

Tips for Effective Online Media

E-mail is an excellent tool for communicating with the media. It is a cost-effective way to quickly distribute press releases and newsletters, and also is useful for submitting letters to the editor or opinion-editorials. Electronic press releases and newsletters can also be posted to your organization's Web site.

Distribute e-mail press releases in plain text.

- Never send press releases as e-mail attachments or attach other documents to e-mail press releases.
- Draft your press release as you would any other e-mail message, using a software program such as Eudora or Microsoft Outlook.

Keep the text brief and focused.

- An electronic press release should follow the same "pyramid" format as any other press release.
- Start with the most important information.
- Use short paragraphs and keep it brief.

Write a subject line that is compelling or provocative.

- Keep in mind that the subject line is the first thing reporters will read when they see your e-mail.
- Never e-mail a press release (or any other message) with a blank subject line.

Include your electronic contact information.

- Remember to include your e-mail address and Web site URL, in addition to your phone and fax numbers and address.
- Put all your contact information at the top of the press release.

Use hyper-links where appropriate.

- If there is additional information available on your Web site – such as a white paper or an event announcement – include a hyper-link so reporters can click right to it.

Avoid disclosing the recipients' e-mail addresses in mass distribution.

- Put your e-mail address in the "to" field.
- Always type the recipients' address in the "Bcc" field of your e-mail message header, rather than in the "to" or "Cc" field.

Treat e-mail media inquiries the same as phone inquiries.

- Always respond just as promptly to e-mail media inquiries as you would to phone calls.
- Reporters who work for online publications are much more likely to contact you by e-mail than by phone. If you are responsible for answering media inquiries, check your e-mail frequently throughout the day.

*Source: NetActionNotes, an online newsletter published by NetAction, a nonprofit organization that promotes grass roots organizing on the Internet.