ASHRAE, as the worldwide leader in advancing the arts and sciences of HVAC&R, is in a position to create many opportunities to obtain media coverage. To take advantage of these opportunities, ASHRAE has developed clear media procedures that can be utilized by the Society’s volunteer and professional leadership. The policy is supported by resources, training and the commitment of ASHRAE leadership.

There are three guiding principles that form the basis for ASHRAE’s approach to working with the media to deliver its messages.

1) Communicating to the public has important benefits to ASHRAE

* Member recruitment
* Member retention
* Building support for ASHRAE standards and the process by which they are developed
* Maintaining its status as the leading HVAC&R organization
* Public education
* Increased sales of products and programs

2) Communicating with the media is a very efficient (and inexpensive) way to communicate to ASHRAE key audiences:

* Current members
* Potential members
* Government officials (local/regional/state/federal)
* Opinion leaders
* General public
* Model code officials
* Building owners and managers
* Industry stakeholders

3) Communicating with the media must follow the basic rules of the trade:

* Meet the reporter’s deadline (missing the deadline destroys media relationships and diminishes ASHRAE’s value to the public and its own members)
* Speak with positive clarity, have a clear message and deliver it with conviction
* Build relationships with reporters, especially those that will cover ASHRAE related issues over time.
* When organizations refuse to speak to the press, the organization loses credibility and reporters assume there is something being avoided, some uncomfortable issue or angle that the group does not want to disclose. Either way, it is a very bad policy.
* There is always something positive to say on any issue. With just a little training this is easy to do.

**The Chapter and the Public Relations Effort**

The success of ASHRAE's public relations effort ultimately depends on the degree that each local chapter gets involved.

The international program cannot succeed unless individual members go on the offensive at the local level, telling people about contributions to the quality of life by their Society and their profession.

In addition to waging local public relations campaigns, chapter members can further help the Society effort by stressing chapter affiliation when attending community and business meetings, speaking in public, or interviewing with the news media.

**How to Organize**

**1. Form a Committee** **–** The chapter public relations effort begins with the selection of a public relations chairman and the appointment of several other committee members. The size of the committee will depend upon the number of activities to be publicized.

By following the instructions and examples contained in this manual, someone with no previous public relations experience will be able to effectively communicate information to the news media. However, good writing skills are important.

**2. Determine Objectives** – At the start of each chapter year, the public relations committee should determine its objectives and establish a budget. Among chapter objectives can be:

* To attract promising young people to the profession.
* To honor chapter members who have contributed to community life, to the Society or to the profession.
* To promote membership in ASHRAE.
* To support the research promotion effort.
* To encourage attendance at chapter events.
* To raise awareness of ASHRAE expertise among local leaders of industry, government and allied professions.

Typical public relations expenses include typing, photocopying, mailing, photography and complimen­tary registration when appropriate for the news media at chapter functions.

Public relations essentially serves and benefits all chapter programs. Therefore, each chapter program should be studied for the public relations opportunities it offers. Not only will successful chapter activities result, but also an image of an active organization, effectively addressing member and public needs.

**3. Target Audiences** – In any public relations program, an objective will only be met if the information generated reaches its intended audiences. Consequently, for each objective established by the Public Relations Committee, an audience must be identified. Typical ASHRAE audiences include:

* Members and potential members
* Students
* Opinion leaders, such as politicians, business executives and educators
* Professionals from allied industries
* Contributors and potential contributors to the research program
* Users and potential users of ASHRAE member products and services
* Employees and potential employers of ASHRAE members
* News media

**4. Use of the Media** – The most effective way to reach either a wide variety of selected audiences is through use of the news media. The effort is called the art of media relations, a basic public relations skill.

Begin by preparing a media list. Extreme care should be taken to ensure that names of editors and addresses are accurate and up-to-date. Improperly addressed releases end up in the wastebasket instead of the news. ASHRAE Public Relations staff can help put you in touch with press in your area and help develop a media list.

A chapter's media list should include local television and radio station; daily and weekly newspapers; local business publication; regional trade publications; and local chapter publications of related groups, such as chapters of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the American Institute of Architects and the National Society of Professional Engineers.

