

News media protocols for DNR staff

DNR's recreational, natural resources and environmental programs are many and affect all our state citizens' quality of life and interests. We rely on the news media to help us reach the public with our messages and to provide information the public wants. For these reasons, we strive to be responsive, accurate, open and timely in meeting news media needs.

DNR is highly decentralized and media from every corner of the state and across the country contact staff at every level. Managing those contacts to assure DNR speaks with one consistent, clear, confident voice requires pre-planning and operational procedures. We need to use the same numbers and make the same points to get our message across. Getting our message out to the public and dealing with reporter questions and requests can be time-consuming. The agency's procedures for handling news media ensures efficiency and allows our specialized communicators to relieve some of the workload for other staff.

The Office of Communication (OC) coordinates all external news media relations. Working through regional public affairs managers, central office senior public affairs managers, the agency Spokesperson Bill Cosh and Office of Communications Director Laurel Steffes, and in cooperation with bureau directors and division administrators, the OC handles media calls or requests, develops news releases, coordinates and approves paid and broadcast advertising, manages media events, develops talking points, speeches and testimony on key issues, and conducts media relations.

The Office of Communications uses a number of tools – the weekly *DNR News* (you get an e-mailed link each week), individual press releases, social media, gov.delivery lists, advertising, direct reporter contacts, media kits, editorial board visits, web information, public service announcements and more – to disseminate key information.

Here are DNR's procedures for the various forms of news media contacts:

- 1. All official agency news release are issued through the Office of Communications.** Your regional or senior public affairs manager develops content by working with program staff and gets needed approvals.
- 2. All agency letters to the editor and official "op-ed" pieces are coordinated through and must be approved by the Office of Communications.** If a newspaper or TV station has an editorial you feel needs an agency response, check with your OC rep or program manager and forward – quickly – the content of the editorial and suggested response to the OC. We will make a quick decision on whether to proceed. Bear in mind that DNR usually does not reply to letters to the editor.
- 3. Any purchase of broadcast advertising, development of PSAs, or display ads (other than legal notices) is coordinated through and must be approved by the Deputy Secretary and Director of the Office of Communications.** First, advertising is proposed by programs for a fiscal year, then preapproved and purchasing waivers are developed. At placement, approvals are usually in two steps – first the script and then the final production. If you are thinking of broadcast advertising or PSAs – radio, TV or cable -- check with your regional or senior public affairs manager. They can

guide you through the process. We have a lot of resources – as well as experience – to get you the best deal for your investment.

4. **DNR is very transparent and willingly responds to requests for open records. However, if a reporter makes such a request, it is important for the OC and administration to know what is being provided as such calls often result in follow-ups to other agency staff. Though you may have information electronically and can send it to the reporter immediately, please contact your OC rep first. We will work with you to make sure the information is provided promptly, and that we are prepared for follow-ups.**
5. **If a reporter calls, choose one of the following options for handling: answer routine inquiries and file a report; refer the call; or follow the media call protocol.**
 - **A call from a reporter can come “out of the blue.” If you aren’t comfortable talking to the news media, you don’t have to. You can always tell a reporter that you’ll have someone call him or her on the matter. Then, ask your public affairs manager or Communications Director Laurel Steffes to return the call.**
 - **If a reporter contacts you, you should feel free to respond to routine contacts (defined below.) However, if you are contacted by a reporter, and it does not fit this definition, get the reporter’s question, deadline, and contact and tell them you will get right back to them. REPORTERS ARE ACCUSTOMED TO ORGANIZATIONS USING THIS PROCEDURE.** Consult with your OC rep. We will help you refine your answer, advise if speaking points are available or if a spokesperson has already been appointed, have that person call the reporter (see web-based listing).
 - **Sometimes a reporter starts with routine factual questions but then moves into policy questions that go beyond the definition of a routine question. If this happens, stop answering and get the reporter’s question, deadline, and contact and tell them you will get right back to them. Contact the OC immediately. Never answer what-if questions or speculate on what might happen. Stay on the record.** If you find an interview is moving into these areas, err on the side of caution and consult with a public affairs manager. If you’re not sure whether the reporter’s question is one that you should handle or refer to the OC, refer it to the OC. You may also ask your OC rep to be present before and during the interview.
 - **If you do respond to a routine contact by a reporter, file a media contact report.** Include the reporter name, the media outlet, the question, your answer, any follow-up you think should be done, and when the piece will print or air. Also include your name and title. Always e-mail it to your regional public affairs manager, and to your supervisor and others as your region or bureau has directed. Do this right away. It’s not helpful to wait until an article has been published and then to provide a link with your report. If there was an opportunity for us to provide additional information or interviews, it has been

