



# N.C. Department of Transportation

## Media Training



# Who are “The Media”

- Conduit to the general public
- TV, print, radio and electronic are very different
  - Multi-focused — must maintain ratings/sell papers, want to provide factual information, competitive with other media, members of the community





# How to establish a good working relationship with the media

- Be proactive — even with bad news — and call them (send out a press release or statement) before they call you
- Get to know the media who call you, treat them with respect and remember their names
- Enable reporters to do their job well — anticipate their needs
- Understand local news cycles and deadlines (weekly/bi-weekly press require longer lead time, know those cutoffs)
- Treat all media in your area fairly — no favorites





# Facts About Television

## Who you will come in contact with:

- Reporters are typically younger, more mobile (roots are not always established) have less historical knowledge

## What they want/need to make a good story:

- Need something visual — a person, a place. Some type of action. The average sound bite length has decreased to an average of 11.1 seconds





# Facts About Television

## Who is their target audience:

- Target audience for advertisers — mom, 33, middle income
- Research shows women decide brand, men typically decide budget/timing





# Facts About Television

- When talking to TV — talk to the woman watching at home
- Define why she cares
- Move from problem to solution
- Clear, easy to understand sentences
- Self-translate





# Facts About Television

- Avoid jargon, acronyms, technical speak — talk to the mother watching at home
- Keep hand gestures to a minimum
- Dress professionally, appropriate for the situation (sometimes a golf shirt is okay)
- Try to stand — don't sit behind a desk
- Smile





# Facts About Television

- If you mess up, stop immediately and ask the reporter if you can answer that question again.
- When asked, “do you have anything to add?” say “YES” and repeat key messages





# **PRINT MEDIA**

## **Who you will come in contact with:**

- Reporters typically a little more established, accustomed to doing research and having more time than TV to put the story together.
- Slightly older, more established demographic
- Take more time than TV
- Do more investigation
- Ask more questions
- Usually set the agenda for other media





# **PRINT MEDIA**

## **What they want:**

- Facts and data — numbers and percentages communicate well
- Access to the information they need
- Open communication

## **Who is their target audience:**

- Have specific geographical regions, story should impact people in that area
- Larger papers are suffering more extensively in these economic times
- Local (weekly, bi-weekly papers are maintaining readership)





# RADIO

- Can have a long shelf-life
- Know the demographics of the listeners — audiences differ greatly from station to station
- If you make a mistake, ask if you can start the answer over (if taped) the reporter wants you to get it right and will typically say “yes”
- Imagine you are talking to several people — not just one
- If you are doing a phone interview, have someone else with you so you can look at them while you talk, this helps you animate your voice





# ELECTRONIC

- Once it is on the internet, its there forever
- Little oversight on some BLOGs, pages  
Can be forwarded, linked to thousands of people (become viral)
- Some sites are more important than others
- (WRAL has highest viewership in market — 3.2 million unique monthly visitors to site)
- Evaluate and consider options seriously before commenting/responding to posts
- Anyone can post whatever they want on a Blog





# What to do when a reporter calls

- Be polite
- Ask what they are calling about
- Ask what their deadline is
- If the subject matter is one you are very familiar with and the question a simple one to answer, do so immediately
- If the subject matter is complicated or challenging, take their number, then you can call them back
- Remember, this is an opportunity to provide accurate information to people who need it





# How to prepare for an interview

- Gather all necessary facts
- All reporters like facts — how much will it cost, how long will it take, is someone to blame
- Call Communications Office for help if issue is challenging
- Identify the most important message NCDOT needs to communicate in this situation
- Craft that message in simple, short sentences.  
*“We are halting this project because safety is our first priority.”*





# What to do during an interview

- Always tell the truth
- If you don't know, say you will find out and call them back — THEN DO
- Repeat your message again and again — make sure they heard it
- Don't get pulled into discussing things you don't know about —  
*"I can't speak to that, but what I do know is . . ."*

*"I'm not familiar with that, but the most important thing to remember here is . . ."* Never say "no comment"





# What to do during an interview

- Remember the reporter is doing their job — it is not personal to them so don't make it personal to you
- Take your time when answering — pauses are okay
- At the end of an interview, if asked, "is there anything you'd like to add," SAY YES, and repeat your message





# How to survive a hostile interview

- Do your homework and anticipate the aggressive questions.
- Keep your composure.
- Use your bridging phrases to regain control of the interview and transition to your purpose statement. (*discussed in next slide*)
- Maintain eye contact.
- Don't feel like you have to continue talking if you're done answering a question.





# Bridging Statements

- I think what the public really wants to know is...
- Let me just add...
- Let me put that in perspective for you...
- Let me answer you by saying that...
- Let me give you some background information...
- Let me give you an example...





# Bridging Statements

- Another important thing to remember is...
- The bottom line is...
- The more important thing for you to remember is . . .
- At the end of the day . . .
- The truth is . . .
- The facts say . . .
- What everyone should know is . . .
- Everyone should remember . . .





# Most reporters are ethical, but just in case . . .

- Assume every word you say or move you make is part of the actual interview from the moment the interviewer calls/walks in
- Nothing is ever “off the record”
- When the interview is over, do not relax and go off message
- If a camera person is in the room, assume the camera is filming
- If you have a microphone on you, assume every sound is being recorded





# Most reporters are ethical, but just in case . . .

- When you answer a question and the reporter has a long pause — DO NOT feel the need to fill the silence. Just sit quietly and wait for the next question.





# Things to NEVER do

- Fail to return a reporter's call
- Say "no comment"
- Repeat incorrect information
- Become frustrated
- Tell a lie
- Respond to what a reporter tells you someone said
- Answer hypothetical questions





# When Bad News Happens

## (Crisis Communications)

- Call the Communications Office ASAP
- Call the after hours number, or Director's cell on evenings/weekends
- Call Communications Office BEFORE the media calls you if you believe the situation will attract attention or a message should be communicated to the general public
- Gather as much information as possible — answer questions before asked

**What happened?**

**How will this impact my family?**





# **When Bad News Happens**

**(Crisis Communications)**

**What should my family do differently?**

**Who will pay for it?**

**How long will it take?**

- Communications Office will evaluate and determine if a release should be distributed and who the spokesperson should be





# How to work as a team with the Communications Office

- Provide accurate information
- Understand the urgency and gather information quickly
- Be available to discuss/answer questions from Communications staff

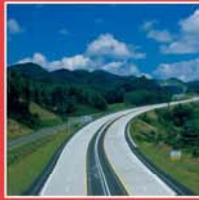




## After the interview

- If you feel you did not do a good job answering a question, call the reporter back
- If you find you made a mistake on data, call or email the accurate information quickly
- Look for the coverage — evaluate how well you communicated the message — **NOTHING ELSE MATTERS**
- If the message you wanted the reporter to receive is in the story and facts are correct, you did your job well





**MEDIA TRAINING**

# QUESTIONS?

