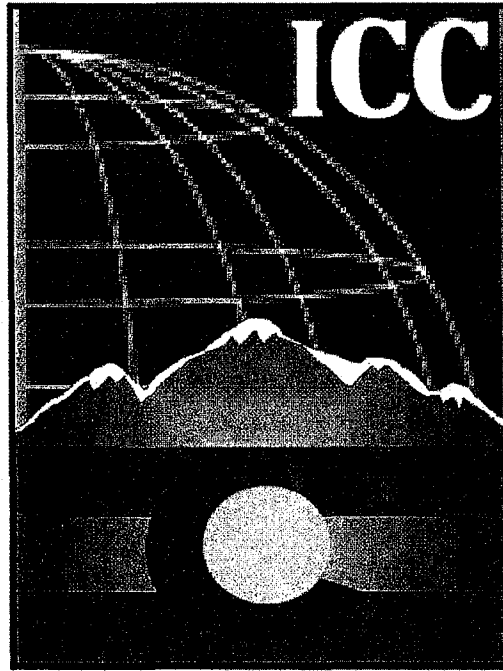


INTERNATIONAL  
CODE COUNCIL



COLORADO CHAPTER

*Chapter V*  
*Communications*  
*& Media Relations*

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# Chapter V

## Communications and Media Relations

This guide is designed to assist the local building official and his/her staff to understand, and hopefully, avoid the most common errors when dealing with representatives of the media. It also offers some recommendations for distributing honest and concise information in a timely manner to the media. Local jurisdictions should have a media policy that can be referenced and updated on a regular basis prior to a disaster. Remember that the media can be your ally, by disseminating information you need to share, very quickly, with a large population base.

### DO'S AND DON'TS

#### DO'S

- Consider appointing a Public Information Officer (PIO) representative (possibly from your local law enforcement agency) to respond to media questions at the disaster field office. The PIO should be briefed by the Building Official prior to on-camera interviews to provide up-to-the-minute reports.
- 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, professional and unemotional when responding to questions.
- Keep your message brief.
- Tell the truth (even if it hurts).

# DON'TS

- 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.
- Assume the cameras and microphones are turned off when making an aside comment; cellular phones will record with the same clarity as a multi-million dollar television production mobile unit.

# Sample News Release

For Immediate Release  
Date (Mo, Day, Yr)

Name of Agency/Jurisdiction  
Contact Person  
Telephone Number

The (jurisdiction/agency) advises all owners and contractors planning to engage in repairs or reconstruction work created by the recent disaster, to obtain building permits and disaster damage inspection forms prior to doing any work. Contact your local building department to obtain applications and information regarding these forms.

All contractors are advised that they must be registered or licensed in the (jurisdiction/agency) before permits can be issued. Applications may be obtained in the building department. The purpose of this requirement is to screen out possible opportunists from taking advantage of consumers due to the current situation.

Residents are warned not to sign blank contracts, prepay for work, or agree to have work performed without first confirming that a contractor is licensed in the jurisdiction, and a building permit has been issued by the (jurisdiction/agency) building department. For more information please contact your local building department.