lost. Also, knowing that multiple people are getting the same question means that we have to proactively start sharing information on the subject – your media contact heads-up can get that started.

Your OC rep will report significant contacts from media, legislators, policy questions or other issues to the Director of the Office of Communications in Madison who will inform the secretary when necessary.

Appendix A -- Handling media inquiries

Routine media inquiries staff should handle if it falls into your program area

- Clarification of hunting, fishing, outdoor regulations and rules
- Local season forecasts and seasonal events
- Hunting, fishing and recreational licensing requirements
- Outdoor recreational conditions, including safety advice and warnings
- Fish consumption advisory
- Notification, content, and format of public hearings (Do not speculate on what will take place at the public hearing or what topics will be addressed)
- Outdoor skills
- Parks events
- Immediate public safety/health situations such as boil water notices, spills, fire-prone dry conditions, fires, ozone or fine particle alerts, etc. (Please let the OC know immediately.) NOTE: Conjecture about the causes of air quality problems should be referred to your public affairs manager.
- Forest health and sustainable forestry practices
- Grants applications, deadlines, and requirements (Not grant awards)
- Sharing contents (after initial release) of reports mandated by federal agencies including: Toxics, Release Inventory, Superfund sites, waters inventory, etc. (Not stimulus related questions)
- Property master planning
- Incidental endangered species take notifications
- Small or routine land purchases that are already completed and announced (Not large acquisitions or Stewardship)
- Follow-ups/questions related to press releases or other public releases where a DNR program contact has been listed. If you are not that contact, forward the call to the person who is.

Appendix B – Refer these media inquiries

Media inquiries to be handled by or in consultation *FIRST* with the Office of Communication include all other calls, such as:

- Any news media call you are not sure how to handle or direct
- Calls from the following major news organizations: *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Associated Press, WisPolitics, Wisconsin Public Radio, Wisconsin Radio Network, *Wisconsin State Journal*, *Green Bay Press Gazette*, and television stations (other than routine questions)
- Any major news stories—statewide or national
- Agency policies and any potential changes in policy matters
- Breaking or potentially controversial news items
- Proposed legislation or rules
- Anything involving the legislature
- Anything budget or stimulus related
- Anything involving the governor or other state agencies
- Personnel issues

- Legal issues
- State Implementation Plan (SIP) development
- Open records requests from journalists
- Federal policies or rules that could have significant impact on Wisconsin including stimulus
- Large land acquisitions or Stewardship; land acquisitions being negotiated
- Major environmental issues such as mine permitting, air fees
- Appointments to non-classified positions and Natural Resources Board
- Law enforcement investigations in process

Protocol for handling and reporting non-routine incoming media calls:

- 1. Staff contacted by a reporter should:**
 - A.) Take the reporter's information – name, media outlet, telephone number, questions, and deadline;
 - B) Thank the reporter for calling and let the reporter know that someone will be getting back to him/her prior to his/her specified deadline, and
 - C) Touch bases with your regional public affairs manager, assigned senior public affairs manager, Spokesperson Bill Cosh or Laurel Steffes to discuss talking points or handling.
- 2. Generally the agency Spokesperson, Regional Public Affairs Managers and OC staff will respond to reporters' questions, however, if the Public Affairs Managers or OC staff determine you are the proper person to respond they will help you prepare a response or provide you with agency talking points.** Talking points are three to five overarching points that we want to make about an issue – these points should be repeated several times in an interview while providing more technical information. If the call has a designated spokesperson or needs counsel with central office, they will help make the appropriate contacts.
- 3. The Spokesperson, Regional Public Affairs Managers or OC staff may contact or ask you to contact division administrator(s) and/or relevant expert(s) to provide background explanation of issue and suggest direction for talking points.** This is an important part of ensuring Public Affairs Managers and OC staff are fully prepared for interviews and can properly draft press releases and talking points.
- 4. If the issue is controversial or needs to be framed in terms of on-going issues and policy interpretation, in addition to developing the talking points or release, the OC will develop circulate and get appropriate sign-offs on them before returning the reporter's call. Generally speaking, controversial issues are referred to the Spokesperson.**
- 5. At the end of each day, the OC compiles a daily selected media summary with the reporter's name, media outlet, name and title of staff member who handled the call, questions the reporter asked, and if necessary, a very brief summary of the conversation.** The media contact reports often frame the work for the OC for the next day by helping to point to issues that need a release or talking points, or ones that will likely generate additional calls to the agency.

