the crisis itself. Most organisations fail in the early hours of a story because they fall into a reactive mode by letting the media define the story for them. By providing even a little bit of information we can take control of the situation by appearing cooperative and concerned.

### **Crisis Communication Plan**

A crisis is deemed to be an event or situation where the services, activities of a volunteer or staff member, or a region or unit of Coastguard is called into question.

1. In the event of a crisis, CEO and the relevant Regional Manager and Unit President will hold a teleconference to determine the cause, effect and appropriate action. The CEO may include such staff or volunteers as may clarify the situation as is appropriate.
2. Prior to this meeting the CEO, or spokes person designated by him, may tell reporters that the situation is still being reviewed and that a statement will be made as soon as the facts have been ascertained.
3. The CEO is, in the first instance, responsible for convening the meeting and providing an impact report to the CNZ Board.
4. All media comment or action is to be through the National Office upon consultation with the relevant Coastguard region and or unit and other affected parties.