

Contacting the Local Media

You can use a press release for print media and public service announcement for radio or television, but there is no guarantee that it will run when you want it to or that it will be seen by the intended customer. Below are some guidelines for writing releases and Public Services Announcements (PSAs).

Press Release Guidelines

1. Identification: If you don't have letterhead, make sure your organization's address & phone number are included in the upper left hand corner of the page.
2. Disposition: This tells the editor when the release should be published. The time, day, date, and year should appear in capital letters below the last line of identification. If you want the release published upon receipt, write "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE."
3. Headline: A brief, one-line summary of the release that appears just above the body of the release.
4. Copy: The content should be straight news style with an informational sentence in the first paragraph including: "Who, what, when, where and why." Include a telephone number at the end where someone can call for further information. The release should be double spaced, with the information arranged in order from the most to the least important. Begin your copy about one-third of the way down the first page. This gives the editor ample space to write a lead for your story or for his or her instructions. At the end of the release type #### under the last line. Never staple pages; use paper clips.
5. Timing: Releases should be mailed at least three weeks prior to the event.

Public Service Announcement (PSA) Guidelines

Follow the same format as with a press release, but include the time it takes to read your PSA; it can be 10, 20, 30 or 60 seconds in length. PSA's should be sent at least two weeks in advance of the date on which you want the announcements made. FCC regulations require that TV/radio stations make public service announcements about programs and events in the community. A PSA cannot sell anything or promote a profit-making enterprise. Stations have the right to decide if and when the PSA will be aired.

Submission tips:

1. Be sure to send your Press Release or Public Service Announcement in multiple forms (email and a hardcopy letter).
2. Be sure to send a copy to each editor/staff position that might have an interest in the topic. Sending multiple copies to one media outlet addressed to different editors is a good practice; it increases the chances that one of them will run your announcement or call for more information.
3. Submit your items far enough in advance for the media outlet to consider running it and schedule it to run prior to the event.

Finding Appropriate Media Outlets:

Consider doing an online search using the following key words:

- Milwaukee media newspapers
- Milwaukee media radio
- Milwaukee media television

By adding one or two additional words, you can narrow your search. For example, you can add the word "arts" to the searches listed above to find the specific information on media outlets focused on the arts.

Note: Contacts change frequently. You may have to call to obtain the correct contact information if you are sending a personalized letter. Otherwise you can use generic titles: station manager, program director, news director, etc.

Be sure to notify the UWM Department of News Services and Publications of your event, especially if Wisconsin Open Meeting laws are applicable [(414) 229-4452, uwmnews@uwm.edu].