- 6. If the reporter needs technical, scientific, or other specific information, the OC may appoint a secondary spokesperson on the issue and that person may join in on conference call.**
- 7. If you are on the scene of a public safety crisis and reporters are rolling in distracting you, call the OC. We will dispatch a public information officer to help, and we can take all calls until that person gets there so you can attend to your important work**



Working With The News Media

This document serves as a blueprint for Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources staff in working with the news media.

Incoming Media Contact

1. Write down reporter's name, media outlet, deadline, phone, email and when story will run.
2. Ask reporter to share a few questions so you can determine what interview is about.

Any DNR Staff Member

Designated Spokesperson

3. Is this a routine contact?
 - Is it a major media outlet? See OC Intranet list.
(If yes, not routine)
 - Has a spokesperson been designated? (If yes, not routine.)
 - Is it a high profile or urgent topic?
(If yes, not routine.)

If not routine, refer to OC or designated spokesperson.

Not routine?

3. Determine whether you are comfortable with the timing, questions and your messaging. If yes, proceed. If no, contact your supervisor or OC.
4. If the matter is urgent, connect with OC by phone and send email to **DNR DL MEDIA CONTACT** with a cc to your supervisor, bureau director, division administrator and secretary's director.
5. If you are comfortable completing the interview, do so. Stick to facts, do not speculate and limit comments to your area of expertise.
6. If in doubt about the timing or direction of the inquiry, feel free to ask for more time or request OC support.

4. If it is a routine contact in your subject area and you are comfortable with the timing, questions and messaging for the specific topic, complete the interview. If uncertain, contact OC.
5. Stick to facts, do not speculate and if questions stray into unfamiliar or high profile territory, politely indicate someone else will follow up.

OC Support

Bill Cosh: (608) 267-2773

Jennifer Sereno: (608) 770-8084

Andrew Savagian: (608) 575-3571

Always submit a media contact report. Include: reporter's name; media outlet; deadline; phone; email; and when story will run. Include a brief summary of the information provided if an interview was completed. Email to **DNR DL MEDIA CONTACT** with a cc to program and division leaders.

YOUR OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

- Communications director – The communications director manages internal and external communications efforts, provides strategic communications direction and serves as the department's chief spokesperson.
- Communications section chiefs & public affairs managers – Communications section chiefs and program-based public affairs managers provide media relations support for agency wide, high profile and program specific topics. Geographic-based public affairs managers provide media relations support related to local issues and regional office needs such as local events.
- Designated spokespeople – Designated spokespeople serve as media contacts for specific topics, high profile issues and crises. Designated spokespeople have completed media training, received signoff on talking points and do not need prior approval to respond to media inquiries. A list of agency spokespeople may be found on the Intranet through a link on the Office of Communications page.

TIPS AND GUIDELINES

- In addition to getting the reporter's contact information, you may ask who else the reporter is interviewing in order to get a broader perspective on the story.
- If you are a designated spokesperson, maintain up-to-date talking points on your topics. Routinely share updates with your supervisor and the Office of Communications.
- If you receive an interview request, do not feel pressured to respond immediately. Your options include handling the call when it is received, asking the reporter for a more convenient time to return the call or taking down the contact information for a return call by a communications team member. If you believe the interview may touch on highly controversial subjects, you are encouraged to include a communications team member for the interview.

