

The Four Steps Toward Successful Field Day Press Releases

By Jim Mulvey, KS1A, EMA Public Information Officer

When last year's local club's Field Day publicity didn't make it into the newspaper, the Publicity Chairman couldn't understand why! After all, he wrote a press release and mailed it with plenty of time to spare. Still, it was passed by. Why? Because there are very specific steps you must follow to ensure that:

1. The right person actually reads your release. (Most are thrown out after a quick look.)
2. They print it.

Step 1. Know what you're up against.

First, the old days of the spartan "just the facts" press release are over. At one time, all you needed to do was a straightforward "who, what, where, when and why" in the first paragraph with no editorializing. It's still being taught that way in journalism school, but it's not the way it's done in the real world!

Step 2. Understand that the biggest problem is having your release tossed in the trash.

At every media outlet (newspapers, television, and radio stations) there is one person who opens the press release mail. They can get a ton of releases every week; they are gathered up and opened by hand one by one, and unfortunately, they are almost all fluff from companies announcing the upgrade of a new improved food container, (yawn). The person must make a quick decision as to the importance of each one. He only reads the first paragraph, and he's usually standing over a wastebasket. Get the picture?

You must make sure the release is of interest to the readers. If you're town paper is the Billerica News, then make sure that "Billerica Radio Amateurs" are mentioned prominently! **You must catch the person's attention with the first couple of lines in your release or out it goes!** Worse, the person who opens the release may make a decision based upon what your envelope looks like. If it's very amateurish-looking, you may not even get a serious first glance. When writing the release, walk the fine line between making it exciting and keeping it factual. See the example provided.

Step 3. Delivering your release to its target.

We've included a sample news release for you to "customize" for local consumption. We've also included a "media advisory." We recommend sending both. A good way to get them thrown away is to just drop them in an envelope and mail to your media outlet. That's not enough! Call the station or newspaper and ask for the city editor or assignment editor (for radio and TV). Get a name. Then, ask for the fax number.

Fax it to them! The fax is the fastest way to cut through the protective layers a company uses against their telephone and mail. A fax will get right through. Send your release a week in advance.

BINGO! The right person now has your release. It's separated from the usual pack; now you have a very good chance of getting the publicity you want and need. Re-send everything the day before the event.

Step 4. The Closer.

Include a contact telephone number. We've actually had newspapers call us back and ask to do a full story on the club! Getting publicity is more of an art than a science. It's important to remember that just writing and sending it isn't enough. Follow the steps, sound friendly but confident, don't try to come off as if you're promoting something as important as a medical breakthrough. Be sure to mention that the site looks great for cameras and photographers. Follow through and you just may score with every release you send.

- 1) Modify this media advisory to suit your local event**
- 2) Submit to local newspapers, radio and television newsrooms one week in advance of Field Day.**