

## PIO Handbook - Introduction

I'm proud to introduce ARRL's new Public Information Officer's Handbook. Promoting Amateur Radio and creating positive public awareness is important to me personally, and absolutely necessary to help bolster our ongoing efforts in Washington and elsewhere.

Not an ARRL PIO? That's OK. This handbook is for anyone with the drive and determination to promote Amateur Radio to the fullest.

I hope you'll take a look at the information provided and see how you can use it to make a difference in your community.

And remember, you're not alone. Members of ARRL's PR Committee, Allen Pitts, W1AGP at ARRL HQ and ARRL leadership officials in your area are ready and willing to support your efforts.

Good luck, and let us know how you're doing!

73,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jim Haynie".

Jim Haynie, W5JBP  
President Emeritus  
American Radio Relay League

# PIO Handbook - Chapter One - Getting Started

Congratulations! You've volunteered for one of the most important jobs in the ARRL Field Organization, keeping the public informed about your group's activities and about Amateur Radio in general.

Before we get into the tips and ideas for good public relations that make up the "meat" of this handbook, let's start by taking a look at public relations itself -- what is it and whose job is it?

Public relations is *anything* said or done by *anyone* who is associated with a particular organization, group, neighborhood or town, that helps create an image in someone's mind of that organization, group, neighborhood or town. This includes not only you and your formal efforts to promote ham radio, but also the ham who helps provide communications for a local bike-a-thon, and even the ham across town whose neighbors can't watch their TVs when he's on the air, and who refuses to work with them to resolve the problem. If somebody's words or actions affect people's perception of amateur radio, that's public relations.

Whenever you're on the air at a public event, demonstrating amateur radio, or even walking down the street talking on an HT, you're doing public relations. It can be good or bad, intentional or unintentional.

This handbook will concentrate on the intentional and the good. Our focus will be on the publicity chairperson as well as anyone who may appear in public as a representative of their club or of amateur radio. And our emphasis will be on getting news about amateur radio out to the general public. Before we talk about "how," though, let's ask "why."

## **What's So Important About Public Relations?**

As radio amateurs, we have three basic goals in promoting our hobby: recognition of the good things we do and our value to the community; protection of our current and future operating privileges; and recruiting the next generation of hams. You might even call it CPR -- **C**ommunity recognition, **P**rotection and **R**ecruitment. Let's take a quick look at each of these goals:

### ***Community Recognition***

- When we do something good, or when people we're associated with do something good, we like to have it recognized. It feels good.
- One of the reasons ham radio exists is to provide service to the public. Providing this service, and having it recognized locally, helps promote our other two goals, protection and recruitment.

### ***Protection of Operating Privileges***

- Amateur radio faces ongoing threats at all levels of regulation -- local governments are pressured to restrict "ugly" antenna towers and find solutions for RF interference problems; Congress, the FCC and the International Telecommunications Union are under constant pressure to provide more spectrum to existing and emerging wireless services.
- A positive perception of amateur radio translates into allies in our neighborhoods, on city councils and in state legislatures, in Congress and on the FCC.

### ***Recruitment***

- Amateur radio is now one of many choices available to people interested in electronics and electronic communication. In order to maintain our ranks and improve our growth, we must make sure people are aware of amateur radio and the unique opportunities it offers.
- The exploding growth of "wireless" communication and computer networking is feeding a growing need for engineers and technicians who understand RF. Engineering and technical schools today concentrate almost exclusively on digital technology, leaving amateur radio as the primary source of hands-on learning for these careers.
- Amateur radio in the schools can help students in all areas of learning. Bringing amateur radio into schools requires a positive and up-to-date image of the hobby among teachers and administrators.
- In recent years, the largest growth area in amateur radio has been among retirees. We need to enhance this growth by creating a positive impression of ham radio that will help persuade officials of retirement communities to permit amateur radio operation.

### **The Power of Perception**

A positive perception of amateur radio helps build support for us among neighbors, educators, corporate leaders and government officials. This support is vital in meeting any or all of the goals above.

On the other hand, a negative perception works in the other direction and can harm ham radio. And *no* perception -- because people aren't hearing anything good *or* bad about amateur radio -- is just as bad as a negative perception. People who don't know amateur radio exists, or who feel it is obsolete, will not be our "friends" when we need support.

### **Your Role as a PIO or PIC**

It matters what people think of amateur radio, and you, as a Public Information Officer or Public Information Coordinator, are in a position to influence that thinking. It's a very important job, and it's very important that it be done well. Some PR is better than none, but poorly done PR can be worse. We recognize that many people take on this job with

more enthusiasm than experience, and more understanding of the need for good PR than training in how to provide it.

It is the goal of this handbook to give you the tools you need to help you do this job as well as you can<sup>1</sup>. But if your questions aren't answered here, or your situation isn't addressed, don't feel shy about looking beyond this book for help. If you're a PIO, start with your section PIC (See QST Page 12, or the [ARRL web site](#) for your Section page and Section Manager listings). Next, try the [PR reflector](#), contact a member of the League's national Public Relations Committee or the Media Relations Office at ARRL Headquarters.

Remember -- you're not alone out there and we have a story to tell!

---

1 - Note: Most references to individuals in this handbook are in the male form. We are not trying to be sexist or to suggest that you're more likely to encounter male journalists than female journalists. You're not. Please read "him" as "him/her," "his" as "his/her" and "he" as "he/she" throughout.

XX

## PIO Handbook - Chapter Two -- Know Your Role

### The Public Information Officer/Public Information Coordinator

Public Relations for Amateur Radio happens at two levels, **local** and **national**. The ARRL PR Department takes care of publicizing ham radio at national level. But by far the most publicity generated by and for our service is done at the local level, in newspapers, on radio and TV, and speaking opportunities before the public. This "grass roots" publicity is the job of the ARRL Public Information Officer (PIO), with guidance at the Section level from the Public Information Coordinator (PIC).

Amateur Radio needs to be perceived as performing vital public services, not just in times of communications emergencies but in our day to day activities, from training young people in electronics and communications to being good will ambassadors the world over. At the same time, we need to project an image of amateur radio as a fun activity and a high-tech yet accessible hobby. We don't want to be seen as troublesome nuisances or just as a group of people pursuing a little-known and slightly peculiar hobby. We have a public relations problem when the only times we are heard from are when we're protesting a restrictive antenna ordinance or are on the short end of an interference controversy.

You are not expected to do all of this by yourself, of course, but, as a Public Information Coordinator or Officer, you can and should be a critical part of this process and a key player in making it all work. Doing the job really well can be an exciting challenge and a source of great satisfaction.

The PIC/PIO qualifications are simple: you need to have (1) the interest, (2) the ability to write simple declarative sentences and (3) membership in the League.

Below, you will find links to the official ARRL job descriptions for the Public Information Coordinator and Officer positions and an application for appointment form. The documents contain additional, specific information on performance expectations, so review them carefully. The application form is necessary for all field appointments.

XX

## **PIO Handbook - Chapter Three -- Telling Your Story**

### **THE MEDIA - What is News Anyway?**

"The Media" is an overused term which conjures up this image of a monolithic beast feeding on a never-ending stream of news stories. While there may be some truth to this image (especially the appetite part), a more fitting image is the cartoon of the small fish eating a plant, with a line of ever-larger fish behind it, each waiting to eat the next-smaller one. For our purposes, though, this media "food chain" is good.

Before we "meet the media," though, let's take a look at its basic "food" -- news itself.

### **What is news, anyway?**

News, in its most basic definition, is anything important or unusual that happens, especially anything that can directly affect the lives of the people reading, watching or listening to a particular news source. And the more people affected, the bigger the news is.

People ask why there's so much bad news in the papers. Mostly because something that goes right usually isn't news. If you go to work in the morning and get there on time, in one piece, that's not news, that's normal.

If you get into an accident on the way to work, that's news to your family and co-workers, but not to too many other people. If you're part of a 20-car pileup and 20,000 people are late to work because of it, that's real news.

A newspaper that's full of only bad news won't sell. So most editors are actively looking for "good news" stories to balance out some of the bad. If your story is important or unusual, it also qualifies as news.

The public service provided by hams during emergencies is important. The fact that we communicate via radio waves in the age of the internet is unusual (use this to our advantage).

One other type of story that often makes the news -- even if it isn't especially important or unusual -- is the interesting story, what journalists call a human interest story.

Most of the time, ham radio activities in and of themselves aren't news, especially beyond a local area. However, you can get ham radio into the news by showing how hams are involved in a local or national news story, or by looking for a human interest "angle." We'll cover these in more detail in later chapters.

If a ham contacts the International Space Station, that's news in that ham's home town. If a current or former astronaut comes to your town and talks with the space station, that's statewide news and good material for some of the TV news magazine shows. If there's a breakdown in NASA's communications system and ham radio is the only contact the crew members have with earth -- and a ham in your town is at the center of it -- you're on the evening news and in newspapers across the country.

OK, now let's "meet the media." Remember the fish-feeding analogy. There is no huge beast called "the news media." In fact, the word "media" is actually a plural noun, and you should say/write "the media are" rather than "the media is..." There are several categories and even sub-categories within the news media. Let's start with...

## **Newspapers**

The bottom of the food chain in the newspaper category is the local weekly, followed by regional daily newspapers (Hartford Courant, Baltimore Sun), specialized national newspapers (Education Week, Baseball Weekly), national daily newspapers (NY Times, Washington Post, USA Today), and while not newspapers themselves, the wire services (Associated Press, Reuters and United Press International). Wire service stories are sent to newspapers and broadcast stations across an entire state or nationwide.

## **Magazines & Newsletters**

This category includes local neighborhood newsletters, company newsletters, regional magazines (New Jersey Monthly), specialized national magazines (Road & Track, QST, CQ), and general national magazines (Time, Newsweek, Women's Day, McCall's).

Here is an actual [wire service story](#) put out by the Associated Press when hams in New Jersey celebrated the 150th anniversary of the invention of the telegraph. It most likely began as an article in a local weekly or daily newspaper which was picked up by the AP New Jersey bureau and run statewide, then picked up by the national "A" wire in New York and run nationwide.

## **Radio & Television**

Here, you start with local radio & TV stations, including local cable stations, moving up to regional radio & TV stations and the national radio & TV networks (CBS, NBC, ABC, CNN, Fox), including cable and satellite channels (Discovery Channel, Nickelodeon, The Learning Channel).

## **Internet**

This includes just about every news source reachable via the internet, from a local radio club web page to websites of traditional media outlets and so-called "new media" sources that are found only online.

Each of these categories has a different set of criteria for determining what's newsworthy. Generally speaking, the larger and broader the audience, the greater the number of people who must be affected for a story to be considered "news."

Here's how the media "food chain" works, starting with local weeklies: The folks at the regional dailies read the local weeklies and pick up stories of broader interest. The regional dailies share their stories with the wire services and are read by people at the metropolitan newspapers and broadcast stations. They, in turn, pick out stories of even broader interest to share with their audiences. Finally, the people at the networks and the national newspapers read the wires and the metropolitan newspapers, and they watch and listen to local newscasts -- and THEY pick out stories of very broad general interest.