HELPFUL HINTS

- Be confident in your messaging. Remember, your audience is the public. Stick to your talking points and core messages that integrate the department's mission, vision and values.
- Provide only factual information. Do not offer opinions, speculate on hypothetical questions or ascribe motivation to others.
- Everything is on the record. Do not provide information on background unless you are comfortable seeing your name linked with it.
- You do not have to answer every question. Use bridging techniques to navigate away from untrue assertions or poorly conceived questions. Example: "What we're actually hearing from our customers is that they appreciate the opportunity to be involved."
- Do not respond to negative assertions by reporters as if a statement of opinion is fact.
- If you receive an unexpected media call or a call on a topic with new developments, do not hesitate to get the reporter's contact information and return the call after you have had a chance to review relevant information and coordinate with others. If an interview takes an unexpected turn, it is OK to redirect a question or indicate that the question is outside the scope of your expertise.
- Often, reporters will use a socially uncomfortable pause to encourage a source to continue providing sought-after information. You are not obligated to fill in the gaps.
- Use the close of an interview to restate key points or, if the reporter has neglected to cover an important positive development, use this time to share it. Example: "One really important point to remember is....."
- Do make yourself available for follow-up questions by providing a cell phone number. It is better to prevent an error than to seek a correction after a story runs.

OTHER USEFUL BACKGROUND

- Help the reporter and the audience understand the story by providing useful background.
- Repeat key points and phrases.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say so, and if possible work to obtain the correct information.
- Assume cameras and microphones are always on and remember that anyone attending a meeting can be a citizen blogger.

OUTBOUND CONTENT

- Contact your Office of Communications team member for coordination of news releases, staff written columns, advertising campaigns, major reports and TV and radio appearances.



DRAFT DNR MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL

DATE: Feb. 6, 2015

OVERVIEW

In working to protect and enhance the state's environmental assets, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources oversees a broad range of programs and activities that require public engagement for success. To connect with citizens effectively, DNR must communicate in ways that meet public expectations for transparency while promoting understanding of shared objectives and science-based management practices. Throughout its communications, DNR emphasizes facts rather than opinions and avoids speculation on hypothetical questions.

DNR communicates with citizens and stakeholders through many channels including the news media. Clear, constructive and consistent messages as well as mutually beneficial media relationships are necessary to carry out the public will and forge meaningful partnerships.

While DNR entrusts staff members to engage with the public on many levels, the Office of Communications coordinates news media relations to ensure program staff may focus on core job duties. Working in cooperation with division administrators, secretary's directors and others, Office of Communications team members including the communications director, central office public affairs managers and geographically distributed public affairs staff lead a variety of media and external relations efforts. Priorities include:

- Coordination and oversight of media inquiries including requests for interviews;
- Development and approval of news releases and media advisories;
- Crisis communications and incident response support;
- Development of talking points, speeches and testimony;
- Development of strategic and situational communications plans;
- Planning and management of events involving the news media;
- Coordination and approval of paid advertising;
- Oversight and approval of special reports; external newsletters, blogs, guest columns and letters to the editor;
- Social media activities; and
- Overall media relations.

The procedures identified in the following pages aim to improve DNR's ability to connect with customers and citizens via the news media in ways that advance the department's mission, vision and values. The following document outlines news media protocols, the signoff process for outgoing content and communication procedures for high profile events and crises.

In short, the document says:

1. Routine media inquiries may be handled by program staff followed by a media contact report.
2. If a spokesperson has been identified for a topic, it is not routine. These media contacts should be directed to the designated spokesperson or the Office of Communications.
3. Outgoing communications to the media or large audiences require prior review and signoff.
4. High profile and crisis situations involve a more complicated communications response.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES

DNR's communication efforts reflect the department's shared values of accuracy, timeliness, integrity, transparency, professionalism, respect and customer service. When put into practice for media and external relations, these principles:

- Secure public trust and goodwill;
- Build credibility by demonstrating an understanding of accepted media practices, Associated Press style conventions and newsroom deadlines;
- Inspire citizen collaboration and reflect coordination among project partners;
- Invite future dialogue;
- Demonstrate the department's commitment to transparency;
- Model respect by presenting information in accessible formats with relevant levels of detail; and
- Provide for swift tactical execution as opportunities and needs arise.

