

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Bharat Mathur
Acting Regional Administrator

TO: All Region 5 employees

SUBJECT: Working with the Press

EPA's policy is to be responsive and open in providing the public with access to information. An informed public is key to EPA's mission of protecting human health and the environment. Open communication fosters a better understanding of EPA actions and how people can protect their environment and families.

One of our challenges is shaping consistent messages and working as a team to communicate the Agency's policies and priorities. I want to ensure that the Region puts its best face forward B that we speak with a consistent voice and that we're effective in spreading the word about our work.

The Office of Public Affairs press team will work with Region 5 staff to ensure that reporters' requests are responded to appropriately. This will ensure that reporters receive information that accurately reflects EPA actions and policies, and will prevent EPA management from being surprised by news coverage. Please follow these procedures.

Here are the specifics:

- If you receive any request for information or an interview from a member of the media, you should refer the caller to OPA (see the list of contacts at the end). Please refrain from answering such inquires directly. OPA will determine the appropriate response B and who should respond B after consultation with program staff, and if necessary, after elevating issues for senior-level attention. Often, OPA will coordinate direct interviews between program staff experts and the media.
- If you receive any request for written information from a member of the media, please refer the caller to OPA. Occasionally, media sources are instructed to request Agency documents under the Freedom of Information Act. OPA will coordinate the response to these media requests after consultation with appropriate FOIA office staff, and if necessary, after elevating the request for senior-level attention.
- On a case-by-case basis, some employees may be authorized to work directly with the media. For instance, on-scene coordinators, remedial project managers and community involvement staff are sometimes approached by the media while in the field. They are authorized, in these situations, to speak directly to the press about their sites without prior

approval, but should report their conversation to Public Affairs after the fact. If you need similar authorization, please contact one of the OPA contacts listed below.

- Any request for EPA to provide an article for publication should be referred to OPA. OPA will consult with the lead program and senior management before making any commitments to the media. (Articles for scientific journals should go through the Region=s peer review process. Contact Gilberto Alvarez, OSEA, for more information.)
- OPA is responsible for initiating contact with the media. This includes making phone calls and sending news releases, letters to the editors and op-eds. If you think you have a good story that you=d like to publicize, please work with OPA. OPA staff is responsible for working with the media to set up interviews, press conferences, editorial boards and briefings. Also, please consult with OPA prior to attending such events set up by other organizations.

When you are called by a reporter B or have news you want to get out B these are the people to call:

Press Team

Phillippa Cannon, 353-6218 Team Leader, Water, Great Lakes National Program Office, Office of Strategic Environmental Analysis

Bill Omohundro, 353-8254 Air and Radiation

Karen Thompson, 353-8547 Waste, Pesticides and Toxics

Mick Hans, 353-5050 Superfund

Jeff Kelley, 353-1159 Chief, Public Information and Education Section

Elissa Speizman, 353-2073 Director, Office of Public Affairs