A story that affects only your home town will be likely to be covered by the local weeklies, but not by NBC Nightly News -- UNLESS it illustrates a trend in society and can be used as an example. How would NBC find out about your hometown story? Two ways: the "food chain" described above or ... somebody (you) tells them about it!

## **Who Decides What's News?**

Who decides what runs and on what basis? At a newspaper or magazine, the decisions are usually made by one or more editors; at a radio or TV station, the titles might also include producers or news directors.

Fact of life: The contents of a newspaper or newscast are selective... and subjective. You have either a set amount of space or a set amount of time, and you nearly always have more material than you can possibly use. So you have to choose. The criterion they all

use is something called news judgment. Here are the questions most often used in making those choices:

How does your story compare with others competing for the same space or time, in terms of importance or interest?

- How does your story fit into the overall "mix" or "balance" of articles that an editor or producer likes to achieve in each issue or program?
- Another fact of life: When two stories of equal importance or interest are competing for the same space or time, the one that has that special something to catch the editor's interest generally wins.
- One more fact of life: An editor can't print or broadcast what he or she doesn't know about.

### **Inside the News**

Let's take a closer look at the different areas within a newspaper, magazine, or broadcast that may offer opportunities for publicizing amateur radio. We'll start with the print media. This category actually includes quite a variety of slightly different printed media. You need to expand your thinking a bit to appreciate the array of options available.

Newspapers, for example, consist of a number of sections and cover everything from local to international news. Newspapers contain sports articles, feature stories, advertisements, want ads, editorials, letters to the editor, advice columns, "how-to" articles, obituaries, comics, puzzles, and more. Many of them contain supplements and magazine sections and publish Sunday editions.

The point is that newspapers are not monolithic wholes but consist of a great many parts, some of which present excellent opportunities for you to get your story in print in other than a straight "news" context, as discussed above.

The only item they have in common, of course, is that they all rely on the printed word. Because they do, you need to reduce your message to words, present it with a natural "angle" which makes it interesting and perhaps plan to supplement it with one or more photographs. Try to get your story there two or three days before the date when the event will actually occur.

Magazines are quite similar in that there's more than one approach. Most magazines consist of a mix of feature articles, often written by freelancers (you?), and columns, generally written by regular contributors, often called Contributing Editors. Even if you can't land a feature article, you might get your story covered by one of a magazine's columnists.

### **Radio and TV**



As with newspapers, you need to consider that the radio and TV media also consist of parts. Their news programs cover everything from international to local news and many "news" programs routinely include feature sections which present opportunities for covering a story on a local Amateur Radio event like Field Day. Some stations have "news magazines" which, like their print media cousins, offer similar opportunities. The advice on timing discussed in the print media section above, applies equally well to the electronic media, although here, because of the more cumbersome logistics involved in assigning camera crews, for example, two or three weeks' notice may work a lot better.

Editors tend to know a lot more about things like parades, bridge collapses, political campaigns, automobile collisions and the like than they do about Amateur Radio. Lace your efforts with some information educating them about the basics of Amateur Radio.

In making your presentation, for example, you may want to supplement a Field Day story idea and request coverage with a good quality audio tape as possible background sound from the prior year's on-air operations to provide a "feel" for the event in the editor's mind. You could also consider adding "still" photographs to further help him visualize the story's potential and capture his imagination.

And, if you have not planned that far ahead, tape some current on-the-air activity and use that, along with some still photos of a few typical radio shacks.

### **Cable TV & Cable Radio**

Cable TV offers additional, and sometimes easier, ways of getting your story out to the public. Some cable systems have full-scale local news operations that you'd approach in the same way you'd approach a local TV station. Virtually every cable system provides one or more "access" channels for community programming. These channels are the "price of admission" that the cable company pays for having monopoly access to your town or neighborhood. In most cases, cable systems provide free training and use of their studios for community groups wanting to produce programs.

An often-overlooked cable programming resource is cable radio. While text-based cable programming is most often accompanied by a rebroadcast of selected radio stations, some systems lease the audio channels to cable-only radio stations. Often, these cater to specific ethnic groups or other small communities.

### **Internet**

While newspapers and magazines use printed words and still photos, and broadcasters rely on the spoken word and (in TV) live-action video, internet websites offer the possibility of using any or all of these "modes," to use a ham term, plus interactive features such as live "chats" and links to additional information sources. Today, it's hard to find a daily newspaper, broadcast station or even community organization that doesn't have at least a

***The Media Game is Rick Booth's insightful article on developing publicity.***  
[Click here](#) to read it.

simple website. See what's out there in your community and what possibilities they may offer in spreading the word about amateur radio.

### **Knowing and Using Your Resources**

Now that you have a general idea of what makes news, what makes up "the media," and how news decisions are made, it's time to look at how you can make use of the media resources available in your community.

XX

## **PIO Handbook - Chapter Four - Building Media Relationships**

### **Knowing and Using Your Resources**

When a PR opportunity knocks, your challenge is to organize your resources quickly so that you will be able to use them and respond most effectively.

What do we mean by "resources"? What kinds are there and how do we use them? We need to think of resources on the Amateur Radio side as "sources" of information, while resources on the media side can carry that information for you to the public you want to reach. These media resources are the "purveyors" of news.

While your role may at times be that of a broker or middleman in the process of conveying information across from one side to the other, there are other times when you will yourself be the source of the story.

Let's look at the resources you have available to you as a public information specialist. How well you are able to use these resources will determine how effective you will be.

### **The Media "Toolbox"**

For most of us, learning the news business is not all that difficult. Most towns, except for the largest, have a local newspaper, possibly one or more radio stations and maybe even one or more TV stations or cable outlets. Getting to know who is who at each one is usually a simple matter of paying attention or making a phone call.

Newspapers list their editorial staffs on the editorial page. Individual reporters often have by-lines. Also, a simple phone call to the local radio or TV station will almost always produce this information easily. Unless you enjoy working under the handicap of a cold start, don't wait until a story hits to uncover that information and cultivate these resources whenever and however possible.

The Internet is a newer outlet and chances are your community is served by web sites that are central repositories for information. If your club maintains a web site, it is a great place to send reporters for information about your organization and its activities. And of course, there's the [ARRL web site](#), which has a storehouse of information and background material for the media as well as the general public. Don't overlook these valuable resources.

Picture yourself with a hot story, trying to explain it to an editor who has never heard of Amateur Radio. You will be expecting him to absorb a lot all at once and he is likely to think that it is all just too complicated and esoteric to catch his readers, listeners or viewers.

It is better to start earlier by feeding him articles whenever you can on more mundane things like the election of officers at your club, a ham flea market or an annual banquet. These will help open a channel of communication as well as establish you in his mind as a source of information. Then, when you need him, you will be able to call on a reservoir of knowledge and good will you have helped to build.

News people and editors are not strange gnomes hidden away in unapproachable recesses of their offices or studios. They cannot afford to be and, in fact, they probably need news sources like you more than you need them. Their livelihoods depend upon being able to tap knowledgeable and credible sources of information on a wide variety of subjects. The idea is to make yourself one!

What do you do if a reporter calls on you for information or even an interview? The answer probably depends to some extent on the type of media involved and how much notice you get.

With a little notice, it is probably a good idea to prepare a statement or a press release in advance. This will give you focus during the interview and help channel your thinking, and the reporter's, so that you cover all the points you want to make. Reporters appreciate people who make their jobs easier by giving them handouts, especially on subjects about which they may have only a partial understanding.

If the reporter plans to bring along a photographer, he or she will usually tell you that in advance. If he does, dress for the occasion, clean up the shack or do whatever else is appropriate so that you will present yourself and Amateur Radio in the best light. The same considerations apply to radio or TV coverage but the emphasis changes subtly. In radio for example, the focus is on voice timbre, vocabulary, elocution and the like, while on TV, personal appearance, expression and mannerisms are added dimensions. Each is important and each should be considered carefully, even to the point of selecting spokespersons or settings whose images will be conveyed best in the particular medium. The task of getting yourself known, and respected, is obviously simpler in a small town and it is not a bad idea to call at the local newspaper office to introduce yourself to the editor. Take along some information on Amateur Radio and explain what we do, who you are and the kind of activities you, your club or group conducts. Ask him for his support

and how you can help him: He may tell you how he would prefer you to submit stories, what the paper's deadlines are and provide you with other information which could make both your jobs easier.

### **Amateur Radio Resources**

You need to develop your own resources, on the Amateur Radio side of things. This requires quite a bit of effort. Your experience and knowledge of other hams and clubs in the area will need to be tapped. A little attention here - before an actual need arises - can be a godsend when a story does break.

Years of experience do not necessarily invest any of us with all- encompassing knowledge. If a story were to develop involving packet radio, for instance, would your understanding be comprehensive enough to answer questions intelligently? If it is, how about other aspects of Amateur Radio such as UHF, space communications, DX or traffic handling? Could you speak with equal expertise on each?

Few of us are competent in all the diverse areas of Amateur Radio and, for that reason, you need to develop a list of resources available to you in covering the broad range of our interests.

There are many ways to develop an "inventory" of experts. A good place to start is to prepare a list of subjects which you might be called on to cover. You can proceed from there by trying to match each subject with the name of an individual who is expert in that area. At the same time, get the name of a backup to call on in case your first choice is not available. Develop a skills inventory list for members of your club.

Be sure to get telephone numbers and any other information you might need to work with your resource people so that you will be able to reach them on short notice. You may need quick access to your contacts at unpredictable times. Be ready.

Be sure to let the people you pick know that they are on your list of experts so they might be better prepared when a story develops and, just as importantly, to let them know of your interest.

Pick people who are knowledgeable, of course, but be mindful, too, that they may become spokespeople for Amateur Radio when a story breaks. Whenever possible, pick people who will be seen as articulate and responsible and who will be as agreeable-sounding and -appearing as possible.

Give some thought, too, to the settings used for your stories. Invite the media to meet with you at a well-organized, photogenic shack where the background is going to help you convey the image you want to project.

At first thought, it may seem that you cannot always control location but, even on a Field Day story, which is going to be set in whatever spot the group happens to have selected

for the activity, there are a number of things you can do. You can clean up the site before the news people arrive, steer them to the best-looking setups and away from ones establishing new lows in unsafe wiring, which will probably show up with remarkable clarity in the background of any photos taken. (And clear out any beer cans, too. Same reason). At the same time, don't make it seem like you're hiding something, or that may quickly become the focus of the story.

The whole idea here is to go about your task with as much prior preparation and as much professionalism as possible. The more work you do "up front," the easier it will be to react quickly and effectively when the need arises.

For most people, "meeting the press" is a stressful situation which is confronted rarely in their lives and thorough preparation is a certain way to remove most of this stress from these encounters. If you can accomplish that, you will be able to deal more effectively with the opportunities presented and make the most of them. You will be shaping the reporting rather than simply being part of it.

XX

## **PIO Handbook - Chapter Five - The News Release**

### **Getting Started**

News Releases (or Press Releases) are the most common ways of communicating information about our activities to the public and, fortunately, they are the easiest to master.