I. News Media Protocols

• Incoming media contacts

- **Routine media contacts:** Employees who receive routine media contacts within their area of expertise may conduct the interview and should submit a media contact report as soon as possible after completing the interaction. If a spokesperson has been identified for a topic, it is not a routine contact. When in doubt, check with the Office of Communications. Details on how to submit a media contact report can be found below. Examples of routine inquiries may be found in **Appendix A**.
- **High profile media contacts:** Unless previously designated as a spokesperson for a specific topic, employees must consult with the Office of Communication upon receiving a high profile media contact and prior approval must be granted to conduct a high profile media interview. Submit a media contact report as soon as possible whenever a high profile media contact is received.
 - High profile contacts involve major news stories; elected officials; policy and budget matters; personnel and legal issues; and controversial items.
 - The high profile category also includes contacts from national and major statewide news organizations including the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel; Associated Press; WisPolitics; Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism; Wisconsin Public Radio; Wisconsin Radio Network; Wisconsin State Journal; WIBA radio; WISN radio; WTMJ radio; and all television stations. Additional examples of high profile inquiries may be found in **Appendix B**.
 - To better help reporters meet deadlines and direct inquiries to the appropriate spokesperson, staff members who are not designated spokespeople but who receive high profile contacts should ask the reporter what the story is about and identify one or two interview questions if possible. Take down the reporter's name, organization, deadline, phone number, email and when the story is expected to run.

• Filing media contact reports

- As soon as possible upon completion of a media contact, staff members should complete a media contact report. Email the media contact report to **DNR DL MEDIA CONTACT** with a cc to supervisors and bureau directors. For high profile contacts, include division administrators and the relevant secretary's director. Include the following details:
 - reporter's name;
 - media outlet;
 - deadline;
 - phone and email;

- brief summary of reporter's questions and your answers;
- any follow-up needed and when the story will print or air; and
- your name, title and program.

- **Designated spokespeople**

- **Proactive communications:** To help ensure timely and accurate communications, DNR's division administrators, bureau directors and Office of Communications staff will identify key agency spokespeople who have prior approval for interviews on high profile topics as well as regional issues and local themes in high profile media markets. Prior to distribution of a news release or other proactive communication on a new topic, the Office of Communications will work with senior management and program staff to designate a spokesperson. This person's name will appear first in the contact field of a news release, followed by the relevant contact on the communications team.
 - Designation as a spokesperson does not confer the ability to issue press releases or reports to the media; these must be coordinated through the Office of Communications.
- **Ongoing communications:** The communications team will work with senior management, program leadership and staff to identify spokespeople for ongoing topics of public interest.
- **High profile or crisis communications:** Consistent with incident response protocols, the communications team will expedite identification of a spokesperson for crisis situations and provide support as needed, including travel to the scene or offsite media triage. More details on high profile communications may be found in Section II, High Profile Event Protocols.
- **Training for designated spokespeople:** Designated spokespeople will complete DNR media training and develop approved talking points prior to conducting interviews.
- **Messaging for designated spokespeople:** Approval to speak on one topic or regional theme does not extend to other, unrelated topics.
- **How to know designated spokespeople:** A current list of DNR's designated spokespeople can be found on the Office of Communications Intranet page.

II. Outbound Content and the Signoff Process

- **Best practices for outbound content development and the signoff process**

- **Advertising:** Ad campaigns, broadcast spots and display ads (other than paid legal notices) that are being placed in external media must be approved by the communications director. Approvals often require two steps – first the script or plan and then the final production. If you are considering an advertising campaign as part of an outreach effort, consult with your regional or program public affairs manager. DNR uses a media buyer to ensure advertising dollars are directed for maximum benefit.
- **Blogs and columns:** All agency columns and letters to the editor are coordinated through and must be approved by the Office of Communications. If a newspaper or TV station runs an editorial you feel needs an agency response, check with your Office of Communications representative or program manager and quickly forward the content of the editorial as well as the suggested response to the Office of Communications. The communications team will make a quick decision on whether to proceed. Bear in mind that DNR usually does not respond to letters to the editor. Blogs and columns by DNR staffers also must be reviewed before submission to a media outlet or blog.
- **Newsletters and program publications:** GovDelivery publications such as program newsletters should be approved by the relevant section chief. The Office of Communications is available for editing and consultation on newsletters and other program publications.
- **News releases:** All agency news releases are issued through the Office of Communications. Depending on the topic, office of communications staff may develop the content by working with

