

CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS WORKSHOP

May 29, 2013

NOAA's National Climatic Data Center
Asheville, NC



Media Interviews and Other Communication Opportunities

Tips for climate scientists



Media interviews are conversations, not interrogations.

- Approach interviews as opportunities to share information; teachable moments
- The reporter may not know the subject well enough to appropriately frame it.
- You can help frame the topic and develop the conversation.
- What journalists and their readers/viewers really want to know is:
 - *What is new about your work?*
 - *Why should we care?*
 - *Why is this important?*
 - *How will it affect me or people I know?*

These questions are the ones you should answer for any audience, in any setting.

When a Reporter Calls, Ask:

- What is the story about and how can I help you?
- What is your deadline/when will the story appear?
- Can we talk in about 10 minutes?

Then Prepare

- Develop your message: what you want to say and how you want to say it.
- Build simple stories around metaphors, analogies, anecdotes, and imagery.
- Anticipate tough questions and how you will answer them.
- Craft sound bites/usable short quotes (10 seconds/one sentence long)

Develop Your Message (this applies to any communications):

- What's new?
- Why is it important?
- Put it in context
- Problem?
- Solution, Benefits?

Messages that Stick are:

- Simple
- Clear
- Concrete
- Credible
- Emotional
- Stories



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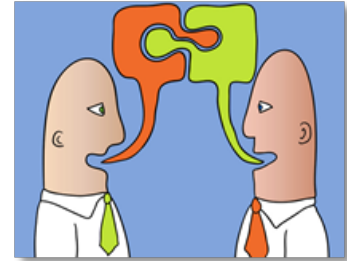
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When you talk to the reporter:

Speak to Your Audience

- The reporter is a filter and translator for the conversation with your real audience.
- Determine who the audience is and tailor your explanations accordingly.



Adjust Poorly Posed Questions

- Poorly posed questions can produce misleading answers.
- Adjust such questions so you can give more accurate answers.
- The questions you are asked rarely appear in the story the journalist writes or in the radio or TV spot that is produced.
- If needed, use bridging phrases such as: “What I think you’re getting at is...” or “What we know is...”

Important Tips

- *DO know your goal for the interview. What do you want to communicate?*
- *DO limit your number of key points to no more than three.*
- *DO keep responses short and simple.*
- *DO repeat your main messages.*
- *DO tailor your messages for particular audiences.*
- *DO let your passion show. Engage rather than lecture.*
- *DO establish relationships with reporters so they will call you and you can call them.*
- *DO write letters to the editor and op-eds, send reporters background information, call and offer yourself as a resource to brief them on important or upcoming topics, offer criticism or advice on recent news stories.*
- *DON'T talk too much to fill silence. Start when you're ready, stop when you're done.*
- *DON'T assume anything you say won't appear in a story. "Off the record" isn't.*
- *DON'T say "no comment" – rather, explain why you can't answer that question.*
- *If the question is not clear, ask the reporter for clarification.*
- *If you don't have a good answer, offer to get back to the reporter with one later.*

Wrap Up

- *Always take the opportunity to recap your main points: "So the bottom line is..."*
- *Offer to review the story for accuracy.*
- *Send along written materials and graphics if appropriate.*

For more information: <http://www.climatecommunication.org>

