

TYPES OF MEDIA

0634

(May 1997)

Different types of news media have individual needs. The following sections provide tips and information about the specific needs of each type of media.

TELEVISION

0634.1

(May 1997)

Television coverage consists of news reports, either videotaped or live, and occasionally requires longer follow-up appearances on talk shows or newscasts.

TELEVISION NEWS (TAPED)

0634.1.1

(May 1997)

A good rule is to think soundbite; a soundbite is usually less than 20 seconds of sound on tape. The reporter wants a brief, concise statement on the incident, so try to make answers short and to the point.

Look at the interviewer, not the camera, and remove sunglasses to reveal the eyes. Remember, TV magnifies gestures, so do not scratch or jingle pocket change. Stand still and straight with hands at the sides or holding a clipboard. Facial expressions should be pleasant and appropriate to the situation. Don't worry about filling in pauses; dead air is the reporter's responsibility. Since the interview is taped, if you make a mistake just begin to answer again.

Cutaways are noninterview filler used for editing. Beforehand, while the reporter discusses what is going to happen during the interview, the photographer often shoots footage. In the finished story, shots may be edited out of sequence with cutaways used as filler. Remember, anything said around a camera or microphone may end up on the air.

TELEVISION NEWS (LIVE)

0634.1.2

(November 1996)

Occasionally, live interviews require you to wear an earphone, stand alone in front of the camera, and answer questions from the anchors in the studio. This is one time to look directly into the camera lens. There may be a TV monitor nearby which shows what the viewer is seeing, but try not to watch yourself--it is distracting. The engineer who sets up the equipment is always in radio contact with the studio, and should relay to you any needed information.

Before the newscast begins, you will probably be asked to stand before the camera and test the microphone. Simply state your name, title, and topic in the voice level to be used when speaking on camera. This allows the engineer to set the audio levels much more effectively than simply counting to 10.

Through the earpiece, the newscast sounds just as it does on TV. Tell the engineer if the earphone sound is not clear.

As soon as the interviewee hooks on the microphone and steps in front of the camera, s/he should assume their actions could be going out over the air. We have all laughed at people who did not know they were on the air--don't let that be you!

The live interview itself is like any other except the questions are coming from the anchors at the studio, and the interviewee is looking directly into the camera. As always, answers should be as concise as possible.

If the worst should happen, for example the engineer says "you're on" and the earpiece suddenly goes dead, simply look into the camera and say: "I'm sorry but I can't hear you. I'll be glad to stand by if you need to make some mechanical adjustments." Or, if you really feel confident, you can inform the anchors there is an audio problem and briefly give the facts that you prepared to present. Even if the microphone and picture go out at the same time as the earpiece, an ad lib would do no harm.

TELEVISION TALK SHOWS

0634.1.3

(November 1996)

Sometimes local talk shows offer an opportunity for an in-depth look at an incident. The rules for this kind of interview are similar to a news format. Since the interviews are longer and allow more conversation, prepare to share an anecdote or two.

Watch the show ahead of time and take some visuals, photos or slides, to enhance the interview. Tell the producer what visuals you will be bringing and arrive early so the producer can look them over.

Interviewees should wear the CAL FIRE uniform when representing the department. For civilian attire, dark suits are usually best; blue shirts look better than white, socks should go to the knee. Wear understated jewelry, especially earrings and necklaces. Find out what the background will look like and wear something that contrasts well.

RADIO

(November 1996)

0634.2

Radio, an immediate form of public contact, is valuable not only when notifications for public safety or alternate traffic routes are necessary but is also a good medium for routine news releases. The same release used for television and newspapers may be sent to radio stations.

Radio needs voices and sound; description paints the picture and tells the story. Brief statements are preferable because the average radio story is 45 seconds. Interviewees should speak clearly and at a medium pace.

Radio reporters gather news by telephone or in person with a tape recorder. Using a question and answer format or narrative report, the announcer will identify him or herself and the radio station and then ask for a brief report. The report could be live or taped for a later broadcast. In either case, personnel should remember to make quality statements and speak clearly at an even pace. During a live broadcast, correct errors as smoothly as possible while still on the air; errors made while taping can be restated.

Before the broadcast, the interviewee should ask the announcer about the topic of discussion, the broadcast length, and if the interview is live or taped.

During this time, the sound levels are adjusted, so the interviewee should not reposition the microphone or change the pitch or volume of their voice. The announcer will say when the broadcast will begin. The broadcast length ranges from 20 seconds to 2 minutes. Keep statements brief and address the question asked. If necessary, however, add important facts that must get out.

NEWSPAPERS

(November 1996)

0634.3

Generally, newspapers or news magazines require the most detail since the print reporter tends to be more analytical. They frequently ask for historical comparisons, maps, graphs, and statistical material.

Address fire related news releases to the editor or the reporter responsible for writing police and fire stories. Major papers may have an environmental editor.

Know the paper's deadlines and requirements for news releases; make an appointment with the editor for a brief meeting to get this information.

Since newspapers deal in the printed word, a specially prepared fact sheet insures the correct spelling of names and titles, and the accuracy of story details.

WIRE SERVICES

0634.4

(November 1996)

The Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI) are the two main wire services. Since the AP is larger, most news agencies have an AP wire service machine.

Radio, television, and newspapers rely heavily on the wire services and expect frequent incident updates. The most requested update information about a fire deals with the acreage and number of structures lost or threatened. The number of displaced people and the number of firefighters and equipment on site will be of interest as well.

Since almost all media have a wire service machine, AP and UPI are the most efficient vehicles to use to dispense information quickly.

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