programs or program staff may initiate content and connect with communications staff. Regardless, news releases will be reviewed by program staff to ensure technical accuracy and by communications staff to conform to Associated Press style conventions. Releases then go to section chiefs, bureau directors and the communications director for signoff. High profile topics also go to the policy and external relations director as well as division administrators for signoff.

- **Reports:** Major reports intended for external distribution receive review and signoff from the Office of Communications and topic related Department Leadership Team members prior to dissemination. Prior to issuance, program staff or supervisors should submit a brief summary to the Department Leadership Team.
- **Social media content:** Social media content for DNR's Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other channels is coordinated through the Office of Communications.
- **Story tips:** Tips for news stories should be routed through the Office of Communications with a cc to the staff member's own supervisor for discussion about timing, targeting and message consistency.
- **TV and radio appearances:** All TV and radio appearances are coordinated through and must be approved by the Office of Communications. Please notify your area public affairs manager or central office communications staff to discuss agreements that involve periodic TV and radio appearances.
- **Wisconsin Public Records Law requests.** Records requests are handled by the department's open records coordinator. If a reporter requests information under the Freedom of Information Act, refer the contact to the department's open records coordinator. It is vital that the Office of Communications and the administration know what information is being provided as the dissemination of requested records often leads to follow-up inquiries from other organizations.

III. High Profile Event Protocols

• High Profile Events – Immediate

- **Definition:** Unplanned events that trigger real, perceived or possible threats to life, health, safety or the environment.
- **Examples:** Accidents causing serious or traumatic injury; serious recreational incidents; hazardous spills or releases (chemical, agriculture, etc.); fires, floods or other natural disasters; or any non-routine situation that poses a significant public health or safety risk to humans or significantly affects the environment (wildlife, air, land, surface water, groundwater) are examples of emergencies or crises.

NOTE: Many of the above situations require activation of an Incident Command System (ICS). If response to an emergency/crisis/high profile event is handled under an ICS, the communication protocol and media relations practices under ICS guidelines will be followed (e.g. establish ICS spokesperson, talking points, etc.).

Communications Protocol

- A. **Media response for staff in the field.** If staff members are responding to an emergency in the field when no ICS is activated (e.g. manure spill) or an ICS has been deactivated, please follow these steps for any media response.

- 1) Direct any media to the on-site Office of Communications public affairs manager for any questions/information.
- 2) Once Office of Communications staff members are notified of the high profile event, the communications team will notify the Department Leadership Team via email.
- 3) If no communications staff members are available on-site to handle media response, direct the media to contact the DNR communications director at 608-267-2773.

- 4) If approached by the media, use the attached talking points as your template to respond to any questions.



Field Staff Talking
Points Template

- 5) Until otherwise notified by the DNR communications director or section chief, the Office of Communications staff member assigned to the event is the spokesperson and media contact for the agency.

B. Other media contacts. If agency staff members receive other media contacts (i.e. phone or email) about a specific high profile event, please follow these steps.

- 1) Forward those on via email to your Office of Communications public affairs manager. Copy your supervisor, secretary's director in the region the event occurred, DNR communications director, deputy DNR secretary and any other relevant staff (e.g. project manager for a site affected by the event).
- 2) Do not respond to the media request until directed to do so.
- 3) If you are instructed to respond to the reporter, file a media contact report as soon as possible.
- 4) Staff may also assist the Office of Communications with monitoring print, radio, television and social media, along with any incoming communication.

Remember – any high profile event likely to attract widespread news media attention needs to be brought to the attention of the communications staff and your supervisor without delay.

C. News Releases/Talking Points/Etc. If the department plans to issue a news release or other public documents for the event, please follow these steps.

- 1) Work with your public affairs manager on the content, management approvals and distribution plans for the information.
- 2) Keep it simple. For news releases and talking points specifically, follow the attached format.