Newspapers are the most accessible of all the different types of media available to us; the best way to get your story into print in a newspaper is to do part or all of the editor's work for him or her.

A newspaper's resources may be limited in the sense that reporters are not always available to cover every story. Plus, no reporter is an expert in every field of human endeavor. Particularly in cases like ours, where many of the stories are a bit esoteric, editors tire quickly of callers with lengthy explanations about their "news." Many also conclude quickly, perhaps too quickly, that if the story is all that complicated, the paper's readers will not be that interested.

News releases help solve these problems and, even more importantly, they help to assure that your story will be told the way you would like it to be told. But if you've never written a news release, where do you begin?

The first thing students learn in a basic journalism class is the "five Ws," Who, What, When, Where, Why. Simple as they sound, just as they comprise the basic elements of a

news story, they also form the foundation of an effective news release. The facts are key to an effective release.

Styles vary for different types of news releases. Remember to target your message to the media. Local newspapers will often carry announcements of activities, meeting dates and the like. Radio and TV are more dynamic and interested in "breaking news" or human interest stories that appeal to a broad audience. As we are looking at a "basic" release, let's concentrate on a release for a local newspaper.

## **Structure**

The news release consists of four parts: 1) the **heading**; 2) the **opening** sentence or paragraph; 3) the **body** of the story and; 4) the **press contact**.

The **heading** should simply communicate to the editor that the paper or papers he is holding constitute a news release, so the words, "News Release" should appear right at the top of the first page. (Incidentally, whether you prepare your release on plain paper, on a club letterhead or your personal stationery is not important. But if it's not on club letterhead, be sure to indicate your title, which lets the editor know you're in a position to be issuing a news release on behalf of the organization).

You might follow that up with information on when it would be appropriate for the editor to use your release. Depending on the circumstances, you could say "For Immediate Release" or "For Release on (Date)."

You should give the news release a title which the editor might decide to use as the headline for your story, for example, "**AMATEUR RADIO CLUB ELECTS OFFICERS**" A dynamic title with a good "hook" can improve the chances of your story getting published. The sample above could also say, "**HAMRAD AMATEUR RADIO CLUB ELECTS FIRST FEMALE PRESIDENT**".

The **opening** sentence or paragraph (also known as the lead) is the most important part of the news release because this is where you must catch the editor's (and the reader's) attention. Get this part right and the rest of the story will write itself. Let's give you an example and then work backwards to explain this:

"At its annual reorganization meeting on June 1 at the Hilton Fire House, the Hamrad Amateur Radio Club elected new officers for 2004-05 and for the first time, elected a woman to lead the organization."

This sets out the "meat" of the story and tells the reader what he can expect as he reads further. It tells "What," the annual meeting of the Hamrad club; "When," on June 1; and "Who," that it elected new officers. It also provides a "hook," the fact that the group elected its first female president.

In the **body** of the story, you need to finish up your "Five Ws" and begin to deal with these in more detail. For example:

The Hamrad club, comprising over 80 federally-licensed Amateur Radio operators in and around Amok County, elected Ann Tenna, president; Farad Aye, vice president; Iona Sphere, treasurer; and Mike Rochip, secretary.

All of the club's new officers are residents of Amok County and its members are active in the county American Red Cross disaster service.

Incoming president Tenna said on Tuesday that she expects to continue the club's commitment to providing radio emergency communications to Red Cross.

In the first paragraph of our story, we name the Who's and Where's while the second and third paragraphs elaborate and cover some of the Why. The story covers the event - the club's election of officers -and provides an opportunity for us to tie in what happened with some human interest and public service angles.

Finally, the press contact is an easy but too often forgotten ending. [The contact can also be listed at the top of the release]. It goes something like this:

"For Further Information, please contact Clark Kent, Hamrad Amateur Radio Club, 1234 Metropolis Street, Amok City. Telephone 555-5678."

The purpose, obviously, is to let the editor know whom he should contact for more information. A less well understood reason to include this information is so the editor will be able to check the authenticity of his source. Few editors will publish a story without being able to verify that the source of the story provided is reliable and that the information involved is accurate.

Well, there you have it, a complete how-to guide to writing a news release. As you can see, there is nothing mysterious about this, there are no skills you don't already have and it is all really pretty simple.

Now, take a look at the samples at the end of this chapter and apply what you've learned. They'll give you a head start on your own first release.

XX

**Sample News Releases (More to come!)**

- [Awareness Day fill-in-the-blank](#)
- [Field Day](#)
- [Federal Grant Supports Radio Amateurs' Role in Homeland Security](#)
- [Florida Amateurs Hear From President Bush, Live Via Ham Radio](#)
- [Amateur Radio Operators Called to Action in the Wake of U.S. Terrorist Attacks](#)

# **PIO Handbook - Chapter Six - Interacting With the Media**

## **How to Handle Media Interviews**

The news release is a great tool, but some reporters, and some stories, will require face-to-face or telephone interviews. When there are several reporters or several types of media involved, this becomes a "press conference" or a "news conference."

Again, you need to be as well prepared as possible. Preparation, depending on how much advance notice you get, should include writing a news release, a statement or at least some written notes for referral during the interview. (Having on hand some ARRL literature or descriptive material explaining the organization you represent may help, too). A news release is also something the reporter can walk away with and use later when he's writing his story. If you have done your job well when you put it together, it will contain the points you want to make and increase the probability that the reporter will include them in his final story.

In the case of a radio or TV interview, having some notes for the interviewer may help things along. In this way, you can suggest discussion areas that are in your area of expertise. Remember, when dealing with electronic media, condense your thoughts into brief "sound bites."

## **Meeting The Press**

When you meet with the press, you should try quickly to evaluate the reporter. How much does this person know about Amateur Radio? About the event or situation you are talking about? What is the reporter's agenda or, in other words, what preconceived notions does he bring with him to the interview? And are those correct notions? Next, listen to the questions you are asked make sure you understand them and then answer carefully and thoughtfully. Be "on point" and remember in this "factoid" age, short, concise answers are better than long-winded responses.

There are different types of questions and there are different ways of answering them. If you are lucky, the questions you get will be simple, straightforward and aimed at the right target. There are also poor questions, which are wide of the mark. In these cases, try to help the reporter turn them into intelligent, useful or constructive veins by your answers and explanations.

If you don't understand what the reporter is getting at, try something like, "As I understand it, you are asking..." and then repeat or paraphrase the question until you get it right.



Watch the reporter's "body English," eye movements and expressions for signs that your answers may not be getting through. Take a little more time and provide a little more information until you are certain your message gets there in the way you intended.

Avoid one-word answers: They make poor quotes and leave you open to the reporter's misinterpretation. He may think he's asking one question while you may be answering the one you think he's asking. Did you ever hear the one that goes...

"I know you believe you understand what you think I said but I'm not sure you realize that what you think you heard is not what I meant."

Remember that your interviewer probably doesn't know very much about radio or about our Amateur Radio activities. You will be lucky indeed if he knows that electrons were responsible for having heated his morning muffin in the microwave oven. And, if he knew as much as you know about the situation you are discussing, there would be no need for him to talk to you at all.

Make sure you don't take off on windy and complex explanations or lapse into ham radio jargon or technical dissertations over everyone's head except another amateur's. Do try to control the direction of the interview by staying focused on the subject. You actually have a big advantage here and you should use it. After all, you know the subject; your interviewer probably does not. Because he's groping his way through unfamiliar territory, you can probably lead him pretty easily in the direction you want by your informed statements and knowledgeable replies to the questions asked.

If you mention others, be sure to have the correct spelling of their names and call signs. You can also prepare a "fact sheet" that has this information already in place.

### **Damage Avoidance**

If you don't know the answer to a question, don't be afraid to say so. It is a lot better than to blunder into sheer guesswork or a wrong response. If it is appropriate, refer the reporter to someone who may have the answer or offer to try to get the information needed. Then, follow up with the information as soon as possible!

Whatever happens, don't "lose your cool." There is no provocation, situation or circumstance in which you can afford to be rude, arrogant or offensive in your handling of the media. They, after all, have the last word ... and it will be in print or on the air.

Do not present your own personal opinion in such a way that it might be interpreted as an official ARRL position or the position of your club or organization. Know how the policies of these organizations are formulated. When you think something you say might be interpreted that way, qualify what you say with "In my personal opinion..." or, better yet, avoid expressing them at all. If you feel yourself getting in over your head, dummy up until you can get some help or guidance from your Section Manager, Public Information Coordinator or organization leaders.

Statements critical of other persons or organizations can cause real grief, whether or not they happen to be true. They may damage hard won reputations, undo someone else's hard work and cause irreversible damage. They could even lead to a lawsuit or other such nastiness. If you feel tempted, run for the nearest exit.

If you find yourself giving credit, make sure all the organizations or individuals involved are included. Don't risk offending someone through oversight.

Expect that, no matter how good a job you have done, there will be no shortage of people ready to find fault. Just do the best job you can and develop a thick hide.

### **Follow Up**

If you have promised to get responses to questions you deferred, be sure to follow up promptly. Remember, reporters are always fighting deadlines!

After your story appears, you may wish to leave a message for the reporter thanking him/her for their efforts.

If a feature was done in a local newspaper, a "Letter to the Editor" from your club (preferably the president) may be an appropriate touch. Such a letter could thank the paper on behalf of the many club members and community volunteers who benefited in some way from the story. Keep it brief and to the point.

XX

## **PIO Handbook - Chapter Seven - Breaking News**

So far, we've covered subject matter that will assist you in handling most routine stories and given you an idea of how to be proactive on behalf of Amateur Radio. What about the "Big Story?" Breaking news - and for our purposes that's usually going to be some form of disaster or emergency in which communications are disrupted - is often a trigger for media coverage of Amateur Radio. From your perspective as a PIO, breaking news comes in two flavors:

- **News that's happening somewhere else.**
- **News that's happening here.**

### **News that's happening somewhere else**

Local news operations love local tie-ins to big national and international stories. So disasters like an earthquake, a hurricane, a flood or large-scale fire provide an opportunity for Amateur Radio to get some coverage by adding local interest. Or at least that's what the editors think. The truth is that -- with a few exceptions -- there generally

isn't much going on among your town's hams that's related to the distant disaster. But if the media are going to come calling anyway, we might as well give them what we can, and get something out of it.

If the editors are aware of you and your connections to the Amateur community, there's a pretty good chance they'll call you. And even if they don't, your odds of attracting their attention when you call them are way up. And do *call* them. Fast breaking stories can't wait for a news release.

### **What will they want when they call?**

It's pretty rare today for the newsroom to need Amateur Radio to find out what's happening. But in the very early stages of a disaster in a remote area, that's possible. And if you or one of your resources can actually listen in on amateurs communicating from the stricken area, you have a golden opportunity to fascinate your local media and their audience. It's going to be tricky, though. You'll have to be in range of the traffic, but most of the direct emergency communications will be on local bands, VHF-FM or perhaps 80 meters. Chances are you can't hear actual tactical communications going on in the disaster area.

