

OCT 18 2006

MEMORANDUM

**SUBJECT:** Procedures for Managing Relations with the Media

**FROM:** David W. Gray, Director  
Office of External Affairs (6XA)

**TO:** Division Directors/Regional Counsel/Office Directors

One of our challenges is to shape consistent messages and work as a team to communicate the Agency's policies and priorities. During the past few years, we have improved the quality and timeliness of our responses to the media as evident by our continued positive news coverage throughout the region. Thank you and your staff for helping in these efforts.

At this time, I want to share with you our procedures for managing media relations in an effort to continue our progress on communication and coordination. It is critical that we make the best use of opportunities to build these relationships and bolster the Agency's reputation for professionalism and excellence.

This memorandum transmits existing procedures for managing interactions with the media. I urge you to personally review these procedures and to share them with your staff. Additionally, I have attached a list of 6XA key contacts, Attachment 1.

I want to highlight these important media procedures:

- If your office receives a phone call requesting information or an interview from a member of the media, please refer the caller to 6XA. Please remind your staff not to answer inquiries directly. 6XA will respond to the media inquiries after consultation with appropriate program office staff, and if necessary, after elevating issues for senior level attention. When necessary, 6XA will coordinate direct interviews between office program staff experts and the media.
- On a case-by-case basis EPA employees will be authorized to interact directly with the media without first notifying 6XA. For example, On-Scene Coordinators, Remedial Project Managers and Community Involvement staff in the Superfund Division are frequently called upon to answer questions from the media while in the field. In these cases, they are authorized to speak directly to

*media requests*

the press without prior approval from 6XA but should provide a report of their conversation to 6XA after the fact.

- Please notify 6XA when you are aware that any media will visit an EPA project to meet with on-site personnel. Often the visits result in news coverage.
- If your office receives a request for written information from a member of the media, please refer the caller to 6XA. Please remind your staff not to release information directly. Occasionally, media sources are instructed to request Agency documents under the Freedom of Information Act. 6XA will coordinate the response to these media requests after consultation with appropriate FOIA program office staff, and if necessary, after elevating the request for senior level attention.
- 6XA staff is responsible for interacting with the media in setting up interviews, press conferences, editorials boards and briefings. Please advise your staff to work with 6XA staff before initiating contact with the media. Also, advise your staff to consult with 6XA prior to attending such events. *emphatic on news on policy*
- When speaking on behalf of EPA, please consult with 6XA prior to discussing in public your views on EPA policies or legislation. We must strictly adhere to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) clearance process for developing the Administration's policy positions. Our Headquarters Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations (OCIR) is the point of contact for the OMB clearance process and will coordinate the development of formal positions, especially those involving legislation. The regional 6XA office will coordinate with OCIR when formal positions are needed. *written comm. reference*
- Articles published by the program offices and/or individual staff using their official title require clearance by 6XA and appropriate senior management. 6XA will consult with the lead program and senior management before making any commitments to the media.
- EPA revised its procedures for publicizing enforcement and compliance assurance activities in March 2006, Attachment 2. As a reminder of the major points included in these procedures, EPA media relations activity should not be a part of any communication with defendants or respondents at any time. Content and timing are an internal EPA matter at all times. EPA should not negotiate content or wording with parties who are involved in settlements, consent decrees, or the regulatory process. At the time announcements are made to the media, defendants or respondents may be sent copies but not in advance. Neither are defendants or respondents invited to participate in any press events.