High Profile News
Release Template

- For news releases, focus on the event only (e.g. manure spill); location; any impacts (e.g. release to a wetland); and that the DNR is investigating and working with local partners to respond (e.g county sheriffs). Don't speculate about the incident, the amount spilled, types of contaminants, how the spill occurred or any future effects.
 - For talking points, develop short, bulleted sentences about one page in length that simply and accurately describe the event.
- 3) Work with the Office of Communications on any follow up media calls, following the protocols outlined in items A & B above.

D. Internal Communication. For internal communication about the incident among staff – e.g. updates in *The Resource* or formal email updates from the Secretary's office, program director, etc. – staff should work with the communications team and supervisors on content, approvals and distribution.

- **High Profile Events – Ongoing**

Definition: Often, emergency events require communication needs (e.g. public meeting) that go beyond the actual incident, or result in ongoing or long-term communication needs that the department must address (e.g. newsletter, web pages, toll-free phone line, etc.).

In addition, certain emerging or high profile events occur that are not considered emergencies or don't involve incident command – e.g. the department's handling of an issue that unexpectedly gains great importance, departmental decisions or actions that are called into question, or where the need for rapid departmental action is necessary to avert or contain a risky situation.

Examples: Public or private well contamination (or other long-term contamination issue), state-tribal relationships or a critical natural resource management issue.

Communication Protocol

- A. **Media response:** If staff members are responding to an emerging/high profile event, when no ICS is activated or the ICS has been deactivated, please follow these steps for any media response.
 - 1) Direct any media to the Office of Communications public affairs manager for any questions/information.
 - 2) Once communications staff members are notified of the high profile event, the Office of Communications will notify the DLT via email.
 - 3) If the public affairs manager is unavailable, direct the media to contact the DNR communications director at 608-267-2773.
 - 4) Do not respond to the media request until directed to do so.
 - 5) If you are instructed to respond to a reporter, file a media contact report as soon as possible.
 - 6) Until otherwise notified by the DNR communications director or section chief, the Office of Communications staff member assigned to the event is the spokesperson and media contact for the agency.

- B. **Communication team:** If staff members are responding to an emerging, high profile event when no ICS is activated or has been deactivated, or there are communication needs that go beyond the ICS, please follow these steps for organizing agency communications.
 - 1) The secretary's director, in consultation with the secretary's office, Department Leadership Team, communications director and other key central office and field staff, will pull together a team to discuss cross-division or agency-wide communication plans.
 - 2) The secretary's director, in consultation with the team, will also appoint an agency spokesperson and a lead program to work with the communications director and communications staff members on communications work that may include developing a separate team to work specifically on the high profile event.
 - 3) The team may also be involved in other agency and programmatic decisions beyond communications.

NOTE: If the Incident Command System (ICS) is activated, staff must consult/coordinate with ICS staff during this decision-making process. Also, some DNR staff involved with the ICS may become a

part of the communication team, and activities with the ICS will most likely affect the plan. However, the ICS remains the on-site authority.

- C. **Communication Planning.** The communications team should consider the following factors in developing a communications plan, communication actions and tools needed and an implementation timeline. A template is attached.



Communication Plan
Template

- 1) Size and scope of the event.
- 2) Public health effects.
- 3) Environmental effects, including (but not limited to):
 - quantity, substance and concentration of any spilled material;
 - actual or perceived direct contact, groundwater or vapor threat (include proximity to municipal and other potable wells);
 - proximity to and nature of sensitive receptors such as nearby surface water; and
 - any other environmental impacts.
- 4) Public perception of a responsible party.
- 5) Nature of neighborhood (e.g. near schools, politically active, etc.)
- 6) Potential public nuisance (e.g. dust or odors).
- 7) Known media involvement for similar situation, past or present.

The communication team will then seek input and approval from the Secretary's Office, Department Leadership Team and other key managers and staff before implementing the plan.

- D. **News Releases/Talking Points/Etc.** If the department plans to issue a news release or other public document for the event, please follow these steps.