You'll have better luck with information and relief nets operating on 20 meters. The Hurricane Watch Net, SATERN (Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network), and other long-range nets provide some interesting listening. ARRL bulletins usually publicize emergency net frequencies. You might need to give a reporter some very brief, simple background on propagation and why you can't just tune in radio traffic anywhere in the world it's happening.

The biggest bang will come if a reporter or crew is on hand to witness and record whatever communications you can hear. That's going to require a lot of luck, since the reporters and crew can't camp out at your station. If nothing's available "live", they may be interested in a recording you made, but they'll probably be happy with an interview in which you summarize what you heard. You can also talk about the kind of activity that is likely to be happening on the scene by comparing it to your local emergency communications preparations.

A reporter may expect you to be able to communicate with a ham in the disaster area. Most of us won't have the contacts, the station or the luck to pull that one off. And we would hope that a ham who can get on the air from the middle of a disaster would be helping cope with the emergency, not roaming the bands for a ragchew. That kind of contact happens now and then, but the chances of your stumbling across that ham while the reporter is in the shack are pretty small.

Then there are the people in your town who are distraught because they can't get through to family members in the disaster area. Can ham radio help? Once again, a reporter may have unrealistic expectations. The first rule of emergency communications is that inbound health and welfare traffic is restricted for the first 24 to 48 hours of an

emergency. Outbound traffic is supposed to be given priority, but you probably won't hear any of it on your local traffic nets (the traffic should be delivered by the first ham with a working phone, not delayed 24 hours as it transits the traffic nets to finally be delivered by a local ham). So what do you do?

Explain the difficulty of sending inquiries into trouble spots. Make an example of your local situation, where you're better prepared to send messages out than accept them from outside. If local phone lines are down and people have been relocated to hotels or shelters, finding them will be nearly impossible. But hams inside the disaster area will be trying to send messages out to concerned relatives. There is the occasional heroic attempt to find someone through the disaster maze. If you've got one of those stories (especially if it's successful), you can play it up. But don't make it sound like an everyday occurrence.

Sometimes, though, the situation isn't all that grim. When earthquakes hit near Seattle in February 2001, it was impossible to make a phone call into the area. But most local phones were working, so hams there set up a net on 20 meters taking inbound inquiries and quickly relaying responses. Most of the people taking advantage of that net were other hams, but if you learn of such a net and have some hams in your area willing to take a minor flood of phone calls, you can publicize that service.

A better idea is to point the media to agencies who are set up to handle inbound welfare inquiries. The Red Cross and Salvation Army will collect messages and forward them (often using Amateur Radio) when channels are clear enough. Check with your local office first.

It's tempting to over-promise Amateur Radio's ability to communicate into a disaster area. If Amateurs in your town *are* providing emergency assistance to a stricken area, you should know about it and promote it. But most of the time, the best local angle is to tell the press what we'd be doing if the emergency were happening here.

### **News that's happening here**

And one day, the news *will* be happening here. You've got a local disaster on your hands, and Amateur Radio is doing its part to help the community cope and recover.

If you're an EC who does the PIO job on the side, you've got a problem. You're too busy right now to handle the media. But, as one Section Manager frequently told his Field Organization troops, if Amateur Radio doesn't get credit for the job it's doing, it *almost* might as well not do the job. That's pretty extreme, and you'd discount it if a PIC were saying it. But this was a Section Manager. His point was that the PR job requires more than the part-time effort of an EC or anyone else more concerned with operational responsibilities. When you're in the middle of a disaster, being a PIO is a full-time job.

So, you're a PIO, and your wise EC has you dedicated to just that job. Swirling around you is a large-scale disaster. You're even more fortunate because you are totally plugged into your ARES or RACES operation. You know what frequencies will be in use. You

have access to the EOC and remote command posts and staging areas. You know who the hams are, where they'll be and what they'll be doing there. It's time to get the word out.

Assuming that you are safe and your family's needs are met, you probably need to be on the scene yourself. That is, you need to be where hams are doing their jobs, and where the media are. Once you get there, get yourself up to date on the situation, sort out the rumors from the facts, and find some reporters.

For the media, especially the broadcast media, many disasters happen in slow motion. A hurricane is a good example. TV stations begin covering a hurricane full-time hours before landfall. The hurricane takes a few hours to pass, and coverage continues for hours or days once it's passed, especially if there was a lot of damage. If the disaster was quick, like an earthquake, the recovery is still a drawn-out affair.

The point is that there is a lot of airtime to fill, and the event will be covered from every possible angle. Amateur Radio is one angle, and we'll get our share of coverage if you are there to make it happen. We'll get coverage if you're *not* there, too. The reporters will find the hams. But once again, the reporter's knowledge is limited and his/her expectations may be unrealistic. Hams who are busy operating stations won't have the time or inclination to give a thoughtful interview. So you may not like what gets reported.

### **Finding the reporters**

Before you dig out the reporters, you need to get some permissions in order. One of the preparations you should have made well in advance is making contact with the Public Information Office for your city, county or state Emergency Management, the Red Cross, or whatever agency the hams are serving. In this situation, Amateur Radio is not independent. We are part of their bigger story. And while they will generally not object to our getting some coverage, they should be aware of our PR efforts, and give you permission to bring reporters into restricted areas to observe Amateur Radio in action.

So whether you've introduced yourself before or not, go visit the Public Information officials first and get those permissions. If they learn from you what ham radio is doing, they'll probably include our activity in their press briefings, or even invite you to speak yourself on behalf of Amateur Radio.

You should limit the information you deliver to just what the radio operators are doing. You're not a spokesman for the agencies we're serving. And you'll even need to be discreet about the ham information. If your hams just received a report that a major bridge collapsed, it's not your job to grab a reporter and pass it on. True, if some reporters are astute enough to be monitoring our frequencies, they could have gotten that information directly. Maybe they overheard it while observing our operation. But let them go to the authorities for confirmation.

Now, go get that reporter. For you, this is probably not news release time - it's time to snag them in person. If you're on the scene or at an EOC, there are bound to be reporters

around. Sometimes they'll be corralled in a media-briefing center. Sometimes they'll be roaming around more or less freely. Find them and introduce yourself. Tell them that there is an Amateur Radio operation providing communications support, and offer them a guided tour. All the interview techniques reviewed in the other chapters of this manual come into play here.

### **Three stages of the disaster story**

You'll probably have more than one opportunity to provide information. Initially, you may only be able to report what preparations have been made, where hams are stationed and what they are expecting (or expected) to do. At this early stage, there may be more rumors than facts flying around, so be careful what you pass along.

As the event unfolds, you should be able to gather stories of our activities and check them out for accuracy. Once that bridge collapse story is old news (30 minutes might be "old" in this context), you can pass on how ham radio operators got the information and passed it to the EOC. Getting details like this is going to be hard, and now is probably not the time to break into the Amateur Radio net to ask the ham who filed the bridge report to tell you all about it. Keep in touch with the EC and anyone who can fill in the picture for you.

When the emergency is over and cleanup is in progress, you have the chance to get details from the hams involved and complete some stories from the field. The press will be looking for those stories, especially if they're still in "total coverage" mode. The more human-interest you can get into your information, the better.

Finally, notable Amateur Radio activity in a big emergency will be reference material for years, until it's eclipsed by a more recent disaster story. Every Field Day you'll be able to talk about how the weekend exercise keeps hams ready to help "like we did during that big flood last year." And as the event fades into the past, remember that news media outlets observe anniversaries of big stories. By working your contacts properly, Amateur Radio can have a prominent role. "It was just a year ago that Hurricane Ralph devastated our area. Ham Radio operators Mary and Joe Smith not only remember their roles in the relief efforts, they also say they've learned from the experience and are now more prepared than ever if they are called on again..."

### **Rules and Regs on Hams and Media**

In an emergency with a really widespread communications blackout, your media contacts may ask you to do more than just tell what you know about the situation. If your hams are in contact with a first-person source on the scene, they may want to ask questions through your station. They may even ask you to send a message to their reporter or crew. How far can you go?

Here's the rule (as of July 2001 - [check the rules](#) on the ARRL web page for updates)

#### **§97.113 Prohibited transmissions.**

**(b) An amateur station shall not ... engage in any activity related to program production or news gathering for broadcasting purposes, except that communications directly related to the immediate safety of human life or the protection of property may be provided by amateur stations to broadcasters for dissemination to the public where no other means of communication is reasonably available before or at the time of the event.**

So unless the interview is with someone who is providing information that will safeguard life or protect property, and there's no other way to communicate, you can't do it. But if those conditions are met, you certainly can. Same with passing a message to the reporter. If letting them talk to him will somehow protect life or property, it's OK.

If you have to say "no", you may have to be hard-nosed about it. Media folks can be intensely focused and driven, and they won't care much about the subtleties of Amateur Radio rules. Tell them your license is on the line.

The media is permitted to broadcast live, record and replay any Amateur Radio communication without permission, either from your station or recorded off-air themselves. Back in 1985, Amateur Radio was exempted from the secrecy of communications provisions of Section 705 of the Communications Act of 1934.

## **Guidelines**

We cannot anticipate every situation in which you might find yourself during an emergency but there are a few simple guidelines that should be universally applicable:

1. **Move quickly** to get on the scene once an emergency occurs. The more time you have to find out what's happening, the better prepared you will be to deal with the questions you might be asked.
2. **Move slowly** enough, once you get there, to be sure about anything you do say. Don't let a reporter lead you or your news source into saying something you didn't intend to say.
3. **Know who you are speaking for.** You may be the spokesperson for your local ARES group, for example, but not for the Red Cross Chapter with which you are closely working. Know where the boundaries are and recognize your limitations: If you are not the designated Red Cross spokesperson, don't presume to speak for it. Be very careful about not "trespassing" on the media liaison roles of the professional responders. In recent years, most, if not all response agencies have a PIO function. Be sure you are familiar with these persons and that they are aware of you.
4. **Check your facts.** This may be the fourth on this more or less chronological list but it is really first in importance. Unconfirmed rumors abound in nearly every disaster situation and they spread with remarkable speed and persist with great tenacity. Become a tyrant with regard to facts; insist on confirming every bit of news and pass along only those you know to be true.

5. **Check the rumors.** Rumors may simply be facts reported early, before they can be properly confirmed. Check out each one until you can speak with authority to either dismiss those that prove to be unfounded or confirm those which prove to be true.
6. **Know the limits of your authority.** In the wake of Hurricane Hugo in 1989, one Amateur Radio operator's transmission from devastated St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands was rebroadcast on network TV demanding that the National Guard be activated to help stop looting. The looting turned out to be relatively minor but less clear was on whose authority, if anyone's, the amateur was acting? This type of request is clearly in the domain of civil authorities and not that of an individual Amateur Radio operator.
7. **Be prepared for News Conferences and Media Briefings.** Emergency management techniques often call for periodic news briefings. Know who is conducting those briefings and be prepared to participate from the standpoint of the group you represent. If asked a question that you do not know the response to, say, "I'll have to get that information for you," get the reporter's contact information and follow-up as soon as possible as they are probably on deadline.