The list of major state and local daily and weekly newspapers should include the city editor and names of specialty editors such as real estate, business, finance, environment and energy. Television and radio lists should include the names of assignment editors (TV) and news directors (radio) of local network and independent stations. While many organizations prefer to send a news release to just the “editor,” a personalized approach is much more effective. It provides the name of a contact for following-up.

Once the media list has been compiled, verify the information by phone each six months.

**What Makes News?**

The next step in establishing media relations program is to identify a chapter's news opportunities.

“News” is what editors, correspondents and producers think is news. An effective public relations practitioner recognizes what news people call news.

Look for the who, what, when, where, why and how of every external activity to see how it can be turned into an opportunity for publicity. Depending on the circumstances, each of these elements may be important enough to stand alone. Often they combine to form a newsworthy item.

Chapter news opportunities are the election of chapter officers, the launching of the research promotion goal, the visit of a Society officer to a chapter meeting, the presentation of ASHRAE Energy Awards, a chapter-sponsored seminar and the hosting of a regional or Society meeting.

Often a chapter can manufacture news. It can:

* Tie in with events of the day
* Conduct a poll or survey
* Arrange an interview with a chapter member on a topic of public interest
* Arrange for a testimonial
* Form a committee of local importance.
* Celebrate an anniversary
* Issue a summary of fact relevant locally
* Publicize a trip
* Present an award or hold a contest
* Pass a resolution of local concern
* Appear before a public body
* Stage a special event
* Write a letter to the editor or a governmental body
* Release a letter that has been received
* Adapt national reports and surveys locally

**Tools That Are Used To Reach the Media**

The basic tools used by public relations practitioners is the news release (or press release).

Use direct and simple language and short sentences and paragraphs. Avoid technical terms that will not be understood by the audience being targeted.

The following are general rules for the preparation of news releases.

1. The first time a person's name is used in a release, give full name and title (if any).

2. Avoid editorial comment and personal opinion; such content is only appropriate if attributed to an individual.

3. Place a contact name, address and phone number at the top of the release for further information.

4. Place release instructions prominently on the first page. If the news is to be released when issued, the instruction should read “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.” If the news is for release at a later date, indicate that date and time. (FOR RELEASE: SATURDAY, JUN 22, 20\_\_.)

5. The lead paragraph should answer these questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? A good news release can be cut from the bottom up and still be complete.

6. *Peoplize* news by quoting a chapter officer and feature a local angle.

7. When releases are more than one page long, pages should be numbered at the top and the work “more” should appear at the bottom of each page except the last. Close the release by an end mark, such as ### or “30.” Whenever possible, end each page with the end of a paragraph.

8. Include a date at the bottom of the last page of the release for your later reference and that of the editor.

**Placing New Releases**

Copy should be placed with the editor of afternoon daily newspapers during the middle of the proceeding afternoon. In few instances will a story get full attention if submitted later than 11:00 a.m. of the same day.

Morning papers should receive news releases between 10:00 a.m. and noon of the proceeding day.

Television assignment editors make their schedules one day ahead of time.

Deadline information should be obtained for weeklies, regional trade magazines and other media list entries.

As experienced is gained, it will become apparent what type of news is of interest to particular news people. Note when and how releases are used to target future releases.

**Following-Up**

Because of the overwhelming amount of mail that crosses editorial desks daily, follow-up major releases with telephone calls.

When calling reporters, always give your full name and chapter name. Keep the call as brief as possible and have all necessary details on hand to answer questions. If you call when a reporter is on deadline, he or she will tell you. Ask when it is good to call back and make a note for future reference.

**Photographs**

Photographs bring more attention to a news release and increase the chances that the information provided will be used.

Type a brief caption to describe what is taking place in the photograph and who is pictured.

**Who Speaks for ASHRAE?**

The ASHRAE president is the chief spokesperson for the Society. When external contacts occur, the ASHRAE staff will identify the appropriate spokesperson for that topic. (ROB 1.201.036)

Media calls received by members or other staff should be forwarded to communications staff to ensure that the most appropriate spokesperson is interviewed and to ensure that ASHRAE’s key messages are delivered.

**Communication Assistance Contact List.**

**When ASHRAE members have questions or need help with media related issues they should contact: publicrelations@ashrae.org.**