

News releases and media advisories

A **news release** should be used only when there is something concrete and of high news value to report. Use sparingly. A news release is appropriate for announcing immediate, major changes, which may affect members of your community (e.g. the opening of a new office or the announcement of a major initiative).

You can help the media and build your own credibility by providing news releases that are brief, concise and accurate. Keep information to a one or two-page format. If necessary, you can provide additional information as an attachment (called a “backgrounder”).

Send the news release as soon as you want the information to be “public”. If you send a release and indicate that you want the media to report the information at a later date (called an embargo), chances are they will shelve the news release after an event has passed, it’s “old news” and won’t be covered.

For example, if you were opening a new office, you would send the news release a day or two before the opening so the media would have time to prepare a story about your office. The story could be released before or after the event. Either way, it’s good publicity for your office.

However, if you have a news item that is very “time-sensitive”, like the announcement of a major initiative, you would wait until the morning of the announcement to send the release (if it reveals the details of the announcement). Obviously you wouldn’t want the media to report on an announcement that hadn’t been made yet. This way, they’ll reveal the details of the initiative on the day of its announcement.

By using **media advisories** (also called media alerts or media bulletins) you can invite a media outlet to your special event or announcement and provide some very basic information to pique their interest.

A media advisory is no more than one page in length and it outlines (usually in point form) information about an upcoming event or announcement.

Using the previous example, your media advisory would say that a major announcement by (name) will be made on (date) at (place) at (time). You would provide a contact name for further information, but you wouldn’t reveal details about the announcement on either the advisory or in a follow-up conversation. On the day of the event, you would issue a full news release.

News releases and media advisories are usually sent to the assignment editor; they may also be sent directly to reporters who cover that topic. Faxing the release is the preferred distribution method.

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A follow-up call is important to ensure the right person received your release. Simply call your media contact, ask them if they received the release or advisory and if they have any questions. This is standard business practice in the media industry, as many media outlets receive hundreds of news releases and media advisories daily.

Source: Western Economic Diversification Canada's Promotions Toolbox