### Now Go Have Fun

Participating in a Breaking News event is exciting. Ham radio has an important role to play, even if all we do is get ready and stand by. The PIO gets to see more of it than anyone else, maybe even more than the EC. Enjoy it!

XX

## PIO Handbook - Chapter Eight - Electronic Media

### Radio, TV and Cable

Nearly everything we have covered so far applies equally well to each of the various types of media but the electronic media -- radio, TV and cable -- have some unique needs, which means there are some differences in our approach. These differences are not so much in the way we deal with radio and TV but in the ways they communicate with **their** audiences. The print media appeal to our eyes, radio to our ears and television to our eyes and ears. Therein lie the principal differences between them.

Operating in worlds measured in minutes and seconds of expensive airtime, radio and TV are tougher to break into. Fortunately, it's not impossible. Once again, however, much of your success is going to depend on where you live. Small town stations are easier targets than large urban broadcast facilities.

Whether you live in a small town or a large one, start by analyzing your local station or stations and their programming. Like newspapers, radio and TV station programming



consists of parts, including news programs and segments of news programs, panel shows, interviews, documentaries and a whole host of others. There are also different types of stations -commercial, cable and public broadcast stations.

News releases may be less helpful with the electronic media than with print media, but send them anyway. Some stations, particularly smaller ones, will rewrite your news release in a broadcast format as a "tell" story (no reporter in the field); others may use your release as background information for the radio or TV station to use in evaluating your story's potential. A word of caution: Don't try to write and present your own script. These are a whole different matter, one best left to station personnel.

Emergency situations are the most likely subjects to receive coverage from the electronic news media. Field Day events may be another possibility, especially in smaller communities, plus human interest stories such as school contacts with astronauts in orbit. There are others, of course, such as public access programs on cable TV, but the points to keep in mind are that the kinds of stories that will appeal most to the electronic news media are those with dramatic impact which appeal to the ears and/or eyes and those which can be told in a short time. Remember, TV is a **visual** medium!

One of the frustrations in dealing with the electronic media is the fact that only rarely are they willing to promise coverage in advance for a particular event. The reason for this is obvious if you think about it: They need to be ready to cover breaking news. Camera and radio remote crews may have to be pulled from one story to cover another, more important story.

On most weekends, however, there is a dearth of news. The electronic media's usual newsmakers are at home, hopefully staying out of trouble. Politicians are usually relaxing, legislatures are not usually in session and there is generally less going on. Weekend news programs are often scratching for stories to fill the available airtime. Weekends offer an opportunity for you to get coverage for your story. Most stations keep "HFA," or " Hold for Air stories" to draw on as the need arises to fill airtime on weekends. There are real opportunities for you to exploit on weekends.

As mentioned earlier, radio stations offer interviews and television has panel show formats, which may offer possibilities to explore. In many communities, you can produce your own "public access" cable TV program. Contact your cable operator for details.

The local Public Broadcasting System channel is another possibility. In Philadelphia not long ago, the PBS channel ran the ARRL film, "New World of Amateur Radio," as a result of the efforts of an area Amateur Radio operator.

Many local radio stations run talk shows and call-in programming through the week. Again, nights and weekends are good times for programming devoted to leisure-time activities such as ham radio. Many stations also pre-record public service programs for airing on weekends. Ask your local operators if participating in such programs is a possibility.

The ways you might use to get to your local electronic media are as straightforward as the ones you would use to get to the print media. In addition, radio and TV stations are run by engineers, some of whom may be Amateur Radio operators. If you have one of them as a member of your club or organization, discuss your story possibilities with him and ask the best way for you to make an approach to the station's programming people.

If your local station nibbles at your bait or pulls the line off your reel, be ready to follow through quickly, intelligently and with as much prior preparation and professionalism as possible.

Prior preparation is important in all of the contacts you will have with any of the media. In the electronic media, especially in "live" shows, it is absolutely imperative. Put your very best spokespeople forward and prepare them as completely as possible. Fumbling, erratic, unprepared or hesitant performances compound greatly in front of these media and you need someone who will be able to cope with the pressures and function well in these circumstances.

You will be on your mettle in these situations and you may well have to be ready to improvise quickly to meet whatever challenge you are presented with. But, more than just a challenge, these are golden opportunities. Use them well.

### **Cable TV**

Cable television has become commonplace. In fact, many of us would be lost without cable. Few realize that there are many aspects of cable TV that are available to the subscriber aside from more channels to watch.

Your meeting announcements, club auction date or an invitation for the public to attend your Field Day exercise could be sent to your local cable TV system's "Community Bulletin Board." All the cable companies offer this service by one name or another and most of them would be delighted to carry your message.

But there's another option available from your cable system that gives you an even greater ability to get your message out to the public. Cable TV comes into a community by way of a franchise agreement. Cable companies bid for a franchise and one is selected on the basis of cost per customer, quality of programming and services to be provided to the community. Many subscribers do not realize that one of the services almost always a part of each franchise agreement is called "Public Access."

Public Access is a channel reserved for residents' own programs. Some franchises provide production assistance including equipment and training. The best part is that Public Access costs nothing to the group putting on a program.

Consider promoting your ham radio club or running a series of license classes on TV. Show the "New World of Amateur Radio" videotape. Show your recent hamfest

videotape! Televising your Field Day or demonstrating OSCAR. These are all great ways to reach thousands of potential hams.

By calling or stopping by your local cable TV company, you can easily get the information you'll need to get started. Instead of sitting home and watching all of those channels with color bars go by, why not see if you can activate one and bring ham radio into your community.

### **Public Service Announcements (PSAs)**

Another effective way of getting the Amateur Radio message to the public via the broadcast media is through the use of Public Service Announcements (PSAs). PSAs are short, 10-second to 60-second announcements about the excitement of Amateur Radio. The ARRL HQ has PSAs available to PIOs for broadcast by local TV and radio stations (write for copies). Your local TV station may be willing to work with you on producing your own PSAs customized for your club. Getting PSAs is the easy part; the harder part is getting local TV and Radio stations to air them. Here are some tips that may help you:

When presenting your PSA (and do it in person if possible) to a local TV or Radio station representative, show him a triple-spaced hard copy of the script. This way, he'll know immediately what's on it, that it's appropriate, and that it won't need any special alteration. He'll be less likely to file it in the circular file.

Give him a brief, one-page, triple-spaced outline of Amateur Radio and ARRL. Cover the five bases and purposes of Amateur Radio described in the FCC Rules. Explain that ARRL is a national scientific and educational, non-profit organization of, by and for Radio Amateurs, founded in 1914, that you are an ARRL appointee and (assuming it's the case) that your club is [ARRL-affiliated](#).

Give him a brief cover letter describing your particular campaign.

Give him a list of local contacts; i.e., you, the PIOs, and/or the Section Manager.

Give him a brief list of local Amateur Radio happenings; cover last month's storm communications, parade effort, and Operation Santa Claus.

Follow these tips, and you'll improve your chances of getting your local TV/Radio station to air your PSA. It will bring the good message of Amateur Radio to millions of potential hams.

### **ARRL HQ PSA Library**

Listed below are public service announcements available from League Headquarters:

#### **Television Spots:**

1. "They're All Hams" :30
2. "Hams on the Air" :30

Television spots are currently available in three-quarter and one-inch formats. Other formats will be added as the technology changes.

If you're not sure which format you need, please contact the TV station and ask the public service director which format is preferred.

**Radio Spots:**

1. "They're All Hams" :30

ARRL's radio spot is available on CD

XX

## **PIO Handbook - Chapter Nine - Talking Up Ham Radio**

### **On Radio and TV Talk Shows**

More than 4,000 talk, interview and local public affairs shows are aired daily in the United States. They reach audiences totaling millions of people. Many radio stations in the USA are exclusively "talk." This forum represents a huge resource for you, the ARRL Public Information Officer. Here's how you can tap it.

### **Celebrities Only?**

Fame never hurts, but isn't strictly necessary to be famous to be booked on talk shows. While a well-known amateur such as the late Senator Barry Goldwater (K7UGA) would get the approving nod in a heartbeat, there are thousands of opportunities for lesser celebrities - like you. An average of half a million interviews annually, on thousands of shows, makes a lot of space for the right people. So who are these "right people?" They are people who talk show producers believe will 1) interest listeners or viewers, and 2) are a good, reliable interview. Your IQ (Interest Quotient) hangs heavily on whether or not people want or need to hear what you have to say. Depending upon the type of show, you must either be controversial, or able to offer them something that can change their lives for the better. Your IQ takes a nosedive, however, if you are a mere poor imitation of someone else; it soars to the heights if you are unique and well-spoken. That "well-spoken" remark comes from the opinion of talk-show experts who believe that how you say it is often more important than what you say. For promoting Amateur Radio we need

to convince producers that listeners will find "hamming" an interesting and vital hobby that they might like to join.

A good, reliable interview is several things. First, it is an interviewee (you!) who shows up on the right day, at the right time and in the right place. For a telephone interview (a "phoner") it means that you are at the phone at the right time - and were smart enough to make it a phone in a quiet location and without the "Call Waiting" service. After all, your hollering kids and the "alert" of the Call Waiting signal go out over the air right along with your most eloquent profundities!

A story about Calvin Coolidge, the 30th President, involves an incident that happened at a White House party. "Silent Cal" was a man of few words. He was approached during the party by a woman socialite who told him, "Mr. President, I bet Mrs. Smith that I could make you say three words." The dour reply was, "You lose." Don't be a "Silent Cal" interview unless you want some ticked off host to say, "you lose." A "good interview" is one in which you do most of the talking. A "good talk" is able to carry the conversation because he or she is an expert on the topic ... and has lots of material on hand.

A teacher at George Washington University offered his students one piece of advice that should be tattooed on the forearms of all who seek talk show appearances: don't ever speak impromptu. Always be prepared for contingencies in case things don't go the way they were planned. Have a talk or line of questioning planned, and be prepared to talk on it at length. Too much preparation is never a problem, but too little is a disaster.

### **Types Of Talk Shows**

Talk and interview shows come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Some are call-in shows, during which listeners telephone the studio and ask their questions live on-the-air. Although this format attracts its share of "interesting" callers, it is also a vigorous arena that taxes you to the limit.

Another format is the cross-the-table interview with no call-ins. This type of interview is typically pretaped for airing at a later time, although some shows do it live.

### **How To Handle The Tough Interview**

Inevitably, if you do a lot of interviews you will encounter either the hostile host or a call-in jerk who wants to make life difficult for you (probably someone with an unresolved TVI complaint). Pioneer TV talk show host Joe Pine sometimes told his guest to go "...gargle with razor blades." Journalist Dan Wooding (Open Doors News Service) said that a person does not really come of age in the interview biz until they have survived an interview on Britain's BBC. According to Wooding, a BBC interview is a vicious rite of passage into the adulthood of the talk show circuit.

But Dan also offered advice on how to handle that kind of interviewer. When he asks a provocative, outrageous or embarrassing question ... ignore it. Answer in a happy, chipper, comfortable and thoroughly congenial manner, but answer by asking a question of your own. You can then burn up about five minutes of that broadcaster's equivalent of a bear trap with your own answer to your own question.

