



MEDIA RELATIONS

POLICY HR007, EFFECTIVE 2013-03-21

POLICY STATEMENT

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) must provide effective media relations that provide clear, consistent messages and responsive attention. Communication about transportation issues must be accurate and follow prescribed procedures to ensure the messages reflect the direction of the department. Employees are required to be familiar with the procedures for interacting with the media.

REASON FOR POLICY

- Ensure accurate and up-to-date information
- Ensure the spokesperson for the interview is the key expert or authorized representative for the department
- Ensure coordination with communications professionals

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW THIS POLICY?

- All MnDOT employees

DEFINITIONS

Key messages

The critical messages that MnDOT needs to communicate about a given topic.

Media relations

Provide ongoing communication with print, television, radio, wireless technologies to ensure accurate and timely agency information to a broad public audience. Media relations includes responding to media requests for information and interviews, issuing news releases and media packets, providing public statements and commentary, managing media investigations and holding news conferences and media events.

Spokesperson

A spokesperson is an individual who represents MnDOT to the media for specific issues, event, and a project or crisis situation.

Topic experts

Topic experts are employees who are directly involved with and have professional knowledge about the subject of a media inquiry.

SENIOR OFFICER

Tracy Hatch

Deputy Commissioner/CFO/COO

POLICY OWNER

Kevin Gutknecht

Director, Office of Communications

POLICY CONTACT

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651-366-4266

POLICY HISTORY

2005-05-12, Established

2013-03-21, Revision 1

[MnDOT Policy Website](#)

PROCEDURES

When contacted by a member of the media, consider the following questions before agreeing to an interview:

- Do I have all the up-to-date information on this topic?
- Do I know what the key messages and/or issues are for this topic?
- Am I the spokesperson or topic expert?
- Will I feel comfortable when the media as the person speaking for the department on this topic use my name?
- Have I worked with the Communications Office or District Public Affairs staff in the past to learn about the best techniques for conducting a media interview?
- Do I agree to be the subject for a media interview?

If the answer is NO to any of the above questions, politely decline the interview and tell the reporter that someone will return their call. Then, contact the Communications Office or District Public Affairs staff as soon as possible with the name and phone number of the reporter, the nature of their inquiry and their deadline. You may still be the person who conducts the interview, but communications professionals will help prepare you for the interview.

If you can answer YES to all of these questions, proceed with the interview, remembering to answer only questions for which you are the spokesperson or topic expert. If the interview strays from the original topic, advise the reporter that you will find someone else better suited to answer his or her questions. As soon as possible after the interview, contact the Communications Office or a District Public Affairs Coordinator to report the following information:

- Media outlet and reporter;
- Topic of interview;
- General summary of interview (what questions were asked and how you answered them);
- When the story will run/air

RESPONSIBILITIES

Office of Communications

- Coordinates and directs media relations for the department
- Manages media issues and initiatives
- Works with spokespersons and topic experts to establish key messages and prepare them for interviews
- Provides media relations services and support to management and staff in all offices in the Central Office
- Develops key messages on issues of statewide significance
- Works with Commissioner's staff to determine the agency's communications priorities
- Advises MnDOT management on media relations issues
- Develops, updates and publishes media relations information
- Provides training and counsel to managers and staff on how to work with the news media
- Serves as liaison to the Governor's office for communications issues and informs the Governor's office about daily media contacts and potential MnDOT stories in the news that may affect the department or the state. Communications sends news releases to the Governor's office for approval.

District Public Affairs Coordinators

- Coordinates and directs media relations for the district
- Works with district spokespersons and topic experts to establish key messages and train them in how to conduct media interviews
- Manages operational media relations, issues and interviews for the district
- Presents both state and local perspectives to the media
- Plans, researches, writes and edits informational materials so that MnDOT district activities are clearly presented to the news media
- Coordinates media relations with and reports daily media contacts to the Office of Communications
- Advises the district engineer and management on media relations issues
- Manages district public information consultant contracts in consultation with the Office of Communications
- Forwards all non-routine news releases to the Office of Communications for the Governor's office approval

Managers, Supervisors and Project Managers

- Ensures that employees are aware of and understand this policy
- Ensures spokespersons and topic experts are provided the appropriate training and support to complete media interviews successfully

Spokesperson Appointment

The Office of Communications maintains a list of key agency personnel who are the spokespersons for highly visible issues. Communications use the list to coordinate media interviews. During a crisis, the list may be suspended, as others may need to be the sole source of information for the agency during the crisis.

Contractors and Consultants

MnDOT's media relations policy must be included in contracts that require contractors or consultants to speak on MnDOT's behalf to the media.

RELATED INFORMATION

The [Minnesota Statute, Chapter 13 \(Minnesota Government Data Practices Act\)](#), (MGDPA), "all government data, collected, created, received, maintained or disseminated by a government entity shall be public unless classified by statute, or temporary classification pursuant to section 13.06, or federal law, as nonpublic-or protected nonpublic, or with respect to data on individuals, as private or confidential."

POLICY OWNERSHIP AND AUTHORIZATION

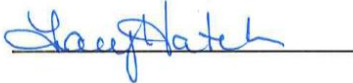
Policy Owner



Kevin Gutknecht
Director, Office of Communications

Date Signed 1-30-2013

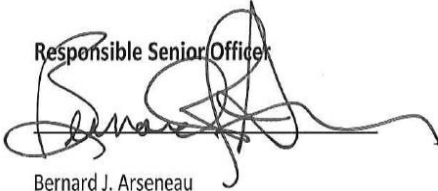
Internal Control & Accountability Governance Board has reviewed this policy and recommends approval



Tracy Hatch *(on behalf of the Board)*
Board Chair and Chief Financial Officer

Date Signed 2.7.2013

Responsible Senior Officer



Bernard J. Arseneau
Deputy Commissioner and Chief Engineer

Date Signed 3-21-13