



TECHNICAL UPDATE

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MEDIA STRATEGIES FOR COUNTIES

As county employees and officials, you may interact with the media more frequently than ever. Whether it's local newspapers, television networks, social media influencers, or digital news platforms, journalists rely on information from public officials as authoritative sources. In today's fast-paced media landscape, where news spreads instantly, it is crucial to have a consistent and well-prepared approach when engaging with the media.

BEST PRACTICES FOR MEDIA INTERACTION

Below are key strategies adapted for 2025 to help government officials navigate media engagement effectively:

Be Prepared.

Before speaking with the media, identify the reporter's objectives and gather key facts, figures, and messaging points. With the rise of live-streamed interviews and real-time social media reporting, preparation is more critical than ever. If you need time to verify information, use a holding statement such as: *"I want to ensure I provide accurate information. Let me gather the facts and follow up with you within the hour."* Always follow through within the promised timeframe.

Be Concise.

Journalists seek clear and impactful quotes. Keep statements brief, relevant, and easy to understand. Avoid technical jargon, acronyms, or bureaucratic language. Social media clips and digital news bites now often distill interviews into 5–10 second soundbites, so ensure your message is clear and to the point.

Be Accurate.

With misinformation and fact-checking at an all-time high, accuracy is paramount. Double-check all statistics and details before sharing them publicly. If unsure, do not speculate. Instead, offer to follow up with verified information before the reporter's deadline.

Be Cautious with Social Media.

In 2025, social media can be both an asset and a risk. Assume that anything you say—even in casual or private conversations—can be shared publicly. Do not engage in online debates with reporters or the public. Stick to official county channels for responses and avoid making statements that could be misinterpreted.

Understand What's 'On the Record.'

Assume all conversations with journalists are public, even if they state otherwise. Avoid saying anything you wouldn't want to see in print or on television. Going "off the record" is risky and not always honored in today's fast-paced media environment.

Crisis Communication Matters.

If a crisis arises, counties should have a designated spokesperson to ensure a clear, unified message. Misinformation spreads rapidly, and conflicting messages can damage credibility. Ensure that responses remain factual, empathetic, and solution-oriented. Regularly update the public as new information becomes available.

Know Your Audience.

Media outlets vary widely in their audience and tone. Tailor your message accordingly, whether addressing a national news network, a local radio station, or a community-focused podcast. Understanding the platform will help frame your message to resonate with the intended audience.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR COUNTIES

A positive relationship with the media can help counties share important information with the public. However, it is vital to manage communications carefully, particularly in sensitive or crisis situations that could expose the county to liability. To maintain consistency:

- Limit the number of people authorized to speak on behalf of your county.
- Ensure all spokespersons are trained in media relations.
- Verify facts before issuing statements.
- Develop a crisis communication plan to ensure smooth messaging in emergencies.

For further guidance on media engagement or training resources, please contact CTSI at 303-861-0507.