In other cases, the interviewer will ask legitimate questions that, although designed to lead you out onto a shaky verbal pier above a school of man-eating barracudas, are nonetheless in your best interest to answer. Keep it cool, be amiable, and skewer the rogue with a well thought out answer. After all, you have had a lot more time to think about the topic than that overworked talk show host.

Another tough interview is the incompetent host. Guests on talk shows are a dime a dozen, and press releases and PR material comes into the station by the box load. Far too many talk show hosts never even see your stuff until you hand him or her a copy five minutes before airtime. The interview then degenerates into a discussion of the major headings ("Joe, what do you mean by..." as he reads a title to 500,000 listeners). The only hope for the "incomp" interview is to take command and run away with the host's show: yak it up! I suspect that the host will actually be relieved. After all, if he is too lazy to at least speed-read the material that you sent in beforehand, then he is probably too lazy to keep the ball rolling: it's your show from the minute you realize that the host is taking the table of contents route.

## **How To Get Invited**

Fortunately, getting invited on radio and TV talk shows is not too difficult. First, you will have to identify the shows that fit your goals. Is the audience a group of people you're trying to reach? Does amateur radio fit in with the general sorts of topics the covered? There are several avenues open for learning this information. The first step might be to listen to your local radio station to find out what shows are aired locally. You could also ask the local station manager for advice. You can also look in the standard broadcasting industry directories. Although some libraries might have them, in most cases you will have to spend some bucks to buy your own copies.

Second, you must prepare a press kit. (This is a press kit promoting *you* as a talk show guest, as opposed to an amateur radio press kit, which you should have as well.) According to Mitch Davis of Broadcast Interview Source, there is a "two-ounce" rule for the press kit. If it weighs more than two-ounces in the envelope, (requiring more than two units of postage) then it is too big.

The press kit should demonstrate that you are experienced with the media (list even one little local interview); if clips are available, include them. Demonstrate why your topic, or your experience, is timely and newsworthy. For example, if Amateurs helped with communications for a storm emergency recently, contact the station or show producer about doing a story. Exploit any seasonal or annual aspects of your topic (Field Day, for example).

Also, if the station or show has a narrow range of listeners, then there might be an Amateur Radio angle that can be exploited. For example, if there is a local Christian radio station in your town, then tune in on and become familiar with the Halo Missionary Net (21.390 MHz, 1800Z). This topic can also be exploited for personal appearances, lunch and breakfast talks, and other gatherings of local religious groups. I found that both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches are eager to hear talks on their missionaries from a radio perspective. It's fresh, different, and so relevant to their own interests.

Expand your topic to include the greatest number of listeners. ALWAYS be a primary source ("I'm kinda like So-and-So" won't cut it - they'll go get ol' So and-So instead of you). Make sure that your phone number appears in at least three places in the press kit.

In a seminar for Washington's Open University, Mitch Davis and his associate Joe Shafran stressed the importance of a little hype to get the producer to actually open your letter (many - maybe most - wind up in the circular file unopened). Use a real stamp, not a postage meter stamp, and a well-designed envelope that stands out (but not too much glitz, please). Don't use computer generated mailing labels. In fact, Davis recommends hand writing the address on the envelope. Above all, address the press kit to a real person - not just "guest coordinator" or "producer." If you have to call the show or station to find out the correct name, then do it. In fact, it is a good idea to call the person anyway. Ask for about thirty seconds of time, and then use it (and no more unless invited to do so) to tell him why you would be a good guest, and state that "some additional information" (the press kit) will hit his desk any day now.

Make yourself visible. A press kit, although very valuable, is a temporary asset at best. It dies (if not on arrival) very soon after arrival. The "we'll file it against the day when..." is the kiss of death. "The day when..." never comes.

### **Cable TV Public Access**

Most areas served by cable TV have a "Public Access" channel that can be used by just about anyone. Rules for getting the program sent over the system vary from locality to locality. Some system operators may require you to record the program using your personnel. This can be a great club project! Your program should be lively, entertaining and engaging enough to pique the viewer's interest. Having some visuals, which could be equipment, graphics, photos, videos of Field Day or other activities also adds to the presentation. The less time spent on just "talking heads" the better.

Like all programs, your cable access show should have a topic and a beginning, middle and end. Good planning is a must. With all that's going on in Amateur Radio, your club could produce an ongoing series!

### **Conclusion**

The radio-TV interview is one of the most powerful and rewarding methods to promote a book, a cause, an idea ... or Amateur radio. It works, it is accessible and it's for you.

XX

## PIO Handbook - Chapter Ten -- Writing for Magazines

Magazines are a somewhat different "animal" than newspapers and broadcasters, but can be equally effective media for promoting Amateur Radio and your group's activities. Two of the biggest differences are that magazines tend to be monthly or even quarterly, rather than daily or weekly; and that they tend to focus on specialized groups of readers rather than the mass "general public." They also tend to be regional or national in scope, and it's much easier to get your story into a national magazine than onto a network newscast.

One group of magazines is different from the rest for our purposes. The editors of these magazines don't have to be introduced to Amateur Radio or persuaded that an article about Amateur Radio fits their "mix" of articles and will be of interest to their audience. These magazines, of course, are the Amateur Radio magazines. Despite the fact that their readers already know what ham radio is and why it's important, they can still be a good resource for you to publicize your group's activities or to share lessons you've learned with other amateurs.

Because the ham magazines are a special case, we'll break this chapter into two parts -- Writing for:

- [The Ham Radio Magazines.](#)
- [Non-Ham Publications.](#)

---

### Writing for the Ham Radio Magazines

*(Adapted with permission from CQ magazine Writers' Guide.)*

Amateur radio has a rich tradition of hams sharing their knowledge and experience with each other, both on the air and through the pages of ham radio magazines. Those who share your interest want to learn how someone else did it, find a way that they can improve their stations or operating techniques or share an experience in which ham radio provided a service to the public or their hobby.

Some magazines report on topics that are of interest to people just getting their ham tickets as well those who have been in the hobby for years. Others specialize in specific areas of the hobby such as contesting or experimentation. It's important to have a basic knowledge of the type of articles that are published in each magazine

The primary purpose of writing an article is to communicate an idea and to exchange the author's experience or accomplishment for the reader's time. Therefore, whatever is



published or written should be worth the time it takes to read it. Every article passes through four very important sets of hands -- the author's, the editor's, the art director's, and -- most importantly -- the reader's. If the first three do their jobs well, then all the reader needs to do is relax, read, enjoy and learn.

Your main job as an author is to write an article that communicates your ideas clearly, concisely, and accurately. You also want to make the article interesting. A magazine isn't a textbook and no article is required reading. So your first job is to capture -- and hold -- the reader's attention. Your next challenge is to make sure you're neither talking down to the readers nor writing "over their heads."

Every successful writer knows his/her audience and writes to and for that audience. Some magazines' audiences are a broad spectrum of people with a shared interest in ham radio. They come from all walks of life and have technical knowledge ranging from nearly nothing to leading edge. In addition, ham radio has many specialty areas, so even a longtime ham with significant experience in one area may be a complete "newbie" in another. What this means is that you should not assume that every reader will bring a particular level of prior knowledge to your article's topic. Because of this, you should try to explain all concepts and define all terminology as you write. This will provide a roadmap for the newcomer and assure the old-timer that you know what you're talking about well enough to explain it to someone who doesn't.

### **Structuring Your Article**

While there's no set "formula" for ham magazine articles, there is a certain structure that is followed by most successful writers. It's the same basic outline used by teachers in a classroom: "Tell them what you're going to tell them. Tell them. Tell them what you've told them."

Let's get more specific. First there is a form of introduction. The introduction is some method of defining the objective or problem to be solved by the article. It establishes the need and the method of satisfying the need. This is also where you need to grab the reader's attention, so it's vital to keep this section interesting. Tell a story that shows why the reader should care about the widget you've written about. Think of yourself sitting around a table at a club meeting, telling a group of fellow hams about your trip, construction project, etc. You've got to keep their interest or they'll go listen to the guy at the next table, telling his own story. If you don't "hook" your readers at the beginning of your article, they'll just turn the page and look for another.

The main body of the article develops the theory, construction techniques, the basic "how-to" information, or "how we did it" type of data. Here you relate how the piece of equipment or gadget is built or how you got to some island and set up that extraordinary station. It's the place for anecdotes, hints and kinks, and the personal touches.

The concluding part gives the reader a summation of what was accomplished. In the case of a piece of equipment or gadget, you would include the results you achieved by using it

and how the reader can use it if he /she builds it. A DXpedition concludes with the number of contacts, recapping the adventure, possible plans for another one, and finally the ship or plane departing as the sun sinks on the horizon.

Footnotes, addenda, and "thank-you's" tail-end the manuscript. If everyone does their jobs correctly, the reader has an enjoyable experience. He knows "what it feels like" to build the whatever without actually building it, or has taken the trip with you in spirit.

Please pay particular attention to the "flow" of your article. Does it "travel" in a logical progression from beginning to end? Does the article generally follow a chronological sequence? Or do the paragraphs "bounce around," both in terms of topics and time? This is a very common problem. Please double-check your final copy to make sure it flows smoothly, and that you have good transitions between topics. It's always a good idea to have someone else look it over before you send it in. If he or she gets confused or dozes off, you've got more work ahead of you.

### **The Manuscript**

Before you start to write, send the magazine a query outlining your proposed article (e-mail will get the quickest response). That way, you'll know whether there is any interest. Next, be original. You must let the magazine know if you are submitting your article to more than one publication at a time (this is generally considered poor practice, by the way), and as soon as one publication accepts it, you must notify all the others to withdraw it from consideration.

Now, let's move on to the manuscript itself. If you think of the manuscript as a term paper, you won't go wrong in terms of structure. Include a title page. The title page simply has on it the title you have selected, your name and call, and your mailing and e-mail addresses. Leave plenty of space between each.

The main body of the manuscript should be typed (or printed) double-spaced on 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Leave considerable side margins. The margins will serve as work space for the editor should your article be accepted for publication. Be sure to leave plenty of room. If you plan to footnote material, indicate the proper reference number by raising it over the word or phrase that is footnoted (for example, Marconi<sup>1</sup>).

Spelling and grammar count (just like on a term paper). You won't be graded, but an article that's full of misspelled words or grammatical errors reflects poorly on your credibility. Be sure to spell-check, but don't fully trust the spell-checker. A word that's misspelled into another word won't be caught. Use your eyes, and a dictionary if there's any doubt.

One exception to the term paper analogy: A magazine article should be less formal and more conversational than a term paper. Term papers don't have to be interesting. Magazine articles do (assuming that you actually want people to read them).

## **Computer File Requirements**

Every magazine has specific requirements for submitting text. Many magazines publish this information on their web site. If you are still unsure about format requirements drop the magazine a note.