- 1) Work with your public affairs manager on the content, management approvals and distribution plan for the release.
- 2) Keep it simple. For news releases and talking points specifically, follow the format the public affairs manager will provide.
 - For news releases, focus on the event only (e.g. manure spill), the location, any impacts (e.g. release to a wetland) and that the DNR is investigating and working with local partners (e.g county sheriffs). Don't speculate about the incident, such as the amount spilled or types of contaminants, how the spill occurred or any future effects.
 - For talking points, develop short, bulleted sentences about one page in length that simply and accurately describe the event.
- 3) Work with the Office of Communications on any follow up media calls, following the protocols outlined in items A & B above.

- E. **Internal Communication.** For internal communication about the incident among staff – e.g. updates in *The Resource* or formal email updates from the Secretary's Office, program director, etc. – staff should work with their communications contact and supervisor on content, approvals and distribution.

- **High Profile Events – Law Enforcement special topics**

Communication efforts for the Law Enforcement team involve a variety of special topics such as Crime Stoppers, with procedural requirements that often extend beyond other DNR protocols. The DNR Law Enforcement's version of the traditional Crime Stoppers protocol follows a model that has been used by this international program for about 40 years. Details of the policy can be found below.



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Appendix A

Examples of routine media inquiries

Routine media contacts may be handled by program staff members with subsequent notification to the Office of Communications. If a spokesperson has been established for a topic, it is not routine and media inquiries should be directed to that person or the Office of Communications. When in doubt, contact a public affairs manager. Examples of routine inquiries include:

- Clarification of hunting, fishing, outdoor regulations and rules.
- Local season forecasts and seasonal events.
- Large mammal sightings and wildlife sightings in urban settings.
- Hunting, fishing and recreational licensing requirements.
- Outdoor recreation conditions, including safety advice and warnings.
- Fish consumption advisories.
- Legal notices, content and format of public hearings and meetings. Do not speculate on what will take place at the public meeting or what topics will be addressed.
- Outdoor skills.
- Parks events.
- Immediate public safety and health situations such as boil water notices, spills, fire prone dry conditions, fires, ozone or fine particle alerts, etc. (Please let the Office of Communications know immediately.) Do not speculate on the causes of air or water quality problems.
- Forest health and sustainable forestry practices.
- Grant applications, deadlines and requirements (not grant awards).
- Sharing contents (after initial release) of reports mandated by state and federal agencies including toxics release inventory, Superfund sites, water reports.
- Existing property master plans.
- Existing property management plans.
- Incidental endangered species take notifications.
- Small or routine land purchases that are already completed and announced.
- Follow-ups and questions related to news releases or other public releases where a DNR program contact has been listed. If you are not that contact, forward the call to the correct person.

Appendix B

Examples of high profile media contacts that must be referred

Unless you are designated as a spokesperson on an issue, high profile media contacts must be referred to the Office of Communications prior to conducting an interview. Examples include:

- Any news media call you are not sure how to handle or direct.
- Contacts from the following major news organizations: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel; Associated Press; WisPolitics; Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism; Wisconsin Public Radio; Wisconsin Radio Network; Wisconsin State Journal; WIBA radio; WISN radio; WTMJ radio; and all television stations.
- Any major news stories, statewide or national.
- Agency policies and any potential changes in policy matters.
- Breaking or potentially controversial news items.
- Proposed legislation or rules.
- Anything involving the Legislature.
- Anything budget or stimulus related.

- Anything involving the governor or other state agencies.
- Personnel issues.
- Legal issues.
- State Implementation Plan development.
- Open records requests from journalists.
- Federal policies or rules that could have significant impact on Wisconsin.
- Large land acquisitions or Stewardship purchases; land acquisitions being negotiated.
- Major environmental issues such as mine permitting, air fees.
- Appointments to non-classified positions and the Natural Resources Board.
- Law enforcement investigations in process.

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Appendix C

Agency Contact Information

- **24-hour Emergency Response Line: 800-943-0003**
[When the phone is answered, press "1" for spills. This will get you to the DNR Duty Officer for any DNR emergency.]
- **DNR Duty Officer: 608-576-5358 (mobile)**
- **David Woodbury (Emergency Management): 608-444-3976**
- **Secretary's Office: 608-266-2121**

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