



Tips for Positive Media Relations

- 1) **Respect media deadlines** (usually before 5 p.m. that day, but often earlier). Respond to calls and emails promptly, even if you still need to gather more information. Ask a reporter what their deadline is and strive to meet it.
- 2) **Prepare.** Ask the reporter what the angle of their story is and what they need to know so you can be prepared. Anticipate the reporter's questions (who, what, when, where, why, and how much) and prepare clear, concise responses. Include relevant facts and figures. Be accurate. Provide documentation. Prepare for the one or two questions you don't want to hear.
- 3) **Know your message.** Select three key messages you want to communicate to the public and frame your responses around them.
- 4) **Listen carefully.** The reporter's question may include inaccurate assumptions or be framed as a negative to put you on the defensive. Correct any factual errors and respond objectively, accurately, and concisely. Do not allow a reporter to put words in your mouth and correct any inaccuracies right away. You can ask the reporter if they would be willing to run their quote by you to make sure they captured the intent of your statement.
- 5) **Be objective.** Avoid a debate or argument- it's not personal. Remember that you are representing a City department, not yourself.
- 6) **Never say "no comment."** If you cannot comment or are unsure if you should comment on a specific question/topic, confer with the City Manager's Office before responding. "No comment" sounds uncooperative and as if you're hiding something. If you cannot divulge information, or if the facts are still being verified work with the City Manager's Office on the best way to respond.
- 7) **Nothing is ever "off the record."** Always assume everything you say is "on the record." If you don't want what you say to appear in a news story, don't say it.
- 8) **Do not speculate.** If you don't know the answer, you can tell the reporter that you don't have that information and then refer the reporter to the Assistant City Managers (you may provide them the PIO@cityofsanrafael.org email) to identify someone who can provide the information.
- 9) **Be yourself.** The more at ease you are, the more credible you are.
- 10) **Always tell the truth.**