Articles and columns on disk or via e-mail save a lot of grief for everyone. There's no "re-keying" required, so the editors can't introduce errors in the process. All artwork and photos should be sent as separate files. Never embed the photos or artwork into the article. Leave that up to the editors.

## **Some Do's and Don'ts**

**Do** number your manuscript pages consecutively, and if you feel ambitious you can also add a key to each page. For example, you could also type in at the top right-hand corner of each page your name and the page number (i.e., Smith, 2).

**Do** try to avoid (wherever possible) the excessive use of formulas, exotic math, and esoteric references. Unless the article is in the form of a tutorial, the beauty of an equation is strictly in the eye of the writer.

**Don't** leave holes in your text for insertion of photos and don't embed diagrams at a specific location in the text. The art department will take care of layout.

**Don't** assume that your manuscript will reach print intact, including the title. Magazines try to present material to their readers in the best light, and will often change the title and rework the text. You may be asked to supply additional materials as well.

**Don't** be pompous. Fancy words intended to impress generally don't. Stick to clear, straightforward English.

**Don't** insult your readers. People don't buy magazines to be told how stupid they are. They buy magazines because they want to learn ... and you're the teacher. Do define and explain.

**Don't** rest on your laurels. If you can write and have written, write some more. People for the most part are innately curious and like to find out what others are doing. Don't keep it a secret.

**Do** look for interesting topics. If you check the literature and find in the course of a year or so eight articles on logic probes, then it isn't too likely that the world is waiting for the ninth. See what isn't being covered and cover it.

**Don't** forget to include an SASE with your article with sufficient postage to ensure safe return should your article not be accepted. While an SASE is not mandatory for most magazines, it is a polite consideration. Some authors also tend to include a self-addressed

postcard with their manuscript so that the editor can quickly acknowledge the receipt of the article and perhaps inform the author of a quick decision of acceptance. The use of these cards by editors varies; some use them and others don't.

**Don't** forget your reader. If your article is published, there is the likelihood of your getting mail from readers. The amount of mail will vary from perhaps one or two letters to scores. Try to answer each letter. Most people who read your work will never write telling you whether they feel positive or negative about your article. Don't assume indifference or lack of interest on their part; it's just the way it is. After all, when was the last time you contacted an author?

### **A Few Notes on Style**

When mentioning a ham radio operator by name use the ham's full name (first name last name), a comma, and callsign. An example would be Hiram Maxim, W1AW. On the second reference use the person's last name. One exception to this would be when referring to two hams with the same last name. Use parentheses on first reference, e.g., "George (W4AA) and Martha (K4AA) Washington." The second reference to one of the two people should be by first name, call. This may vary a bit for different publications. While we're on the topic, the words "amateur," "ham" and "ham radio" generally are not capitalized. Exceptions: when referring to the Amateur Radio Service (as in the FCC's rules), with or without the word "service." So you'd capitalize "Amateur Radio came to the rescue once again..." but not "...as area hams helped coordinate evacuations." *Never* write HAM in all-caps. The term "ham" is neither an abbreviation nor an acronym. Check with each magazine for its specific style.

### **Photographs**

Every publication has standards for the type of photographs they will accept. In general color prints, slides, and digital images are acceptable.

A digital image will be accepted if the resolution is sufficient. Generally speaking, this means using at least a 1.2 megapixel (or greater) camera with the image resolution (sometimes referred to as "image quality") set at *maximum*. This is usually the setting that allows your camera to store the LEAST number of pictures. For digital images, the resolution must be at least 300 dpi when the image is sized at 4 X 5 inches or larger. Generally speaking, a 1280x960 pixel image will reproduce well in print. For a more detailed explanation on resolution see the chapter on imaging or consult your image-viewing software. It should have a "properties" function that will give you the specifications of any image.

All photos, digital or otherwise, must include captions. Tell the editors (and ultimately the readers) what is going on in the photo, where it was taken and so on. If people are shown prominently in the photographs, you must supply their names and/or call signs. Type photo credit or descriptive information on a piece of paper and tape the paper to the back of the print, or use adhesive-backed notepaper.

If it is a digital image include a list of photographs at the end of the article. Include a caption, the photo credit, and the image file name. Here are a few things not to do.

**DO NOT** send images captured from Web sites, or scanned from magazines, newspapers, catalogs or other media without obtaining the written permission of the author, Webmaster, company, etc.

**DO NOT** send prints made on color laser or inkjet printers. The color quality is not sufficient for us to use.

If your camera has a date-stamping function that adds the date automatically to every photograph, **TURN IT OFF** when shooting photos for possible publication.

**DO NOT** write on the backs of pictures with felt-tip pens. Most of the time the ink will either "bleed through" or come off on the picture behind it. It is almost impossible to get the ink off. Don't use a ballpoint pen, either. The pressure of the point will mess up the front of the photo. Do write or print descriptions on labels and when you're sure the ink's dry, apply the labels to the backs of the pictures.

### **Working With Columnists**

So far we have covered what should be done if you are writing a full length story on some event. Often the story you have to tell is part of a larger event. Here's where you can work with the various magazine columnists or section editors and help fill in the gap. Most magazines will report on Field Day. Yet each magazine will report on a different aspect of the event. For example, every club may go out in a field and set up their equipment. If the Governor of your state visited your site, that's news and supplying information about his visit would be of interest to readers. Another club may have made contact with the International Space Station. This is a different part of the Field Day story. Sometimes a unique photo is enough to catch the editor's eye. Two examples in recent years include a helicopter raising a long wire antenna or solar panels supplying electricity. Often the editors wish they had just one photo to go with the story they are writing. You may have the right picture. A note from one club PIO to the public service editor of a ham magazine said, "I took over 100 Field Day pictures. Would you like them sent to you?" The editor replied that he was looking for a particular photo of a digital station. The club PIO met the editor's need and the photo made it into the article.

Large scale disasters, such as a flood, can prompt many stories. Sometimes a quick e-mail to the public service editor with information on how your group helped out will allow the editor to tell the story of hams providing critical communications in many areas. Remember that there may be a two or three month delay from the time the event happens until it actually appears in the publication. Magazines like to get current information out as soon as possible or while the event may be fresh in someone's mind.

Finally consider placing the editor/columnist on an e-mail list of club happenings. Many editors have club newsletters mailed or e-mailed to them. The information in the club newsletter may provide enough information to have an editor contact you for a story.

Remember that hams want to read about their hobby and there are many ways of telling your story if you take advantage of it.

### **News Releases and Event Announcements**

Most of the major ham magazines run announcements of special events, hamfests, conferences, etc. Be sure to get these in at least three months before your event to be certain of making the deadline for correct issue.

If you are sending out a news release on an event or activity, be sure to include the ham magazines. Follow all the guidelines for releases you'd send to a newspaper or broadcast station.

### **Getting Double Mileage**

Many local newspapers consider it newsworthy when an area resident has an article published in a national or international magazine. If a member of your club has an article in a ham magazine, consider sending a news release to your local paper(s), with the member's permission, of course. This provides you with an opportunity to highlight amateur radio and your member's unique experience or technical expertise. If you can, include a photo and a copy of the article or magazine (with the article marked).

---

## **Writing For Non-Ham Publications**

*(Adapted from the previous ARRL PIO Handbook)*

A key means of inviting non-hams to learn more about Amateur Radio is by writing feature articles for non-ham publications. Writing for non-hams is different -and sometimes more difficult - than writing for hams. Here are some tips.

### **Target your story to the audience**

What's unique about the group you're writing for? What facets of Amateur Radio will interest them the most? Fire, police, and similar personnel will naturally be interested in the public service and emergency aspects of amateur radio, but don't forget to mention how much sheer fun it can be, too.

It doesn't have to be "Why you should become a ham." If you're writing to government or public service officials, give them specific examples of how amateurs have served their communities, and tell them how to find hams in their area to set up emergency preparedness teams.

## Article Ideas

Here's an easy exercise. Stop for a moment and ask yourself these questions: What profession am I in? What other hobbies do I have besides Amateur Radio? Do I belong to civic or charitable organizations? What family or other activities am I involved in?

Your answers will almost certainly provide the springboard for several articles-ones which will be fun and easy to do because you're already familiar with the subject matter and the audience you're writing for!

Some of those activities will have a natural link to Amateur Radio, such as travel buffs who'd be excited about talking to people in other countries, or businesspeople who are on the road a lot and would enjoy the ability to meet new friends in the cities they visit.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

*Teachers.* Teachers are always looking for ways to motivate students, so they'd love to hear how you use Amateur Radio in the classroom to let your kids meet people in different areas of the country, to teach world geography, or to practice a foreign language. Parents would be a prospective audience for the same reasons. You can also mention what great after-hours relaxation it is for yourself.

*Outdoors enthusiasts/private pilots.* Probably very few of these people know about the availability of small, lightweight HF and VHF/UHF Amateur Radios. Lives have been saved because people had such radios with them when they were stranded in a semi-remote area.

*Health Care Workers.* Do health professionals and volunteers know how Amateur Radio can brighten the day of someone who's homebound or in a nursing home? You can tell them.

*History and genealogy buffs.* These people can have a marvelous time talking with people in states or countries that hold special interest for them. The same with retirees, especially those living away from their former homes.

*Science and technical professionals, and hobbyists.* Some professions and hobbies are a natural match with amateur radio. Many engineers could pass the Extra class theory questions with their eyes closed. Amateur astronomers might enjoy Amateur Radio astronomy and professionals can pass the time while a spectrogram is exposing! Computer professionals and hobbyists can contribute their talents to the new world of digital Amateur Radio-as indeed has already happened.

Those are just a few ideas for members of professions and hobbies that seem to have a natural link with Amateur Radio. But what about the ones that don't? Does that mean those people wouldn't be interested? Of course not; you're in some of those groups and you're a ham, right? Maybe there's a link that isn't obvious. Look around your club. Is

there an unusually high number of members from any particular non-technical field, such as law? If so, look at journals in that field that may be interested in profiles of group members' outside activities.

### **Do's and Don'ts**

Do communicate the excitement of the hobby-and try to target this for your audience. For instance, technical professionals might be amazed to learn that we're using sophisticated digital techniques, and that we have our own satellites. Liven up your article with direct quotes from people in their own profession/hobby who are excited about Amateur Radio.

Do give a "call to action." Tell your readers how they can find out more; e.g., give the ARRL HQ address, or a local contact if you're writing for a local publication.

Don't go into details that are inappropriate for your audience. Talking about the Amateur Radio implementation of the ARPA Internet protocol suite would be fine in Computer Networking magazine, but not in Astronomy Today. (But do tell the astronomers about Amateur Radio astronomy!)

Don't get defensive about the common public confusion between Amateur Radio and citizens' band. A brief, unemotional, informative statement is okay, such as: "Amateur radio offers more privileges than other public radio services, such as citizens band or the Family Radio Service. In return, we're required to take a test and obtain a license from the Federal Communications Commission."

### **Target your story to the magazine**

Get familiar with the magazine(s) to which you want to submit your article. Here are some questions to think about as you read them:

*How long are the articles?*

One page? Two? Four or more? It will probably vary, and may be quite flexible. There may be a section that's perfect for your article-such as "First Person" or "In My Off Hours"-that's always a certain length; if so, make sure you write to that length.

