



Guide to Writing a Press Release

CHIEF MARKETING OFFICE, FEBRUARY 2014

Before you start writing: think about the most newsworthy “angle” of your story.

Who does it impact? A large # of people? A specific population? An “underserved” population? (Farmers, low-income families, small business owners, unemployed Vermonters, women, minorities?)

Were famous or familiar people involved? (The Governor, a well-known actor or sports figure?) Sorry, your Commissioner is not considered a famous or even a familiar person.

Is there a local impact? Look at where your event took place or will take place. Take another look at who is impacted. If your event is in Hardwick or involves people from Lamoille County, pitch your story to media in that area specifically.

Bizarre, unusual or funny? If your event was a “first,” “last” or “only,” or if it involves a humorous or “fish out of water” situation, that makes it more interesting and therefore more newsworthy.

Timeliness: the most essential element of news is that it is recent or current. Release a “recap” of your event the day it happened, not the week after. If your story concerns an issue of current interest, tie your story into the greater context of that issue.

General “dos and don’ts” when writing a press release

Keep it less than a page.

Always check spelling and accuracy of names, URLs and dates... TWICE.

A press release is not the same as an ad. Keep your tone informational, not promotional. Write in third person, not first person. For example:

DO: “Workshop participants will learn how to get the most out of trade shows.”

DON’T: “Don’t miss this workshop! You’ll learn how to get the most out of your trade shows.”

While it’s always good for communications from the state to be in a professional-looking and consistent format, and while you can feel free to adhere to the format of the attached Sample Press Release, you should also feel free to simply paste your press release as regular text right into the body of an email. Reporters and editors appreciate the convenience of cut-and-paste, and they won’t use your pretty format anyway.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 1, 2014

Contact: Firstname Lastname, Department/Agency
 802-828-0000, firstname.lastname@state.vt.us

TITLE

Subtitle (if applicable)

Suggested Tweet: 140 character synopsis with your & your partners' Twitter handles and a link to this press release posted online, or simply to your website.

MONTPELIER – Lead sentence. **What is the news, and who are the key players?** Followup sentence. **Take a little more time to spell out why this is important, whether it's inaugural, high-profile, affecting many people, etc.; elaborate the "why."**

Quote: Insert a sparkling, memorable statement affirming ____'s significance on a broader scale. (Preferably not from the person sending the release: IE "The Department of Self Promotion is amazing," said John Jones, Commissioner of the Department of Self Promotion.)

Elaborate on important details. **What are the organizations/businesses involved? If it's a past event, how many attended? If it's an upcoming event, who should consider attending or who is eligible to attend? Is this the inaugural event? If not, how many years has it occurred? When is the actual event, action or announcement occurring? Is it open to the public?**

For more information, visit website (linked) and _____ on Facebook (linked). Add a person's contact info here only if it's different from the PR contact at the top.

Photos are available: **Note attached photos, or insert a link to a DropBox or FTP of photos/video for people to peruse and download. If event based, you can write, "Photos will be available." If you have attached photos, use this area to provide a caption for each one.**

About (Optional): **Mission statement of Department, Agency or organization.**

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