



# Spin Control

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## Getting Your Story in the Newspaper

The best person to see that news about what is happening in the local unit is published in the local newspapers is the squadron PAO. Since the newspaper editor is usually a community advocate and since Civil Air Patrol is a non-profit, humanitarian, and community service organization, chances are good that your squadron news will be welcome.



There are many topics that make a good story for the local newspaper. Here are a few:

- Assignment of a new commander of staff officer
- Ground-breaking of a new facility
- Nominations or appointments to service academies (West Point, the Naval Academy, the Air Force Academy)
- A CAP cadet joining one of the military

services. (Check with the recruiter to avoid duplication.)

- Speaking engagements (Guest speakers make for great stories.)
- Selection of cadets for scholarships or special CAP activities, such as the International Air Cadet Exchange, or participation of adult members in special schools or workshops.
- All promotions
- Awards (These can generate two stories - one announcing the award, a second about the presentation when it occurs.)
- Announcing visits by VIPs, such as congressmen, state officials, CAP national commander.
- Announcing social events planned by the unit.
- Recruiting drives, sports events, drill competitions, etc.
- CAP participation in community projects, such as parades and exhibits



**All news releases about missions or exercises are released by the mission Public Information Officer and must be cleared by the Mission Coordinator.**

**Twelve Ground Rules for Public Relations**

**1. Define Your Objective.** Before beginning any public relations or public affairs project - whether it is a news release or special event - determine your purpose.

**2. Use Your Allies.** Newspaper reporters and editors, radio and TV news directors, and influential local citizens are your friends and allies in telling the story of CAP.

**3. Know What's News.** Everything you do is news to somebody, but it may not be news to your local paper. Try to align your unit activity and its news with community interests - the local angle. Never attempt to force your material on anyone, whether they are a newspaper editor or a Rotary Club member.

**4. News Is Perishable.** Keep in mind that news is news only for today. Tomorrow it is history.

**5. Be Honest and Accurate.** Make your stories as interesting as possible and keep them accurate and factual. Confirm all ranks and names, affiliations and location names. Be specific.

**6. Spread the News.** You may get your news out in many ways: tell the person on the street or your neighbor, make a speech or buy advertising. Most often, you will be using established news outlets in your area - daily and weekly newspapers, national press associations, radio and television stations, industry and company publications, and public and private organizations of significance.

**7. Play It Fair.** There is no place for partiality among the responsibilities of a PAO. All media - large and small, daily or weekly - deserve and have the right to expect equal attention.

**8. Exclusives.** If a reporter comes to the PAO for help with a feature or story idea, respect their right to that story as an exclusive. The PAO is not at liberty to discuss the reporter's exclusive with other news people, unless it is an important story and should be released to all media at once or if the PAO is asked about it. In the latter case, tell the second reporter that someone else is already working on the story. If they request the facts, give the facts to them and immediately inform the first reporter of the action. No other person or organization, whether it is another reporter or a civic organization should be told about the exclusive story before it is published unless they ask.

**9. Media Queries.** Media representatives will sometimes call to ask for information. If the PAO knows the answer and no regulation or order prevents the PAO from giving it - answer immediately. If the PAO does not know the answer, don't try to guess, hedge, or speculate. Say "I don't know." If the information can be located and the request is reasonable, say so, and take the name and telephone number. Then find out the facts, return the call and release the information as soon as possible.

**10. Know Your Organization.** Be familiar with the unit, the people in it, and its activities and programs.

**11. Establish Many Contacts.** The more news people the PAO knows the better the chances of getting news published or put on the air.

**12. Contacting the PAO.** Be sure all local media know where and how to get in touch with the PAO - at any time, day or night. Give them telephone numbers to home, business, personal pager, and cell phone. Providing an e-mail address is also helpful.