*From what viewpoint are they written?*

Is everything in third person, or does the magazine seem to run a mix of third person and first person articles? First person can be fun because you can write directly from your own experience, but be sure to include interesting anecdotes from other hams in the same profession/hobby. Second person is good for "you-yes, you!--can do this and have fun" articles. For third person, you simply describe your interviewees' activities.

*Do they include photographs?*



If so, figure out a way to get some-and make sure they're of good quality. Does the magazine use black and white, color, or both? Black-and-white-photos should be printed on glossy (not matte) stock, have borders, and be at least 5x7 inches in size (preferably 8x10). Make sure the picture has good contrast. For color, slides, prints or high-quality digital images are acceptable at most magazines. Check writer's guidelines (see below) or ask the editors for each magazine's preference. Whatever media you use, make sure the picture is clearly focused and not "busy" with too much in it. If possible, crop out any distractions on the edges before submitting it.

*Does the editor expect a query letter first?*

A query letter is a proposal to a magazine for a story. Commercial magazines almost always want them, but professional and hobby magazines often have looser policies. If you aren't sure, you could go ahead and send one, or check the magazine's listing in the annual *Writer's Market*.

*Does the magazine have writer's guidelines?*

Again, the type of magazine we're discussing here may not have such a beast, but it's polite to ask. These guidelines (usually just a couple of typewritten pages) will include formatting requirements for submissions, and often include hints on the style preferred by the magazine.

### **How to make professional submissions**

Your mother was right: neatness counts. Make sure your article is professional in appearance. Double space, and use wide margins (at least one inch on all sides). Either use a typewriter with a fresh ribbon, or a computer with a laser or high-quality inkjet printer. Good-quality photocopies are fine. Many magazines today prefer submissions on a floppy disk (with hard copy attached) or via e-mail. Again, check with the magazine.

Put your name, address and daytime phone number at the top of the first page, center the title about a third of the way down, then leave a few lines before beginning the actual article. On subsequent pages, include the page number, article title, and your name.

Don't try to do your own layout or embed photos in the text. The magazine will only redo your layout in its own style.

Write a cover letter. This doesn't have to be fancy. Just write a concise, professional letter that briefly explains your article.

Include return postage and envelope. If you don't want your manuscript returned, mention that in your cover letter and forget the postage. If you do want it back, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope (business-size for short articles, 9x12 for thicker ones).

Copyrights. What you write is yours. When you submit an article to a publication, it's generally assumed that they will have only one-time rights to use it. However, this a complex subject, so if you're concerned about it, read the section on rights in Writer's Market or some other good freelancers' book.

### **Personality Plus**

Your article doesn't have to be a "hard sell piece" on newspapers are looking for personality pieces-and heaven knows, there are plenty of personalities in Amateur Radio!

How about your coworker who recently won recognition for her help with public-service and disaster-relief communications? What about the seemingly ordinary doctor in your local medical association whose idea of a fun vacation is dragging a few hundred pounds of radio equipment halfway around the world for a DXpedition? And don't forget the high-school student whose interest in Amateur Radio helped earn him a college scholarship. Try local sports figures, newscasters, and other celebrities. With 400,000 hams in the United States alone, there are a lot of fascinating stories out there just waiting to be written.

The point is that there are innumerable angles you can use to make Amateur Radio interesting to all sorts of people. Let your mind explore the possibilities, and you should have enough article ideas to keep you going for a long, long time!

XX

## **PIO Handbook - Chapter Eleven - Extending PR Into the Community**

### **Other Public Relations Ideas**

Articles in newspapers and magazines, or news stories on TV or radio, aren't the only ways to promote amateur radio in your community. Here are a few additional public relations tips you might try in getting your message through. Feel free to adapt them to your situation.

### **Letters to the Editor**

Nearly every newspaper and magazine prints readers' letters. This can often be an excellent forum to thank a community organization or leader for helping your group, or to offer recognition for your group's activities (ask served organizations to write letters to the editor, thanking your group for its help). Letters to the editor can be especially useful for setting the record straight if an article or another letter has unfairly painted Amateur Radio in a negative light. Be sure to write calmly and rationally, and avoid the urge to get into ongoing debates in the "Letters" column.

## **Amateur Radio Public Awareness Day**

To make the public more aware of the existence, purposes, and benefits of Amateur Radio, clubs and Field Organization members set up public displays across the nation, in schools, libraries, town halls, parks - anywhere an imaginative group can think of -on Amateur Radio Public Awareness Day. The special day is held each September on the third Saturday. Why September? It's a time when no other major Amateur Radio event is taking place. Schools are back in session, and clubs are looking for a good kick-off for their fall seasons. The weather is generally good enough for outdoor exhibits at fairs and town parks.

For a comprehensive tutorial on putting together a good exhibit, see the ARRL Special Events Communications Manual.

## **Club "Fact Sheet"**

If your club or organization doesn't already have one, prepare a brochure or "fact sheet" giving a little of its history, describing its mission, listing its officers and outlining the programs and events it sponsors. This is a great handout to use when you meet with the media or with government and emergency management officials. It can also be a neat thing to use in recruiting or orienting new members.

## **Public Service Events**

Public events present unique settings for a "captive" audience to become more aware of Amateur Radio. They are ideal for attracting inquiries and promoting interest in our hobby.

After a club has committed to providing communications for an event, ask for support for the public information and public relations effort. Most event sponsors are eager to help us promote Amateur Radio at their events.

Ask for space for a paragraph on Amateur Radio in the event brochure, program and Press Kit. Depending on the event and the circumstances, this can range from mere acknowledgment of Amateur Radio operators to a brief description of our hobby and contact information such as the ARRL (for the prospective ham mailing with list of local clubs, classes and exam sessions).

In most cases, it is better for the promotion of Amateur Radio to refer to the group "generically" as Amateur Radio Operators or Ham Radio rather than using your club or group name (if you have one). The idea is to get the words "Amateur Radio" or "Ham Radio" in front of the public eye as much as possible. The Wireless Association of Greater Norfolk County may be a super club but the name doesn't convey Amateur Radio to the general public.

Make your activity and participants visible! Position a station in a highly visible and well traveled location (with regard to spectators and participants). The Net Control Station (when feasible) or an Information station with a LARGE sign or banner displaying Ham Radio or Amateur Radio is a good attention getter. You may find someone in your area or club who has one to loan or who can generate one with computer banner or sign programs.

Ask to have the Public Address Announcer make a few announcements regarding Amateur Radio. Have "prepared" copy to be read, thanking the amateurs for their participation and inviting people to get more information about Amateur Radio. You or one of your crew can hand this directly to the Public Address Announcer.

Ask for space on the event information table or for your own info table. Handouts can include: Address of ARRL for prospective ham mailing, list of local clubs or classes, and a brochure describing Amateur Radio. You may want to collect names and addresses of interested persons and forward them to ARRL for the prospective ham mailing (using sign-up slips and a "bucket" or other methods). Arrange for visible means of identifying each ham participant and station. Signs on mobile communications vehicles and caps with the words Ham Radio on them are excellent. The general public should be able to read these from a distance. Buttons, ribbons, vests, arm-bands, sashes and badges are also good, but in a crowded environment, baseball caps stand out well. Some event sponsors find it to their advantage to have the hams easy to locate in a crowd and may provide reimbursement for such items. Ask them!

Do arrange for a news release of some sort to the local media before and after the event. Again, this is to get the words Amateur Radio in front of them. Who knows? You may find that someone wants to get more of the story on the Amateur Radio involvement at the event.

### **Invite Local Officials To Field Day, Club Meetings**

Adopt selected key government officials and invite them to attend a Field Day exercise or other activity where you can show off your capabilities. Invite them to a club meeting to talk to your members about the community's emergency planning.

Invite local emergency management officials to your meetings, too.

### **Proclamations**

If your club or organization has a significant anniversary like, "The Hamrad Amateur Radio Club's 25th year," ask the town fathers or even the state's Governor to issue a proclamation commemorating the event. They are usually happy to oblige. Follow up with a news release. These are considered newsworthy events: Don't miss the opportunity.

### **Recognition Awards**

Give a recognition award of your own. If you can identify a local government or emergency planning official in your community who deserves recognition, give him or her an award. A classy-looking certificate can be made up easily by one of your computer- literate members with a laser printer, a decent piece of paper and a suitable frame. Invite your honoree and the media to a club meeting for the presentation. If the local garden club can do it, so can you!

### **Other Organizations**

If your club meets in a church, a firehouse or a lodge hall, these organizations may be willing and interested in including your club's meeting announcements or other information about your activities in their newsletters or other publications.

### **The Workplace**

If any of your members works for a company or entity with a company house organ, consider communicating with its editor to suggest an article on the employee's amateur activity. Many company house organs often feature unusual employee hobbies.

### **Speakers Bureau**

Help your club start a speakers bureau and then promote it. Let your local schools and community service groups know it exists and that you have people willing to present a program. These groups need program material, too, to keep their meetings interesting.

### **Public Programs**

Consider having your club work on a project to develop a really interesting program about Amateur Radio using slides or a video format. This is a great idea for clubs looking for something interesting to do that will help them grow.

Use the slide or video program you developed above to meet with your local service clubs and present programs to them on local Amateur Radio activity.

These are just a few of the things you can do. With a little effort, you could easily add to this list of projects that have a positive public relations impact.

XX

## **PIO Handbook - Chapter 12 - Putting it All Together**

The preceding chapters have given you the basic tools you'll need for being an effective representative of your club, and of amateur radio, to the news media and your neighbors. Now you need to create a plan of action and begin putting all these tools to use.

Decide what you want to accomplish in the public relations arena, then set up a reasonable, step-by-step, timetable for getting it done. You can use a fancy computer program, a personal digital assistant, or a chart on your wall, whatever works best for you. Set simple, achievable, goals in a realistic timeframe. For example:

**Next 2 weeks:** Contact local media; introduce yourself; find out who should get news releases; get deadlines, phone/fax numbers and e-mail addresses. Follow up with mailing of your own contact info.

**Every 4 weeks:** Send out meeting notice (remember their deadlines), highlight program/speaker. If program has any interest outside amateur radio, follow up with news release on meeting program.

**Next 6 weeks:** Pitch article on member's trip to East Brigadoon for "Radio Adventure" (DXpedition); if no bites, follow up to see what types of stories might be of more interest; then try to develop them.

**Early June:** Pitch Field Day coverage; follow up with invitations/directions.

Note that every goal on this short sample list included "follow up." That can be as important as the initial contact and is a key ingredient in establishing and maintaining a good working relationship with the reporters, editors and news directors in your area.

Like ham radio itself, effective public relations really is about relationships -- the same people skills you use in club leadership or on the air will help you "put it all together" as an ARRL PIO. Good luck, and remember -- your section PIC, your fellow PIOs on the internet PR reflector, the HQ media relations staff, and members of the ARRL Public Relations Committee are all available to answer questions and offer suggestions. You're not alone. Now get out there and start pitching!